

**R v RYAN WYN JONES**

**SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS - PRESIDING JUDGE OF WALES**

**8 DECEMBER 2023**

**MOLD CROWN COURT**

#### REPORTING RESTRICTIONS

Reporting restrictions are in place under section 45 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 which make it a criminal offence to publish any matter which is likely to lead members of the public to identify any of the children under 18 concerned in these proceedings until that child reaches the age of 18. This includes a prohibition on publishing the name, address, educational establishment, workplace or photograph of any of them in connection with these proceedings.

To avoid mistake, I will not myself be referring to any of the children by name.

A copy of the reporting restrictions order, which was made on 8 May 2023 by the North East Wales Magistrates Court, is available from the court.

#### THE OFFENCES

Ryan Wyn Jones, you have pleaded guilty to

- The attempted murder of your former partner, Lisa Morris (Count 1)
- The attempted murder of her 10 year old son (Count 2)
- The unlawful wounding of her 12 year old daughter (Count 6); and
- Having a bladed article in a public place, namely, the knife you used to commit these offences (Count 5).

You are 27 years old.

## CREDIT FOR PLEA

You pleaded guilty to Counts 1 and 5 (attempted murder and the bladed article) at the adjourned Pre and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) and indicated a plea to Count 6 (the section 20 unlawful wounding) at the same time, which entitles you in my judgment to 25% credit for plea on those Counts. You pleaded guilty to Count 6 (the other attempted murder) two months after that, which entitles you in my judgment to 20% credit for plea on that count.

## BRIEF FACTS

I will start by outlining the facts.

Lisa Morris has three children, a 12 year old girl, a 10 year old boy, and a 7 year old girl. At the time of these offences on 5 May 2023, she was separated from their father and living with her children in Corwen, north east Wales. Her own father lived about 60 metres away.

A relationship began between you and Ms Morris in late 2022 and you moved in with her. You exhibited controlling behaviour and, when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you were at times violent towards her. In particular, a couple of months earlier you strangled Ms Morris until she passed out and, when she came to and fought you off, you threatened her with a bread knife taken from the kitchen drawer. On other occasions you caused her two black eyes and a split eyebrow.

Less than a fortnight before the attacks on 5 May, on 19 April you pushed Ms Morris down the stairs. Her 10 year old son told you to stop and went upstairs, but you followed him, apparently thinking he was going to report you to his father. You then assaulted him, verbally abused him, and grabbed his phone. You were arrested and given bail including a condition that you should not contact Ms Morris, but both of you remained in contact.

On 20 April, social services visited and spoke to the 12 year old girl and the 10 year old boy. The

boy told them that you had said to him: "If you ever get involved again, I am going to kill you". In view of your subsequent actions, I can be quite sure that you did say that, and that you meant it when you said it.

Ms Morris forgave you. On 29 April your bail conditions were revoked and you were told there would be no further action in respect of what happened on 19 April.

5 days later, on 4 May, the afternoon before the attempted murders, you and Ms Morris visited her father. You were apologetic about the events of 19 April, but you also picked up a Stanley knife and said "You could do damage with that".

You went back to Ms Morris's house and you and she drank alcohol and took cocaine which you had bought.

During the night, from about 1 am, Ms Morris messaged her sister: "Don't ignite him please" and "He's trying to do something". At 1.45 am you went to your own mother's house and were let in by her partner. You appeared paranoid and you were under the influence of cocaine. While you were there, between 1.48 and 2.28 in the morning, you and Ms Morris exchanged texts which indicate that she was ending the relationship with you and you were angry. Her last text to you in a series, at 1.57 am, said "Don't ever come back here or speak to me again after tonight". Your next text to her was at 2.14 am and said "I need my charger. Can I talk to you please." She replied "I'll give it to you in the morning and what is there to talk about." She then texted that she was just wasting her time with you because you didn't care any more. You replied "Okay Lis.. Be like that, I'm used to it."

At this point, you turned off your phone and went to her house. I am sure from the sequence of events in the weeks and hours preceding this that you had already formed an intention to kill with a knife. Everyone was asleep in bed. You went into the kitchen and took out a kitchen knife. It was over 30 cm long and the blade was just under 20 cm long and about 3.5 cm wide. You took it out of the kitchen and went upstairs with it. You were taking it to the bedroom

where Lisa Morris was asleep, intending to use it. You woke her, you argued with her, and you stabbed her repeatedly to the face and upper body as she was lying in her bed. The stab to the head was so forceful that the tip of the blade broke off and lodged in her skull.

