

THE KING v SARAH LLOYD JONES
THE KING v ALUN ANTHONY TITFORD

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS

SWANSEA CROWN COURT

1 MARCH 2023

1. Kaylea Titford made a success of her life.
2. She was funny, determined and fiercely independent. Her hydrocephalus was dealt with by an operation which meant she had no reduced brain function. Her physical disability from spina bifida left her without movement or much feeling in her legs, but she was an accomplished wheelchair user, who was competitive in national wheelchair sports. She went to a mainstream school. She had a learning assistant to help her with things in school she simply could not do herself. But she would not allow people so much as to push her wheelchair or open a door for her. Everything she could do for herself, she did.
3. But she died just after her 16th birthday.
4. You, Sarah Lloyd Jones, her mother - and you, Alun Titford, her father - caused her death by shocking and prolonged neglect over lockdown; which you by your guilty plea, Sarah Lloyd Jones, and a jury by a unanimous verdict, Alun Titford, have proved to be gross negligence manslaughter on your part. For those crimes I now pass sentence.
5. I will briefly summarise the facts of the case particularly relevant to sentence. My summing up to the jury in the case of Alun Titford set out the evidence more fully and the case has been opened today by the Crown.
6. Kaylea Titford was born with hydrocephalus and spina bifida in 2004. She was born with normal weight but by the time she was 3 her weight had risen to the heaviest 99.6th centile of relevant weight on a scale of 1 - 100. At 4 years old she started mainstream primary school and at 6 she was already good at physical activities and games in her wheelchair. At 11 or so she went on

to mainstream secondary school.

7. Concerns about her weight led to a concerted effort by professionals to work with the family to improve her diet and stabilise her weight. Sarah Lloyd Jones did not attend these appointments after the first one but Alun Titford attended instead. For 2 years from 2011 there was success, for which the family was given credit. But in 2013, when she was 9 or 10, a number of years before Kaylea's death, the stabilisation of her weight came to an end and weight gain was an issue until she died.
8. There was a history of missed appointments. Some of these ended the provision of relevant services, because professionals took the view that there was no point in scheduling appointments which were not being attended. Both defendants were aware that help was available from a variety of agencies, but they did not make full use of that help as time went on. By the end, they were not accessing or accepting any significant help at all for Kaylea. The whole burden of looking after her therefore fell on them, but this was not for reasons beyond their control. It was part of their gross negligence towards the wellbeing of their daughter.
9. I do not accept that Alun Titford thought that Sarah Lloyd Jones was looking after Kaylea well enough on her own. It was obvious that she was failing. He did not need to look at her legs to see that. He would go into Kaylea's room from time to time, as he did on her birthday and when he got back from work on other days, but he ignored the smell and the dirt and the flies and the chaos and the evidence of his own eyes and nose that she was not getting the care she needed. There are texts in which Sarah Lloyd Jones begged for his help. He didn't give any help. His long hours at work are not an excuse. He liked working. He did not like helping. He was, as he freely accepted, too lazy to help.
10. He expressed some scruples about getting involved in the personal care of a daughter who had reached puberty, but his neglect was total, and he could and should have done more to help, and ask others for help. Instead, when he was not at work, he sat in his bedroom upstairs watching television.
11. Equally, I do not accept that Sarah Lloyd Jones can throw the blame onto her husband. It was too much for her to do on her own, that I do accept. But it was her duty to ask for help and to

accept it from the agencies which, over the years, she sometimes ignored, or turned away. When she had a telephone appointment with Birmingham Children's Hospital in May 2020 she did not say that help was needed for Kaylea. She was positively offered help in **August** 2020 by contact from a young person's lymphoedema specialist, and, later, contact from a young people's specialist, and, later, contact from the Youth Intervention Service. She did not take up any of these offers. When Kaylea's non-attendance at school was queried after schools re-opened in September 2020, she made various excuses for not sending Kaylea back, without disclosing what was really happening.

