



# Judiciary of England and Wales

THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE MURRAY

In the Crown Court at St Albans

***R v Elliot WRIGHT – Sentencing Remarks***

**16 October 2024**

**Reporting Restrictions:**

*Each of the complainants, referred to in these sentencing remarks as “C1” and “C2”, respectively, is entitled to lifelong protection of her identity in relation to these offences under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992.*

*No matter relating to either complainant may be included in any reporting of this hearing or these sentencing remarks or in any other publication if it is likely to lead members of the public to identify C1 or C2 as the victim of any of these offences. This prohibition applies unless waived or lifted in accordance with section 3 of the 1992 Act.*

1. Elliot Wright, it falls to me to sentence you today for three offences of inciting the sexual exploitation of a child, one offence of arranging the sexual exploitation of a child, one offence of paying for the sexual services of a child, and one offence of doing an act tending and intended to pervert the course of justice.
2. The victims of your offences are female children, one who is 17 years old and one who was 16 years old when you first targeted her. As I will make clear shortly, each of the complainants was in particularly vulnerable circumstances when you targeted them. I shall refer to them as “C1” and “C2”, respectively. C1 is the complainant in relation to the offences on the indictment against you. C2 is the complainant in relation to the offences that have been committed to this court for sentence.
3. You were a serving police officer in the Bedfordshire Police at the time of all of this offending.
4. You are 29 years old now, the same age as you were when you committed your offences against C1. You were 28 years old when the offending against C2 began.
5. On 4 July 2024, you pleaded guilty at this Crown Court to three offences against C1, as follows:
  - a. inciting sexual exploitation of a child under section 48 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (count 2 on the indictment);
  - b. arranging the sexual exploitation of a child under section 50 of the 2003 Act (count 3 on the indictment); and

- c. doing an act tending and intended to pervert the course of justice (count 5 on the indictment).
6. During the investigation of your offences against C1, the police discovered your offences against C2. On 31 July 2024, you pleaded guilty at Stevenage Magistrates' Court to two offences of causing or inciting the sexual exploitation of a child under section 48 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and one offence of paying for the sexual services of a child under section 47 of the 2003 Act. You were committed to this Crown Court for sentence.
7. I do not have a victim personal statement from C1, but the court has heard a summary of the victim personal statement of C2, who gave her evidence in a video-taped interview, the transcript of which I have read.
8. As I shall describe in a moment, each of C1 and C2 has serious mental health issues and other vulnerabilities. You cannot be held responsible for those to the extent that they preceded your offending against them. But your exploitation of each of these children undoubtedly has caused each of them additional serious harm.
9. I am sure that an important reason why you targeted each of them was that their mental health issues and other vulnerabilities made them easier targets for you. In neither case, in my view, did you specifically use your status as a police officer to commit the sexual exploitation offences against the complainant. It is, however, relevant to your offence of perverting the course of justice. Also, C2's victim personal statement makes clear, that after she discovered that you were a police officer following your arrest, her ability to trust others, including those in authority, was damaged. This increases the harm that you have caused her.

### ***Facts***

10. On 21 March 2024, the police received a report that C1, a 17-year-old girl in local authority care, was reported missing after she was seen getting into a car with an unknown man. She had earlier told her carers that she was going to meet someone named "Elliot" with whom she had been in contact on social media. The police were already aware of C1 as a vulnerable young person and considered her to be a high risk of sexual exploitation.
11. The police soon located the car and brought it to a stop in a small village near Henlow in Bedfordshire. You were the driver and C1 was your passenger. You told police that you had been in contact with C1 for a few weeks, that you believed her to be 19 years old, and that you were taking her to your home to cook her dinner.
12. C1 confirmed to police that you were taking her to your home for dinner. She also told police that you knew she was 17 years old, that she was in local authority care, and that she was someone who regularly went "missing" and had mental health difficulties. By your plea of guilty, you have admitted that the purpose of collecting C1 from her care home was to bring her to your home with a view to engaging in sexual activity. That is the offence of arranging the sexual exploitation of a child.

