

R -v- Kirsty CARLESS

Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Choudhury

Stafford Crown Court - 31 July 2025

1. Kirsty Carless: You are now aged 33. You have been found guilty having an offensive weapon in a public place (Count 1), the murder of Louis Price (Count 2), and ABH (Count 4). I must now sentence you for those offences. It will take me a few minutes to explain the sentence. You may sit down.
2. Louis Price was only 31 years old on Christmas Day last year when you killed him. Louis was your former partner with whom you had been in a relationship on and off since 2021. You had a child with Louis, named Beau who was just 2 years old. You have four children from an earlier relationship.
3. The relationship between you and Louis was volatile with regular arguments, abuse and violence between you. The arguments were often triggered by your feelings of jealousy over Louis seeing or contacting other women.
4. On 11 November 2024, there was an argument that started when you felt that Louis had not defended you in a conversation he was having with a friend. You lost your temper and started to attack Louis. You punched him in the head and threw a candle holder at his back as he was trying to gather his belongings and leave. You also threw his clothes in the bin and poured bleach over them. You pleaded guilty to the criminal damage of Louis's clothes (and that matter has been committed to this Court for sentence) but you maintained that you had not been the aggressor on that occasion even though Louis could be seen on BWV of police attending that your behaviour towards him had reduced him to tears. Your attack on Louis that day formed the basis of Count 4, ABH, of which the Jury have found you guilty.
5. The events of 11 November 2024 led to your arrest, and you were placed on conditional bail with restrictions on contacting Louis or attending his home.
6. A couple of weeks later, Louis confided to a friend that he thought something bad was going to happen to him. Sadly, for Louis, that premonition was to come true just a few weeks later on Christmas Day.
7. On Christmas Eve, you were out with friends. You were drinking heavily and taking cocaine. You had sexual relations with another man, Mr Jones, and made plans to stay the night at his home. Whilst there, at around 1.30am on Christmas morning, you were contacted by another friend, Hannah Wilkins. After a couple of innocuous video calls during which Louis was not mentioned, Hannah sent you a screenshot of a Tinder profile that had been posted by Louis. It seems that seeing this screenshot of Louis on a dating site triggered another jealous rage within you. You abruptly left Mr Jones's address and went home. Between about 02:15 and 02:44 you tried calling Louis no fewer than 26 times. You called a taxi to take you to Louis' house. You prepared yourself for what you were going to do by picking up the keys to Louis'

house which you kept at home and a kitchen knife, one of a set of knives that you owned and which had a distinctive grey and spotted handle. You tried to suggest that you picked up the knife at Louis' and that he was in the habit of borrowing things from you even though Louis was living with his parents at the time. The jury saw through that and were sure that you took the knife from your home with the intention of using it to cause injury and that you were guilty of Count 1.

8. When you got to Louis's address, you told the cab driver you would be back in a minute. A few seconds later he heard a male scream loudly. Of course, he was not to know that you had stabbed Louis. You had gone inside the house unannounced and went straight upstairs expecting to find Louis in bed with another woman. You took your shoes off outside his bedroom door no doubt intent on creeping up on him as quietly as possible. Finding no one in the bedroom you rushed downstairs.
9. Louis had been with friends in a caravan parked at the rear of the property. CCTV footage shows him emerging from the caravan and hesitantly stepping towards the house to see what the disturbance was. He was only in the house for about 6 seconds before he could be seen again running out of the conservatory and putting a hand to his chest. It is clear that in those 6 seconds you inflicted the fatal wound by stabbing him in the chest. The only sensible inference to be drawn is that you stabbed him on sight. The knife penetrated to a depth of 12 cm and in doing so pierced Louis's heart. As the pathology evidence indicated, from that moment he would have had no more than a couple of minutes at most before he collapsed. Louis ran off trying to escape further attack, but you were not done; you callously chased him round the garden wielding the knife. Louis managed to make it back indoors but soon collapsed dying on the floor. Seeing him as he lay dying, you made no attempt to help or call emergency services. You ran off, got back in the cab and went straight to your mother's house. The cab had been waiting for just under two minutes. That is all it took for you to take one life and destroy many others, including your own.
10. Once at your mother's home, you told your her and your stepfather that you had stabbed Louis in the chest and that he's on the floor dead. Your recollection at that point was crystal clear. It is only later, as you sought to try and explain what you had done that you concocted an account that involved partial amnesia. The truth is that you knew exactly what you had done and intended to do and you were just trying to cover it up by lying to the jury.
11. By your actions you have destroyed the life of a young man and that of his family. We have heard a powerful Victim Personal Statements from Louis' sister, Abbie Reidy, and from his parents Eleanor and Graham Price.
12. Abbie Reidy describes the shock of learning about her brother's murder and the pain of having to tell Louis' other children that they could not have their dad anymore. She describes Louis as the beating heart of the family and said that having to identify Louis' body was a terrible moment that has scarred her for life. She describes how the pain and devastation you caused would never leave them. Eleanor Price says that