Her 10 year old son was woken by the noise. He got up and saw, he thought afterwards, two knives in your hands. I cannot be sure you had two knives and I sentence you on the basis there was one. He had seen you go into his mother's bedroom and shut the door. He heard his mother crying, screaming and asking you to stop. He managed to get past the door and into her bedroom, and there he saw you strangling his mother on the floor and stabbing her to the face as you tried to kill her. You were under the influence of cocaine and you were laughing as you did it. However, a psychiatric report prepared on your behalf has found no evidence of drug induced psychosis, or, indeed, any mental disorder within the scope of the Mental Health Act.

Just imagine the horror of that for a 10 year old boy, seeing what you were doing to his own mother in her bedroom in the middle of the night.

At some point that evening, as the boy told his grandfather later on, you said to him "Shut the fucking door, video this, your mum's getting murdered, and send it to your fucking dad."

Bravely, the boy grabbed you and tried to get you off his mother.

You then turned your attention to him, and tried to kill him - a 10 year old boy defending his mother. This was what you had said you would do two weeks earlier when on 19 April you had told him you would kill him if he got involved again. You stabbed the boy. Even though you had broken the point of the blade on his mother, you used such force that you were still able to drive the knife into his neck and shoulder, and to some extent to the back of his neck. Your concentration on the boy's neck leaves me with no doubt that you were trying to kill him, just as by stabbing her head you had been deliberately trying to kill his mother.

These were not just spur of the moment attacks. I am sure that they were premeditated. This is supported by what you had said on earlier occasions when handling the bread knife and, later, the Stanley knife. It is also demonstrated by the way you had made your way to the house, gone to the kitchen to get the knife, and then gone upstairs to do what you immediately did.

As your murderous attack continued on the 10-year old boy, you both ended up in the boy's bedroom. You strangled him, pushed him to the floor, and stabbed him whilst he was on the ground there. He knew he was being savagely attacked, but he was not immediately aware that he had been stabbed. You and he moved to the landing at the top of the stairs. There, his mother managed to pull you off him. That saved his life, just as he had saved hers.

But you did not stop. You just went back to attacking her.

There were two other children in the house; her two daughters, aged 12 and 7. The 7 year old woke up and saw you stabbing her mother in her bedroom, and she then saw you trying to strangle her brother. As she and her brother screamed at you to stop, the 12 year old daughter woke up. With great presence of mind, she tried to ring her father, but you came into her bedroom and threw her phone aside. You then turned your attention to her. You grabbed her by the hair, you threw her on the floor, and you stabbed her to the back and head. This is the section 20 plea. Her little sister heard you laughing and telling the big sister to record what you were doing to her.

The older sister also saw her mother in the girls' shared bedroom, and you were kicking and spitting on her, whilst stabbing her on the ground. The little sister was hiding underneath a blanket. She thought her mother was dead, and she started to cry. Even that did not stop you. You just said to the 7 year old girl "Move, and I'll kill you".

She was the only family member in the house you did not stab that night.

Your next move was to take Lisa Morris's phone from her bedroom. I am sure you were trying to stop her or anyone else using the phone to get help.

You then went back into the girls' bedroom and stabbed their mother a few more times.

The 12 year old daughter managed to get down the stairs, and from the staircase she could see you picking her mother up by her hair and stabbing her.

You followed the daughter down the stairs. You tried to lock the doors and asked where the boy had gone (he had, in fact, managed to run out to his grandfather's house and raise the alarm). She said she thought he was still in the house, and you went upstairs to look for him. She then ran to her grandfather's house, too terrified to put any clothes on before she left.

Meanwhile, the 7 year old daughter was still in the house. She heroically tried to save her mother, and then she too ran barefoot to her grandfather's. You were still attacking Lisa Morris.

Then you left her to die, and went away from the house, taking her phone with you so she could not call for help and throwing it away down an embankment. You were determined that she should die from the stabbing.

You underestimated her. She managed to crawl to her father's house.

A 999 call was made by her father at 2.35 am. Heartbreaking body worn camera footage starts at 3.02 am which shows how close your intended victims were to death, mother and son, and the effect of the injuries on the other children, and the others present. The 999 call recording and the video footage from the body worn camera later is very distressing indeed, some of the worst I have seen, and yet it is only an echo of the violence on a woman and her children which you had deliberately inflicted and continued over a period as I have just described.