13. C1 also said that you asked her for indecent images of herself, namely, of her naked breasts ("boobs"), and that she sent you such images and other sexualised images, such as her wearing a thong and her in her underwear. By your plea of guilty, you have admitted that you did this for your sexual gratification, knowing that she was under the age of 18. That is the offence of inciting the sexual exploitation of a child.
14. C1 told police that she only met with a person after she had seen them naked, implying that she had seen a naked image of you. She told police that she did not have sex with a person unless she got something back in return.
15. C1 later told police that you had asked her if she had made any sex tapes and if she would consider offering indecent images of herself for payment on OnlyFans, an internet-based subscription service used primarily by sex workers who produce pornography. C1 said that at one stage in the car you had your hand in her pants, and you got her to take a photograph of her breasts for you. None of this conduct is the subject of a separate count to which you have pleaded guilty, but it is part of the background of your offending, and I take it into account as additional aggravation.
16. C1 said that before you were stopped by the police, you noticed the police car following you. At this point you told her you were a police officer. You then told her to delete all messages between you from all social media platforms and to tell the police that she was 19. She said you took the memory card out of the dashcam, smashed it and asked her to throw it out of the window. In due course, she was very resistant to the police seizing her phone, no doubt because of what you had told her to do. That is the offence of doing an act or acts tending and intended to pervert the course of justice.
17. You were interviewed by the police after your arrest. You told them that you had been a police officer for 10 years. You said that you had met C1 on Instagram. You admitted that you were aware that she had mental health difficulties and that, from photographs you had seen, she had self-harming scars. You admitted that you knew that she was in supported accommodation. You told the police that she had sent you photos but that these were not indecent. You said that when you were stopped, you were taking C1 to a vape shop. You were then going to make her dinner and afterwards take her home.
18. Subsequent examination of your phone confirmed the following:
  - a. There had been social media contact between you and C1 over a period of weeks before you met in person. You had exchanged hundreds of messages with her.
  - b. The messages showed that you asked C1 for pictures of herself a number of times before you arranged to meet. In other messages, you offered to buy C1 gifts if she came to your address. These gifts included vapes, alcohol, underwear, other clothes, and cigarettes. It is clear from the messages that you knew that C1 was the subject of a deprivation of liberty order.

- c. The internet search history on your phone showed numerous searches relating to sexual offending against children by police officers and disciplinary proceedings and potential defences to indecent images offences as well as more specific searches relating to secure children's homes, secure mental health units and C1 by name.
  - d. You had a significant number of sexualised images of girls who appeared to be under the age of 18, although these images were not, strictly speaking, "indecent".
  - e. You had been to the road on which C1 lived about four occasions before you met her.
19. C1's carer gave evidence to the police. The carer confirmed that C1 was a child in care under a deprivation of liberty order, that she was at high risk of child sexual exploitation, and that she was at high risk of self-harm by means of alcohol abuse and tablets. The carer also confirmed that she saw messages from someone named "Elliot" on C1's phone before C1 left to meet you. C1 told the carer that Elliot was 30 years old. The carer warned C1 not to go meet you and that, if she did, the police would be alerted, as indeed they were. Despite this warning, C1 left. Her carer ran after her and managed to note the registration number of your car.
  20. Another witness from the children's home where C1 was in care described C1 as "highly vulnerable". The witness said that there were previous incidents where C1 had been suicidal. The witness also said that C1 had on prior occasions arranged to meet older men for sexual favours in exchange for drugs, alcohol and vapes, confirming her vulnerability and how she was at high risk of sexual exploitation.
  21. Turning to your offences against C2, I have already noted that, as a result of the police investigation into your offences against C1, they discovered your offences against C2, a homeless 17-year-old girl in the Harlow area with a ketamine addiction. She was regarded by Essex Police as at a high risk of sexual exploitation. She had been raped when she was 14 years old. She suffers from serious mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. I am sure that C2's mental health difficulties and the vulnerabilities associated with her young age and homelessness were among the reasons why you targeted her.
  22. The police review of your mobile phone, to which I have already referred, revealed that you were in contact with C2 on Instagram in March 2023. Subsequent investigation showed that you began chatting with her on 15 February 2023, when she was 16 years old, principally on Instagram and WhatsApp.
  23. Following the discovery of your contact with C2, the Essex Police spoke with C2. She confirmed that she knew you. She said that you first contacted her when she was 16, and that you solicited indecent images of her in return for payment. She said that you also attempted to recruit her to work with you on the OnlyFans platform, seeking to get her to provide pornographic images of herself to subscribers for payment.