12. I find it impossible to say that one parent was more to blame than the other. They were both equally responsible and they were both equally culpable.
13. Kaylea was found dead in bed on the morning of 10 October 2020. However, Sarah Lloyd Jones' basis of plea - and the facts proved to the criminal standard at Alun Titford's trial - show that their failure to take reasonable care for Kaylea's health and welfare needs took place over a period between the start of lockdown on 23 March 2020 (when Kaylea stopped going to school) and her death, a period of over six months. This was not a lapse on the part of the defendants. It was a long and sustained period of criminal negligence. I say that having taken full account of the better care given to Kaylea before lockdown.
14. The particulars of criminal negligence, again accepted in the basis of plea and proven at trial, included the increase in Kaylea's weight, which rose from 16 stone 12 pounds (107 kg) when she was last weighed alive in March 2018, at the age of 13, to her post mortem weight of 22 stone 13 pounds (146 kg) on 11 October 2020, which was shortly after her sixteenth birthday on 27 September. Her Body Mass Index was then 70. There was no attempt to control her diet. She could only eat what she was given which, by the end, was the same fattening takeaways that everyone else was eating.
15. It was perfectly obvious from her physical appearance, and would have been to both defendants, that Kaylea was morbidly and dangerously obese. Not only did her parents not watch her diet as they had been taught to do, they failed to get her a wheelchair to replace the one she had grown out of. This left her completely bedridden, and her lack of ability to move herself caused still greater increase in weight. Her immobility also removed her ability to

extricate herself from the general squalor into which the defendants sank her. She was in a specially adapted room in a specially adapted house, with her own disabled toilet, but she had long since been unable to toilet herself. By the time of her death, she was lying in her own filth, surrounded by flies which bothered her and maggots which fed on her. Her flesh was disfigured by ulcers which left her skin open down to the fat and in one place down to the bone. The stench created as her body rotted away alive, and from the excrement left to dry unattended around and on her body, and in the room, made paramedic and police officers of long experience retch and feel physically sick when they attended on the body. The ulcers on Kaylea's body, caused by pressure sores, lack of hygiene, lack of movement, and lack of professional care, were the worst the expert had ever seen.

16. I am not going to go through the detail of the evidence. It has been fully opened by the Crown today and I heard the evidence at trial. This was a horrifying case; a case of sustained neglect, leading to the death of a completely dependent, bedridden, vulnerable, disabled child at the hands of her own parents.

17. And it is not only the death. I have no doubt that the suffering and degradation she experienced before she died was prolonged and significant. While it is true that she had no feeling in her lower limbs, where most of the ulcers were, she could see and smell her own filth. She and her sister called for help in text messages. What was happening was obvious to anyone who went into the room and it would have been obvious to her. Kaylea could see the flies and the maggots. She complained about them. She could see the bottles of urine from her catheter left unemptied and uncollected from the floor. She could see that her wheelchair was out of reach. She would know it was now too small for her anyway. She could see dirty bedding and the mess in the room, and she knew she had not been properly washed for a long time, even if she could not see her own blackened armpits and had limited or no feeling in parts of her visibly crusty and ulcerated skin.

18. For a girl of her age and independent spirit, this was a particularly terrible state to find herself in.

19. In her last hours, the night before Kaylea's body was found cold and dead, her father heard her screaming. She had already turned her mobile phone off for the last time. Her father's reaction

to the screaming was to text her telling her to stop, twice. He did not go and see what the matter was, or get whatever help she needed. She was left to die alone.

20. From the indictment, the key to the indictment, the basis of plea, the evidence, and the jury verdict, the following facts are clear:
- (1) Both defendants owed Kaylea a duty of care as parents with the care of their disabled child.
 - (2) They breached that duty by failing to take reasonable care for her health and welfare needs. They failed to take reasonable steps:
 - (a) to prevent Kaylea from becoming morbidly obese.
 - (b) to ensure that Kaylea did not stay immobile for periods of time which were bad for her health and wellbeing.
 - (c) to ensure she had a safe and hygienic **environment** to live in.
 - (d) to ensure that Kaylea maintained a hygienic **physical** state.
 - (e) or to ensure that her physical health needs were met,
 - (f) and that medical assistance was sought when needed.
 - (3) It was reasonably foreseeable at the time that this gave rise to a serious and obvious risk of death, and it was a significant cause of Kaylea's death.
 - (4) It was gross negligence; so gross as to be a crime.
21. I have the benefit of written and oral submissions from Counsel, Pre Sentence Reports for both defendants, and a report on Sarah Lloyd Jones from Dr Christine Tizzard. She has a doctorate in psychology and is a chartered consultant psychologist. There is an addendum PSR report responsive to Dr Tizzard.
22. I will apply the Gross Negligence Manslaughter Sentencing Guideline.
23. Present in this case is the Category B factor of both defendants continuing their negligent conduct in the face of the obvious suffering caused to Kaylea by that conduct.
24. I do not accept that was a case of lapse in an otherwise satisfactory standard of care. The standard of care had been inadequate for a long time before death. It was criminal through the

