



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

SHEFFIELD CROWN COURT

**THE KING
v
BRANDON ANTHONY HODSON**

Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Fordham

Wednesday, 2nd April 2025

1. Brandon Hodson, you can remain sitting down for now. You pleaded guilty on the first day of trial to two counts. Each is a count of being concerned in supplying Class A drugs between 1 April 2023 and 3 March 2024. One count relates to crack cocaine. The other relates to heroin. I have the basis of plea, the two sentencing notes and the letters which were uploaded. I have listened to the submissions made here in open court. The two offences relate to the supply of drugs of the same class, and arise out of the same facts. The case calls for concurrent sentences, but with a total sentence which reflects all the offending behaviour and is just and proportionate.
2. There will be a 10% reduction in sentence for your guilty pleas. The statutory surcharge applies and will be ordered at the conclusion of the proceeds of crime proceedings. That will also be when orders can be made for forfeiture and destruction of those items seized by the police. I have set a timetable.
3. Under the drug offences definitive guideline, I first need to determine your culpability demonstrated by your offending. The prosecution have set out a basis for identifying yours as a Leading Role. On that, I agree in the end with your advocate. Yours was a Significant Role. You were a local manager and enforcer. You were managing a drug-dealing “operation”. It was an operation “within” a chain. Your expectation was of “significant” financial advantage. You knew the scale of the operation. You were in charge of a group of young men. You were the “Big Man” and “Big B”. You used the mobile phone SIM which was a dedicated drug line. From that SIM, bulk messages were sent. They advertised the supply of crack cocaine and heroin.
4. Some broadcast messages used the word “raw”, but that indicates purity and not necessarily further cutting, down a chain. One exchange of messages to another of your phones spoke of a “key” (kilo) in “halfs” (half-ounces). Based on the evidence as a whole, I do not find you were organising “buying and selling” on a “commercial scale”. Nor expecting “substantial” financial advantage. Nor substantial “links” or “influence” on others “in a chain”. I have considered the evidence as a whole. I have considered the focused picture of drug dealing from the SIM in a 9-week period up to the evidence of you buying a SIM top-up on 3 March 2024. I have also considered the nature of the items which were seized by the police. I have not, at this stage, relied on the particular ways in which you

involved Brian Burton and his flat in your drug dealing activity. I have put those to one side for now.

5. I now need to determine the harm caused. On that, I cannot agree with your advocate that your offending should be categorised as “Category 3” harm. Yours is a “Category 2” case. Yes, it involved “selling directly to users”. But selling directly to users means there is “at least” Category 3 harm. In this particular case, properly considering and reflecting the quantity of drugs calls for Category 2; not an adjustment within Category 3. The detailed picture of drug dealing in the 9-week period at the start of 2024 involved an identifiable total of 364.8g of crack cocaine and 456g heroin. That was a proper and reliable measure using an algorithm. I have looked, with appropriate caution, at the overall period covered by the charges. I have considered the evidence as a whole. I am sure that the quantities of drugs in this case are greater than the indicative 1kg for “Category 2” harm. I am sure of that, in relation to the crack cocaine. I am also sure of that in relation to the heroin.
6. That means the category starting-point for sentence is 8 years imprisonment, with a category range of 6½ years to 10 years.
7. Having taken that starting-point, I have to consider upward adjustment and downward adjustment. In considering upward adjustment, I must identify a total sentence which reflects all the offending behaviour, given that I am imposing concurrent sentences. Also, there are two aggravating factors which increase the seriousness of your offending. First, you exploited a vulnerable” person (Brian Burton) to assist in your drug-related activity. Secondly, you exercised control over the home of another person (Brian Burton) for your drug-related activity. These two factors reflect a further degree of criminality.
8. There is no double-counting. At the stage of determining your culpability (Significant Role), I did not rely on the particular ways you involved Brian Burton and his flat in your drug dealing activity (ie. “by pressure” or “by intimidation”). Key points are that he was a vulnerable person being exploited and you exercised control over his home. You used Brian Burton and his flat in supplying drugs. Brian Burton was vulnerable. He was a recovering drug addict, taking a daily dose of methadone to help manage his recovery, and collecting his regular prescriptions from a pharmacy. You approached him outside the pharmacy. It was apparent to you that he was a drug user. You realised you could take advantage of that. And that is what you did. You and two others put him in the back of a van and took him to his flat. You then set up inside his flat, using it to prepare and package drugs. You used a camping stove there to produce crack cocaine. You stored items there. You threatened and intimidated Brian Burton. You used him to drive you around in a BMW, to various locations while you were delivering drugs. This went on for around six months between April and November 2023.
9. In considering downward adjustment, I have thought about everything that has been said and written about you. The main factor for a downward adjustment is that you have no previous convictions. You are aged 25 and were aged 23-24 at the time of the offences. You were diagnosed as a child with ADHD (a condition interfering with functioning or development) and dyslexia (difficulties with

reading, writing and spelling). I have information about your time at school and after leaving school, about your relationships and family, and the children in your life. I have information about your difficult experience so far of prison, while on remand awaiting trial, including your anti-depressant medication; but also your first positive steps and roles taken in a prison environment.

10. Having regard to all of the features of the case, and as a total sentence which reflects all the offending behaviour, the appropriate figure for sentence following a contested trial, which is shortest term commensurate with the seriousness of your offending, would on each count be 9 years imprisonment (108 months), to be served concurrently. I am going to assess the 10% reduction for your guilty pleas as a reduction of 1 year (12 months). That means a sentence of 8 years imprisonment, on each count, to be served concurrently. I am satisfied that this sentence is just and proportionate to your offending. The advocates agree that the time already spent in prison on remand is 386 days. If this proves incorrect, it can be dealt with administratively. I am making a restraining order because it is necessary and proportionate to protect a person (Brian Burton) from conduct causing alarm or distress or a fear of violence.
11. Brandon Hodson, stand up please. Your sentence is 8 years imprisonment. The practical effect is this. The 386 days you have spent in prison on remand in custody will automatically count towards your sentence. You will be released no later than half-way through the sentence, namely after serving 4 years. When you are released, the rest of the sentence will be served on licence in the community. When that happens, you must comply with all the licence conditions. If you do not comply, you risk being recalled to prison to serve the remainder of the term in custody.
12. You are also now subject to a restraining order. That order prohibits contact with Brian Burton directly or indirectly. This means you must have absolutely no contact with Brian Burton whatsoever. That includes anyone passing on messages from you. The restraining order continues until someone obtains a court order to bring it to an end. If you were to disobey that restraining order you would be committing a further criminal offence, punishable with up to five years imprisonment.