24. You attempted to meet C2 numerous times. She said you knew her age and her vulnerabilities as she had told you that she could not afford to feed herself. The police obtained information from PayPal, which confirmed that you made two payments to C2 totalling £50 and had prepare a third payment of £10, which you cancelled. This money was payment for indecent images of C2.
25. You were interviewed whilst in custody in relation to these matters, and you answered "no comment" to all questions.
26. You have no previous convictions or cautions.
27. I have carefully read the detailed pre-sentence report dated 14 September 2024. The author of the report notes that while you have now accepted full responsibility for these offences, having initially lied to the police, destroyed some evidence and attempted to conceal other evidence, you have shown limited remorse in relation to your offending against C1 and no remorse in relation to your offending against C2.
28. The author of the pre-sentence report has assessed you as posing a high risk of serious harm to children in the form of sexual abuse, engaging in sexualised communication with vulnerable young girls, inciting them to engage in sexual exploitation, with the potential to lead to contact sexual offences.
- ~~29.~~ The pre-sentence report also reveals that you have a poor disciplinary record within the police service for inappropriate sexualised behaviour towards female colleagues. The author of the report concludes that you therefore present a medium risk of harm to adult female co-workers.
30. I have also reviewed a short letter dated 3 October 2024 from an Assistant Psychologist at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, where you have been on remand in custody, which describes your engagement with the Psychology service at the prison and the work you have done. It shows you have engaged positively, and that you are open and willing to address your own symptoms of trauma, severe anxiety, feelings of sadness and feelings of hopelessness. The author of the letter considers that you have demonstrated a strong commitment and motivation to address the factors that led to your offending.
31. I have had regard to the Sentencing Council guidelines on the relevant offences. Plainly, this offending passes the custody threshold.
32. For purposes of sentencing your offences against C1, I take count 3 on the indictment as the lead offence against C1, arranging the sexual exploitation of a child, the gist of which is that you collected C1 from her secure care home with a view to engaging in sexual activity with her. Having regard to the guideline, I consider that the offence falls into harm category 2 and culpability B. In relation to culpability, I do not consider that your status as a serving police officer means that you were in a position of trust in relation to C1 in the sense intended in the guideline.
33. The fact that you were a serving police officer at the time and used your status as such to target C1 is, however, a significant aggravating factor. A further significant

aggravating factor is that you targeted C1 in full awareness of her particular vulnerabilities as a child in care, subject to a deprivation of liberty order, with significant mental health issues, and at risk of sexual exploitation by predatory men such as yourself. I do not take into account as aggravating factors that you took steps to prevent C1 from reporting your offences and that you attempted to dispose of or conceal evidence, as this aspect of your offending is reflecting in the perverting the course of justice offence, for which you will be separately sentenced. As I am treating this as the lead offence against C1, I must reflect in my sentence the criminality associated with your other sexual exploitation offence against C1, namely, count 2 on the indictment.

34. In terms of mitigation, you have no previous convictions. I bear in mind that as a result of this offending, you have lost your career in the police force. Finally, although I bear in mind what was said by the author of the pre-sentence report about your limited remorse in relation to C1 and no apparent C2, I accept the submissions of Mr Paynter on your behalf as to why the author of the report may have misunderstood you, and I accept his assurances that you are genuinely sorry for these offences, you recognise the serious harm you have caused to each of these young victims and the damage you have inflicted by this offending on public trust in the police.
35. The starting point for a category 2B offence, is 1 year's custody. In light of the very serious aggravating factors that I have mentioned, it is necessary to sentence above the upper end of the category range of 2 years' custody before considering mitigation. Having regard to the aggravating and mitigating factors, the sentence that I would have imposed after a trial is one of two years' custody.
36. In relation to your offence on count 2 of the indictment of inciting sexual exploitation of C1, to which the same guideline applies, the sentence that I would have imposed after a trial, taking into account the same aggravating and mitigating factors, would have been one of 18 months' custody, concurrent to the sentence for count 3.
37. In relation to count 5, I consider that this offence, which was spur-of-the-moment and ineffective, falls into the lowest categories for culpability and harm. It is aggravated, however, by your revealing to C1 your status as a police officer in order to influence her to comply with your requests to delete messages, to lie to the police, and to assist in destroying the dashcam footage. Having regard to the relevant Sentencing Council guideline, the sentence that I would have imposed after a trial would have been one of 7 months' custody, consecutive to the sentences for the sexual exploitation offences against C1.
38. In relation to the offences against C2, your offence of inciting the sexual exploitation of C2 by getting her to send indecent images of herself to you and your offence of paying for sexual services of a child by paying for those same images are, in my view, two aspects of a single course of offending against C2. It is necessary for me to impose an appropriate sentence for each one, but they will be concurrent, reflecting the criminality of this course of offending. Similarly, I will impose a concurrent sentence for your offence of causing or inciting the sexual exploitation of C2 by

