

THE KING -v- JORDAN WILKES

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Jordan Wilkes, you are 29 and fall to be sentenced for two offences both committed on 20 August 2024; attempted murder and having an offensive weapon.
2. Not long after 5pm on 20 August 2024, A, aged 9, was playing with her friend, B, on an internal set of communal stairs in a block of flats at Glider Close, in Christchurch. A short distance from the bottom of those stairs was the front door to where JW lived with his mother. He came out and moved quickly to where the girls were, towards the bottom of the stairs. He either had in his hand or took from his pocket a folding pocketknife with a blade extended. He grabbed A by the arm and then stabbed her three times in quick succession. She managed to get away from him, unaware that she was injured and ran up the stairs with B. They knocked on the door of another flat, whose occupants they knew, to get away from JW.
3. Once safe inside, A's injuries were discovered; a small stab wound near the jawline; a deep stab wound to the shoulder, not far from her neck; and another deep wound to her knee. She was given first aid and the emergency services were called.
4. The shoulder wound narrowly missed major blood vessels which, if cut, would have bled catastrophically and may well have resulted in death.

The risk of that happening was obvious. The wound to the knee was possibly caused as she adopted a defensive posture to protect herself from the continuing attack.

5. The smallest blade on the knife had caused all the wounds.

6. Once A got away from JW, he did not chase after her but returned to his flat and put the knife away in a bedside drawer.

7. A and, indeed, B showed great bravery that day and afterwards, exemplified by how they answered questions when interviewed by the police subsequently.

8. A went to hospital in a serious state; when the police arrived, she was slumped over a kitchen unit and bleeding heavily from her wounds. She was taken to Southampton General Hospital where her injuries were surgically cleaned, repaired and sutured. The shoulder wound probably tracked from nearer the neck towards the edge of the shoulder. They had been inflicted with at least, moderate force. A was discharged from hospital. However, whilst her physical injuries were, thankfully, not the most serious, it is very clear from a statement given by her mother in court that she has suffered serious psychological harm which is continuing. She is permanently and, obviously, scarred. Of course, the impact on her family has been very significant. B has been considerably affected by what she saw happen to her friend. They are both lucky to have such loving families.

9. JW was arrested in his flat and told the police where the knife was to be found. His phone was taken from him and its contents then examined. There were a number of files of interest in the download which indicated he had accessed articles, videos, documentaries and podcasts which related to murder and child-killing in the months leading up to the offences. Most recently, less than 24 hours beforehand, he accessed a video relating to a court case of a 14-year-old boy who stabbed a 13-year-old girl to death.

10. Also found in the search was a clump of A's hair which had been put in the bin, which he had most likely pulled out during the attack.

11. When JW was interviewed, he largely made no comment to questions he was asked.

12. Expert psychiatric opinion on JW has been provided by Dr John Sandford in a number of reports. A psychological assessment has been made by Dr Kirsty Moses. JW is of low intelligence with significant speech and language delay and some features of autism spectrum disorder. He has significant difficulties with understanding, reasoning and processing verbal information. He went to a school for children with special educational needs aged 5 or 6. He suffers with epilepsy. He left school at 15 and was home-schooled for another year. He was bullied throughout school and in his life. His mother has provided an email describing the repeated and prolonged bullying for most of his life. He was targeted, by reason of his problems. There was knocking at the door and ringing the doorbell.

13. The Pre-Sentence Report states that JW does not offer any explanation for his actions other than to say it was wrong and he should not have had a knife. He said he would view material about children being killed when he was bored or depressed although he found it hard to watch. He lived with his mother, having some limited contact with his father; his parents separated when he was a young child. He presents as an isolated individual with very limited social contact. His previous conviction and these offences show his inability to retain control when he loses his temper. Assessment using an established scale suggests he is at low risk of reoffending within the next two years. Including serious offending. However, the Probation Officer views that as an underestimate. He is assessed by her as posing a high risk of harm to children, especially if bullied or ridiculed. The risk to the public is medium. He has responded well to previous supervision.

14. JW you are a dangerous offender. There is a significant risk of you causing serious harm in the future by committing a specified offence. That conclusion is based upon the facts of these offences, the background to them, the contents of all the reports and your previous conviction. That was an assault occasioning actual bodily harm committed in 2016, when you were 20 and when an 8-year-old boy was approached by you; you punched him on the knee, grabbed and threw him off a bin onto the ground, before banging him against a wall and kicking him. You tripped him up when he tried to run away. You stamped on his face and were only stopped when dragged off by an adult. The boy was knocked unconscious for a short period.

15. I must then decide if a life sentence is justified. I must consider:
(a) the seriousness of the offences;
(b) previous convictions;

- (c) the level of danger you represent to the public and for how long;
- (d) the available alternative sentences.

16. Whilst this was a very serious offence, with an attempt to kill a 9-year-old child, it was short-lived and not premeditated. You lost your temper and the opportunity arose for you to attack the victim. You had an interest in child killings and decided to try to carry it out yourself. The injuries caused were not as serious as they could have been. The incident was short-lived and you did not persist by going after either child. The smallest of the three blades in the small pocket-knife caused the injuries.
17. The previous conviction shows a propensity to using violence to a child but, again, the injuries suffered did not amount to serious harm and no weapon was used..
18. The danger to children is high and impossible to measure in terms of length. You have responded to supervision before; you are only 29 but you have significant cognitive difficulties.
19. There are alternative sentences available; an extended determinate sentence or a very long determinate sentence.
20. I have concluded that a life sentence is not justified. I am sure that a determinate sentence does not sufficiently address your dangerousness. There will be an extended sentence of imprisonment.

21. I apply the Definitive Guideline on sentencing for attempted murder. The categorisation of the case is A2; Culpability A for the attempted murder of a child and Harm 2 as serious psychological harm resulted, as set out in the Victim Personal Statement from her mother. The starting point is 30 years imprisonment with a sentencing range from 25 up to 35 years. The sentence is increased by your previous conviction in 2016. The sentence is reduced by your mental disorder and your remorse, although the depth of that is far from clear.
22. You will serve at least two-thirds of the determinate sentence. After that, the Parole Board will consider what continuing risk you pose to the public. You may not be released until you have served the full term. Whenever you are released, you will be subject to licence conditions for any unserved part of the custodial term plus a further five years, during which you may be recalled if necessary.
23. The total sentence will be an extended determinate sentence of 35 years made up as follows. On Count 1, an extended determinate sentence of 35 years, being a custodial term of 30 years plus and extension period of 5 years. On Count 3, a concurrent sentence of 2 years imprisonment. The surcharge applies and I direct that the order be drawn up in the appropriate amount.
24. The conduct of two very brave little girls and their families during the court proceedings has been quite remarkable in light of the ordeal that they have been through. They all deserve the recognition of the courts and the wider public. There are clearly difficult times ahead for all those affected by this shocking crime. I hope that things will improve and that A, in particular, will, in time, come to terms with it.

[Ends]