It is difficult in words to convey the horror and the depravity of what you did to them that night. It is a miracle that no-one died. Certainly, you did everything you could to kill the mother and her young son, as well as attacking one daughter and threatening the other.

You were arrested by police outdoors at 3.30 am, crying and holding the knife to your own neck. You made admissions at the police station.

#### INJURIES TO LISA RILEY

Lisa Morris had multiple wounds to her head, neck and chest. She had a depressed skull fracture of the left side. Her brain was exposed. Pieces of skull had to be removed from her brain. However, part of the skull which had been forced into her brain could not be safely removed. The tip of your knife was also removed. One of the neck wounds had severed the strap muscles of her larynx. She had a fracture to the left cheekbone and many facial lacerations, some of them deep. Her right eyelid needed stitches. She lost a tooth. She had 8 to 10 wounds to the chest wall, two of them bubbling as air leaked out from her thoracic cavity. She had 13 stab wounds to her left arm, some down to the bone; and 4 wounds to her right arm. She was in the operating theatre for 10 hours, and in an induced coma in intensive care afterwards. She was discharged from hospital after 12 days.

She remains under the care of a consultant neurologist. She struggles to open her mouth, which means that she can no longer eat properly. She has serious Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is triggered by the sight of the scars on her body and face. A forensic psychologist has found that she has serious cognitive impairment, of a magnitude found in persons with dementia, but in her case attributable to the brain injuries which you inflicted on her. She now fulfils the criteria for a mental disorder under the Mental Health Act. Her memory and working memory are severely impaired. Her working memory is worse than 95% of the population. Her verbal fluency is severely impaired. Her language function is impaired.

## INJURIES TO THE 10 YEAR OLD BOY

The boy had an incised wound 8cm long under the surface of the chin and to the upper neck. He had two 1 cm incised wounds medial to the shoulder blade or scapula. He had a 4 cm long incised wound overlying the left shoulder blade. He had a 2 cm long incised wound to the back of the neck at the hairline. Penetrating stab wounds had caused emphysema within the soft tissues of his neck, shoulder area and back of chest. The damage to his veins, and, in particular, his jugular vein, was life threatening in the absence of prompt medical attention.

## INJURIES TO THE 12 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER

The older daughter had stab injuries to her upper back and scalp. They were superficial and had stopped bleeding before she was examined in hospital.

## SENTENCING GUIDELINES

I will apply the Sentencing Guidelines on attempted murder, section 20 wounding, having a bladed article in a public place, domestic abuse, totality, and credit for plea.

I will start by considering the offences individually.

Count 1, the attempted murder of Lisa Morris, would in isolation fall within Category B1 of the Guideline. You took a knife upstairs to the bedroom from the kitchen, and you had premeditated these crimes for some time, albeit only in general terms. On the night, you went to the house intent on killing. You inflicted permanent, irreversible injury. The starting point is 30 years custody in a range of 25-35 years.

The domestic violence context is an aggravating feature. So is your attempt to prevent help coming by getting rid of phones. You gratuitously degraded Ms Morris as you tried to kill her. You spat on her as well as stabbing and stamping on her. You gloried in wreaking violence on



her in front of her children, with suggestions that they video what you were doing to show to their father. You were under the influence of cocaine, which is another aggravating feature. You have 4 convictions for 5 offences. The most recent and relevant are two convictions in 2019 for assault occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and a conviction for possession of cocaine in November 2022. You were not on bail when you committed these offences but you had only recently had bail conditions lifted for the reported violence against Ms Morris.

Count 2, the attempted murder of her 10 year old son because he was trying to save his mother, would in isolation fall within Category A2 of the Guideline. You certainly inflicted serious physical harm, quite apart from the extent of the psychological harm, which is harder to evaluate from the material I have, although it is surely to be expected. The starting point is 30 years custody in a range of 25-35 years. Count 3, the unlawful wounding of her 12 year old daughter, would in isolation fall within Category A3. She was vulnerable because of her age and you were using a highly dangerous weapon. The starting point is 2 years in a range of 1-3 years. In addition to the other aggravating features, you did this because she was trying to stop you murdering her mother by raising the alarm on her phone.