no parent should have to bury their child, especially at such a young age, and knows that she will never get over the fact that her son took his last breath in their conservatory, something that she is reminded of every time she walks in there. She too describes Louis as the beating heart of her family; a funny beautiful man who, although no angel, was much loved and will be missed. Graham Price, describes how his world fell apart when he got the news that his son, his best friend and his fishing buddy was gone. Words cannot describe the devastation that you have caused him and his family. He says that what happened to Louis that night was an act of evil that took his life and which means that they will never get to see Louis find true happiness.

13. I pay tribute to the quietly dignified way in which Louis' family have sat through the trial, witnessing harrowing footage of the final moments of his life. There is no sentence that I can pass today that can undo that devastation or even begin to console the family for their loss.
14. I start with the principal offence which is that of murder under Count 2. There is only one sentence that the law allows to be passed for the offence of murder, and that is a mandatory sentence of imprisonment for life. I therefore sentence you to imprisonment for life.
15. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Schedule 21 to the *Sentencing Act 2020*, Parliament has stated that the starting point for the minimum term for anyone who takes a knife or other weapon to the scene of a murder intending to commit any offence or have it available to use as a weapon and used that knife or weapon in committing the murder is 25 years. Your conviction under Count 1 means that a knife was taken from your home to the scene for the purpose of causing injury. Moreover, the fact that you went on to use that very knife to murder Louis means that that minimum starting point of 25 years applies in your case.
16. Having chosen that starting point, I am required to take into account the aggravating and mitigating factors in your case.
17. The first of these is whether the offence of murder was premeditated or planned. Ms Heeley submits on your behalf that whilst there was some premeditation it cannot have been significant because the intent could only have formed once you had returned home from Mr Jones' house. I do not accept that submission. There was undoubtedly a degree of premeditation in that the knife was taken from your home as were the keys to gain entry to Louis' home. Even if the intention was only formed once you returned home and not whilst still at Mr Jones' house, that degree of planning or premeditation was still significant, although not such as to warrant more than a modest uplift from the starting point.
18. I do not find that there was any aggravation of the offence by reason of additional suffering inflicted before death. The incident was mercifully short-lived. Whilst it would have been a terrifying few seconds for Louis, there was no additional suffering inflicted on him over and above that which would exist in the case of any such knife

attack. The pathology evidence is such that Louis would have lost consciousness fairly rapidly after the stabbing and would not have had any prolonged realisation that he was going to die.