whole period of lockdown. There was plenty of time to get help for Kaylea and to put things right for her. In all of that time, things went from bad to worse.

25. I do not accept that either parent can claim a lesser or subordinate role in the responsibility to Kaylea or in their gross negligence in discharging that responsibility and causing her death. They are both equally responsible.
26. I do not accept that any blame that may have attached to outside agencies for not being more proactive can be used to reduce the defendants' primary responsibility, as parents, to reach out for the help which they knew - from experience - was available. Help was there for the taking. It was there for the asking. It had been given before. Both defendants completely neglected to get the help that Kaylea needed and sometimes it was ignored when offered. This can be seen at earlier periods from the evidence and in the chronologies from medical and other records. The failure to get any help at all, even from Kaylea's GP, was particularly significant in the crucial lockdown months leading to Kaylea's death.
27. I have considered whether either defendant's responsibility was substantially reduced by mental disorder, learning disability or lack of maturity and I have also considered the separate Guideline on sentencing offenders with mental disorders.
28. Starting with Sarah Lloyd Jones, the Tizzard report dated 7 November 2022 is based on a proof of evidence and Counsel's advice, a detailed prosecution case summary which from the date must have been the one uploaded on 22 March 2022, and a single Zoom interview on 1 November 2022. It does not take account of the later Pre Sentence Report or the evidence actually given at trial or, I told, medical records. It was prepared over two years after Kaylea's death and is in my judgment not a reliable guide to her mental state at the time of the offending, although I accept it as evidence of her mental state at the time of the Zoom interview. She told Dr Tizzard that she was depressed, but **she said she was not depressed and did not suffer from any mental health issues before Kaylea's death.** It is in that context that I read her basis of plea which says that lockdown impacted on her mental health. That was the case for many people, without amounting to a significant mental disorder.
29. Dr Tizzard herself noted that what she was being told was in large areas "muddled or confused"

and, in some cases, inconsistent with other evidence. For example, she said that Kaylea did not like school, but the evidence at trial showed that she did like it. She said her husband was not violent towards her but the police said she had called them several times when he had been aggressive. Although I have given careful consideration to Dr Tizzard's report, including its current diagnosis of major depression, I have also weighed the evidence as a whole and I am satisfied that Sarah Lloyd Jones was fully aware and fully responsible for what was happening when Kaylea was alive. She had no mental disorder, learning disability or lack of maturity which substantially reduces her responsibility on the facts of this case.

30. Turning to Alun Titford, it is clear from the PSR that he **was** diagnosed with depression about 10 years ago and that in the past he has been voluntarily admitted to psychiatric hospital, sometimes because of depression and sometimes because of drug induced psychosis. However, no episodes of this nature are alleged in recent times; nor did he in evidence to the jury blame his conduct on mental health issues. He was not on any medication and says he did not want any support from the Community Mental Health Team. Having heard him give evidence, I see no reason to disbelieve his self description as simply lazy. I do not adopt the report writer's alternative theory that "this is likely to be owing to his experience of depression and general pattern of avoidance coping". Being lazy meant not doing unpleasant work that he didn't want to do. It is not inconsistent with enjoying the work of a removals man. He accepted in evidence that he could have done more for Kaylea.
31. In his case, also, I find that he had no mental disorder, learning disability or lack of maturity which substantially reduces his responsibility.
32. This means that there are in my judgment no category D factors in this case.
33. Assessing all the relevant factors, and considering the case as a whole, I am confident in placing the offending of both defendants in Category B, with a Guideline starting point of 8 years custody, in a category range of 8-12 years custody.
34. I consider the **heightened** rather than **extreme** nature of the Category B factor in this case of "prolonged negligence in the face of obvious suffering" to be treated more fairly as an aggravating factor than as sufficient (in the absence of any of the other Category B factors) on