Count 5, having the knife in a public place as you took it away from the scene, would in isolation fall within Category A2. It attracts a starting point of 6 months, in a range of 3 to 12 months. I recognise that by the time you took the knife into a public place you were walking alone in the middle of the night through deserted areas. You then hesitated to put it down only briefly when caught and challenged by police. The serious criminality associated with the knife is to be reflected in the other counts, rather than this one.

Each of the violent offences aggravates the others, particularly the two offences of attempted murder against a mother and her child.

There is no mitigation apart from the credit for plea.

I do give you credit for sparing the victims a trial by your guilty pleas, but the Pre Sentence

Report does not support the suggestion of true remorse, to be treated as mitigation over and above the ordinary credit for those pleas. The report writer found that you were victim blaming and minimising your own responsibility, presenting a dishonest and manipulative account of yourself and the offences in an effort to reduce your culpability instead of acknowledging it for what it was.

There is some evidence of positive engagement with programmes available to you in the prison system and I have read letters from your uncle and yourself.

### DANGEROUSNESS

Not surprisingly, the Pre Sentence Report identifies you as dangerous within the meaning of section 308 of the Sentencing Code.

I am independently and completely satisfied by the facts of this case that there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious physical and psychological harm occasioned by the commission of specified offences by you.

You are violent. You are vindictive. You lack insight. You are prone to misuse of alcohol and cocaine, and nothing your family or anyone else has ever said to you deterred you from a downward spiral of substance abuse and escalating violence. Even the involvement of police and social services had no impact on you. Your conduct, not only in the presence of the children, but directly targeting them, puts you far outside the ordinary constraints of human decency. The Pre Sentence Report, based on an interview with you over 6 months after the event, when you were sober, and in prison, and had had plenty of time to reflect, shows that you are still a highly dangerous and untrustworthy person. You will in my judgment remain so for the indefinite future, and possibly for ever. Although I am glad to hear that you have engaged with substance abuse programmes in prison, I must sadly agree with the author of the Pre Sentence Report that if you were to be released from prison there is every reason to fear that you would again reach for drugs and alcohol in response to the pressures and temptations

of life outside.

I consider that the seriousness of the offences, and particularly the two offences of attempted murder, are such as to justify a sentence of imprisonment for life concurrent on Counts 1 and 2. Paying due regard to the provisions of the Sentencing Code, that is the sentence I will pass. Your sentence for the lesser offences after credit for plea will be concurrent terms of 2 years on Count 4 and 6 months on Count 5.

#### MINIMUM TERM

In relation to the life sentences, I must set the minimum term that you have to serve before the Parole Board can conduct its first review of whether and, if so, when you might be **released on licence**.

It may be that the Parole Board will decide **not** to release you on licence at that point.

If you are ever released by the Parole Board, you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, and may therefore be recalled to continue your life sentences in prison. That is how a life sentence protects the public for the future as well as punishing you. **The minimum term will not be your sentence. Your sentence is imprisonment for life.**

I will decide the minimum term by determining a notional determinate sentence, which reflects all of the offending behaviour and is just and proportionate to it as a whole, in accordance with the principle of totality. This would be concurrent for the two attempted murders of mother and son, aggravated by the concurrent sentence for unlawful wounding of the older daughter.

I apply the Guidelines, and take account of the all the aggravating and other features which I have identified. There also has to be an upward movement in notional concurrent determinate sentences to reflect the fact that there were two attempted murders here and not just one. I will take account of the reduced credit for plea on Count 2 when reaching a notional

determinate concurrent sentence on Counts 1 and 2, before giving full credit for plea on Count 1.

Before substantial reductions to which I will shortly come, the notional concurrent determinate sentences had there been a trial on Counts 1 and 2 would have been 40 years. After credit for plea that would have been reduced to 30 years. Since you would have served up to two thirds of that in custody, the minimum term before the Parole Board's first review will be 20 years.

**However, the sentence is not that. The sentence is life imprisonment.**

You must pay the statutory surcharge of £228.

You have spent 215 days in custody on remand and that will be deducted from the minimum term.

I order forfeiture and destruction of the knife.

I make the restraining order at section Q12 of the DCS with the map at section Q13.

Stand up now, Ryan Wyn Jones.

**For the attempted murders of Lisa Morris and her son, your sentence is imprisonment for life with a minimum term of 20 years, less 215 days on remand.**