19. Nor do I consider that Louis was vulnerable within the meaning of the statute. He was not, for example, asleep or heavily intoxicated at the time of the attack and nor was he under any mental or physical incapacity. There is a history of violence between you prior to the murder, but, even having regard to the ABH on 11 November 2024 for which you have also been convicted, I do not regard that history as being so one-sided as to amount to an aggravating factor in this offence.
20. Other aggravating features which are accepted are that Louis was at home when he was attacked, that you were under the influence of drugs at the time and that you were on bail at the time for offences against Louis. You do have previous convictions for violence but these are from when you were still a child and I do not treat them as aggravating.
21. Turning then to the mitigating features, the first of these is whether there was an absence of intention to kill. Ms Heeley submits that I cannot be sure that there was an intention to kill. In my judgment, the intention to kill was plain. There was premeditation as already discussed. Moreover, you stabbed Louis in the chest, a highly vulnerable part of the body. The fact that the knife did not penetrate the full length of the blade does not mean that you did not intend to kill: Louis may simply have been trying to move away. Having stabbed him, you did not stop there but chased him around the garden brandishing the knife, clearly intent on inflicting further wounds. The only reason that you did not or did not need to stab him again was that Louis collapsed on the floor within seconds of your first stab. You then fled, leaving him to die. I am satisfied so that I am sure that at that moment it was your intention to kill Louis.
22. You have shown no remorse for what you did, instead suggesting falsely that you cannot remember your actions.
23. I have taken into account your mental health issues, namely the mild depression, your diagnosed ADHD and the PTSD, and the relevant sentencing guidelines on sentencing those with mental health conditions. I note that by the time of the incident, you had not taken medication for your ADHD for some weeks, and whilst there were some signs of PTSD before this offending it is clear from the jury's verdict that this would not have substantially impaired your ability to exercise self-control. There was no evidence that any of your conditions would have impaired your ability to exercise appropriate judgment or to make rational choices. I note also that Dr Kennedy's diagnosis of PTSD was based entirely on your account of your relationship with Louis. As Dr Kennedy stated, the truthfulness (or otherwise) of that account was of singular importance in this context. You have been untruthful about many matters, including where you got the knife and your recollection of the incident. I have no doubt that your account to Dr Kennedy was, at least in part, self-serving and/or

untruthful. I therefore attach little weight to the PTSD in the circumstances of this case. In these circumstances, your mental health conditions, such as they are, do not afford you any significant mitigation and nor do they reduce your culpability.

24. I have taken into account your personal mitigation, including your difficult upbringing and of course the fact that you are the mother of five children (one of whom is still very young) who will now have to see you in custody as they grow up. This latter feature is significant, albeit the pain of separation from your children is down to your own actions. I also take into account that, although not strictly of good character, your life was relatively free of police involvement prior to your relationship with Louis. These matters warrant a modest downwards adjustment.
25. Taking all of these factors into account, it is my view that the various features on either side of the scale balance each other out such that no adjustment from the starting point is required.
26. The sentence for Count 1, had it stood on its own, would have been in the region of 6 months' custody as it is a category 2A offence within the meaning of the relevant guidelines. However, the fact that a knife was taken to the scene is already accounted for by the starting point for the minimum term under Count 2 and no further uplift from the starting point is warranted.
27. The same applies for the sentence under Count 4, which would fall into Cat 3B of the relevant guidelines giving rise to a starting point of a High-level Community Order with a range from Low-level community order up to 36 weeks. In my judgment it would not be appropriate to adjust the minimum term in accordance with s.322(2) of the *Sentencing Act 2020* any further by reference to the sentence that would be imposed on Count 4. In coming to this view, I have had regard to the guidelines on totality. I therefore impose no separate penalty for either Count 1 or Count 4.
28. Taking account of all of the above, the appropriate minimum term in my judgment is therefore 25 years.

Kirsty Carless, Please Stand.

29. I sentence you for Count 2, the murder of Louis Price, to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 25 years. From this must be deducted the 215 days you have spent on remand in custody for these offences. The minimum term is accordingly 25 years less 215 days. The victim surcharge must also be paid. There is no separate penalty imposed on Counts 1 and 4. There is also no separate penalty for the criminal damage matter to which you pleaded guilty and which was committed to this Court for sentence.
30. It is important to emphasise, so that you and the public can understand the position, that the minimum term is just that – a minimum period which cannot be reduced in any way. After it is served, there is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time thereafter. It is then only if the Parole Board decides you are fit to be released that you will be released. Moreover, if, and when, you are released

you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, and may therefore be recalled to continue your life sentence. It is in these ways that a life sentence protects the public for the future.