its own on the facts of this case to raise the case into Category A. The conditions in which Kaylea was left to die were fairly described by the Crown as unfit for any animal. However, there was no deliberate cruelty. There is no evidence of dislike, or of targeting. It is a case of criminal **neglect** and gross **negligence**.

35. It is a particularly serious case of its kind and that does require some upward movement from the Guideline starting point.
36. There are no other aggravating factors which I have not already taken into account when deciding the Category of culpability, and I must not double count.
37. I now turn to mitigating factors. Sarah Lloyd Jones has no previous convictions and Alun Titford has no recent or relevant previous convictions. That is mitigation.
38. I accept the personal mitigation put forward on behalf of both defendants. I accept that both parents have been grieved by the loss of their daughter, and that Sarah Lloyd Jones is now correctly diagnosed as suffering from a Major Depressive Disorder. I accept that she struggled with the care of Kaylea. Alun Titford also has personal mitigation, to which I have given weight. I accept that lockdown created unusual circumstances, although both defendants were going out to work after March 2020. Neither defendant was cut off from the outside world.
39. None of the other **Guideline** factors reducing seriousness or reflecting personal mitigation applies. It is clear to me that what the defendants could not do, and the stress and pressure of looking after a number of children, including Kaylea with her special needs, was within their power to deal with by calling for appropriate help, which they did not do. Their failures were not for reasons beyond their control. They never asked for help they did not get. They did not ask for help at all. It was made easy for them to ask for help.
40. I do not accept that either defendant has shown remorse that should count as significant mitigation. Alun Titford pleaded not guilty, and even to the author of the Pre Sentence Report blamed his partner and even his daughter. Sarah Lloyd Jones pleaded guilty, and will get credit for that. But Dr Tizzard's report and the Pre Sentence Report show that she still continues to try and shift blame elsewhere, and to minimise her own responsibility.

41. Balancing the aggravating and mitigating factors, I feel able to reduce the starting point to seven years six months for both defendants, before credit for plea.
42. I make no finding of dangerousness in this case and there is no need for an extended licence period for the protection of the public.
43. Sarah Lloyd Jones is entitled to credit for her guilty plea. She entered a Not Guilty plea at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing on 1 July 2022. The case was listed for trial on 16 January 2023. She entered a guilty plea at a pre-trial hearing on 12 December 2022. This is not a case in which she needed Counsel's advice or the report of Dr Tizzard to inform her decision to plead guilty.
44. Following the Sentencing Guideline, I assess the appropriate credit to be 20%. That reduces the sentence in her case from seven years six months to 6 years. Alun Titford did not plead guilty and gets no credit.
45. I am not asked to make any ancillary orders and I do not think any are necessary.
46. Both defendants have been on bail without electronic monitoring and so there is no credit for time served before trial.
47. Each defendant must pay the statutory surcharge of £190 or such other correct figure as may be substituted administratively.

STAND UP ALUN TITFORD:

48. For the gross negligence manslaughter of Kaylea Titford I sentence you to 7 years 6 months imprisonment. You will serve two thirds of the sentence (namely 5 years) in custody before you are released on licence. When you are released, you will be on licence until the end of this sentence. You must comply with the terms of the licence and commit no further offence or else you will be liable to serve a further period in custody.

STAND UP SARAH LLOYD JONES:

49. For the gross negligence manslaughter of Kaylea Titford, having regard to your guilty plea, I sentence you to 6 years imprisonment. You will serve two thirds of the sentence (namely 4 years) in custody before you are released on licence. When you are released, you will be on licence until the end of this sentence. You must comply with the terms of the licence and commit no further offence or else you will be liable to serve a further period in custody.