

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. SN you will be sentenced to a Referral Order for 6 months. Please sit down whilst I explain why I have passed that sentence
2. SN you are 15 years old (dob 12/7/2009 and had no previous convictions until you appeared before me on 7/1/2025 and pleaded Guilty at the first hearing before me to the offence of Violent Disorder. You are however subject to a Youth Caution for an offence of Assault that took place on 16/4/2024 and you have been working with the Youth Justice Service since early January 2025.
3. The offence of Violent Disorder arose from events on 18/7/2024 in the Harehills area of Leeds, which were reported throughout the country, following widespread public disorder.
4. On that date social care workers were attempting to take some children deemed to be a risk into care. They had attended a house in Harehills in order to do so. They were prevented from doing so and sought the assistance of the police. This led to a large crowd gathering and this crowd turned violent, attacking the police and their vehicles. The crowd then set about damaging other property and vehicles in Harehills. That included a First Bus that was damaged, set on fire and burnt out. That bus helped people in your community, where you lived. You, your family, your friends may well have used such a bus to get to school or college or work.
5. The overall financial costs of the damage, the cleaning up operation and the wider impact on the community, the community where you live with your family and friends has been estimated at over £800,000.
6. There is no evidence to suggest that you were part of the initial crowd that gathered or that you were involved in the trouble at the beginning. Indeed you told the Youth Justice officer

that you simply joined in at a later stage just because other people were behaving in that way too.

7. However the evidence and footage shows that you did join in as follows;
 - i) You were part of the group that stopped the bus from driving away from the trouble that was occurring, you actually gave the bus driver two fingers and then along with others attempted to “rock” the bus from side to side whilst it was stationary, leading to the driver abandoning his vehicle;
 - ii) You were then part of a group that stopped a van and items were taken from the van, piled up in the middle of the road and set alight. The footage shows you helping to lift a fridge and then part of a sofa onto the fire;
 - iii) When police officers attempted to tackle the fire you were seen to be throwing missiles at the officers and you continued to do so as they retreated to their police vehicles;
 - iv) You then returned to the bus that had been damaged by this stage and you kicked out at the windscreen, causing further damage, and the engine compartment.
8. In sentencing you I have a PSR , dated 5/2/2025. You came to this country with your family in May 2023 and you and them have found it difficult to settle. I am told you mother and sisters have returned to Romania and your father intends to do so after this Court hearing, leaving you in the care of your adult brother. Youth Justice service see him as a good and positive influence on you.
9. The pre sentence report suggests a medium likelihood of committing further offences in the next 2 years but this appears to be based on the fact of the two offences in the three months between April and July 2024. Since then you have kept out of trouble and you are working well with the Youth Justice Service. I note you are doing better at school and you are due to take your GCSE examinations in May / June 2025.

10. In sentencing you I am required to have regard to the principles set out in the Definitive Guideline for Sentencing Children and Young Persons. Paragraph 4.1 of the Guideline sets out six matters that I must have regard to. They are that the principal aim of the youth justice system is to prevent re-offending / the welfare of the child, in other words what is best for him / your age / the seriousness of the offence / the likelihood of further offences being committed by you and the extent of any harm likely to arise from any further offending.
11. Paragraph 4.2 then states that the first thing the Court should consider is the seriousness of the offence. I do so. In assessing culpability and harm this is a very serious incident of Violent Disorder that had a massive impact on the Harehills area of Leeds as well as causing significant financial loss to a number of parties. If you were an adult then the starting point would be an immediate custodial sentence in this case.
12. However you are not an adult, you were just 15 last July and you are still only 15. Paragraph 6.2 of the Guideline makes it clear that the starting point is to consider the sentence likely to be imposed on the date the offence was committed, when you were only just 15 years old.
13. The fact is if the Court were considering custody then you would be entitled to substantial discounts because of your age and the fact you pleaded Guilty at the first hearing.
14. Whilst a custodial sentence is possible in the case of a 15 year old I must also have regard to paragraphs 6.19 and 6.20 of the Guidelines which states as follows
- “A Referral order is the mandatory sentence in the youth court for most children and young people who have committed an offence for the first time and have pleaded guilty to an imprisonable offence”.
- I interpret committed an offence to mean convicted of an offence for the first time. In other words that is the sentence I am required to impose under this provision unless any of the exceptions apply and they do not.

Paragraph 6.20 goes on to state that “ A discretionary Referral Order can also be imposed for any offence where there has been a plea of guilty, regardless of previous offending behaviour.”. I mention this provision because I am conscious that although SN has no previous convictions he does have a Caution for another offence of violence, committed in April 2024.

15. The appropriate sentence in my judgement is a Referral Order. It could be up to 12 months.

I am conscious that I made a longer Referral Order in respect of a younger youth today.

However I very much take into account your particular circumstances, that you do not have settled status in this country, and so you are likely to return to Romania when free to do so .

A 6 month order will take you into the summer, allow you to complete your education and examinations whilst living with your brother and you will then be free to return to Romania.

16. Given your parents either have or are going to return to Romania it is not realistic or practicable to make any compensation order that would have to be paid by them. For the same reason I do not impose any costs I must however order them to pay a Surcharge, which is £26 and will be paid within 28 days.