soliciting her to sell pornographic images of herself via the OnlyFans platform. Each sentence will reflect the total criminality of your offending against C2.

39. Having regard to the same aggravating and mitigating factors as apply to your offences against C1, the sentence that I would have imposed on you after a trial for each of the three offences against C2 would have been one of two years' custody for each offence.
40. Although you have been assessed as a high risk of harm to female children under 18, based on everything I know about you, including what I accept is your genuine remorse, your commitment to address the issues that led to your offending, as well as the sentence I am required to propose and the making of a SHPO against you, I am satisfied that you should not be sentenced as a dangerous offender.
41. For your offences against C1, in relation to which you originally pleaded Not Guilty at the plea and trial preparation hearing on 23 April 2024 and then subsequently pleaded guilty on 4 July 2024, with the trial fixed to start on 16 September 2024, I consider that the appropriate reduction of your sentence is between 15 and 20 per cent.
42. For your offences against C2, to which you pleaded Guilty at Stevenage Magistrates' Court, you are entitled to a full discount for pleading at the earliest opportunity, in other words, a reduction of your sentence by one third.
43. In passing consecutive sentences, I have borne in mind totality when fixing the term of each sentence. I have arrived at a total sentence that I consider is just and proportionate, and therefore no further reduction for totality is necessary.
44. The statutory surcharge provisions apply to this sentence.
45. Each of your offences is so serious that only a custodial sentence can be justified. Each sentence will be the shortest that is commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.
46. The days that you have spent on remand in custody will automatically count towards your sentence.
47. I have already indicated what sentences I would have imposed had you not pleaded guilty, and you had been convicted after a trial.
48. Taking into the reduction of sentence to which you are entitled due to your guilty pleas, I impose the following sentences:
  - a. for the offence of arranging the sexual exploitation of a child against C1, 20 months' imprisonment;
  - b. for the offence of inciting the sexual exploitation of a child against C1, 14 months' imprisonment, to be served concurrently with the first sentence;

- c. for the offence of doing an act tending or intended to pervert the course of justice, six months' imprisonment, to be served consecutively to the sexual exploitation offences against C1;
  - d. for each of your three offences against C2, 16 months' imprisonment, to be served concurrently with each other and consecutively to the sentences I have imposed for your offences against C1 and to the sentence for perverting the course of justice.
- 49. Your total sentence, therefore, will be one of 42 months' imprisonment.
- 50. You will serve up to one-half of your sentence in custody. You will serve the remainder on licence. You must keep to the terms of your licence and commit no further offence, or you will be liable to be recalled, and you may then serve the rest of your sentence in custody.
- 51. I impose a sexual harm prevention order in the terms that were discussed earlier during this hearing. The purpose of this order is to prevent sexual harm by you in relation to indecent images of children and to reduce the risk of your committing contact sexual offences against children. It will apply until further order of the court. If you do not fully understand how the order will apply to you, your counsel will explain it to you after this hearing.
- 52. I certify that you have been convicted of sexual offences so that you must for the rest of your life keep the police informed at all times of your personal particulars, the address at which you are living and any alteration in the name you are using. You will be given full details of these requirements on a form at the end of this hearing.
- 53. The sexual offences of which you have been convicted are ones that will make you subject to barring from working with vulnerable children. You will be told of the restrictions under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- 54. You may go down.