

John Shannon

Sentencing Remarks – 14 January 2026

St Alban's Crown Court

1. Mr Shannon, today I sentence you in respect of the 6 offences to which the jury returned guilty verdicts at the conclusion of your trial on 5th September 2025 – these are:
 - 2 counts of sexual activity with a child contrary to s.9(1) Sexual Offences Act 2003
 - 2 counts of penetrative sexual activity with a child contrary to ss.9(1) and (2) Sexual Offences Act 2003
 - Assault by penetration contrary to s.2 Sexual Offences Act 2003; and
 - Sexual assault contrary to s.3 Sexual Offences Act 2003.
2. The victims have the benefit of lifelong anonymity pursuant to the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, meaning that no matter likely to lead members of the public to identify the identity of either victim should be published or otherwise made known outside of this court.

Background

3. These counts relate to the sexual assaults you committed in the early hours of 9 April 2022. Victim A and Victim B, being 14 and 15 years old at the time and during their school Easter holidays, were enjoying a sleepover at the home of a mutual friend. The girls were in what should have been a safe contained environment – laughing, joking and uploading tik tok videos – a standard and unremarkable set-up for a teenage sleepover. A set up where they, and everyone else, expected them to be safe. A place where they were entitled to be safe.
4. You returned to this house, belonging to one of your drinking friends, after a night at the pub and continued your evening into the early hours in the living room. The girls, who were ready for bed in the adjoining play room, decided to join you, and chatted with you - continuing after your drinking companions had called it a night, with one sleeping in the playroom, leaving the girls nowhere to sleep. You were the one remaining adult, you were a trusted family friend, and you were fully aware that the girls were 14 and 15 years of age.
5. Around 4.30am you went to the nearby 24-hour garage with the 11-year-old son of the family, returning with £269 of food, and drink – particularly 8 pints of stella, 8 bottles of corona, a bottle of rum and a bottle of red berry vodka. Following your return on all accounts the 2 victims drank a significant amount of the flavoured vodka you had bought whilst you drank the beer and the rum. You were the responsible adult in this setting, and your provision of this alcohol impaired their ability to protect themselves against you.
6. Subsequently, after consuming this alcohol, you went into the back garden to smoke. Victim A accompanied you. You asked her to sit on your lap, which she agreed to. You then started to kiss her, grab her breast, and rubbed her leg and vaginal area over her clothes, with your hands going under her clothing. Around the side of the house, you pulled down her pyjama bottoms and underwear, pulled down your own trousers, you were erect and proceeded to have sexual intercourse with her. She told you to stop as it hurt and she did not want to have sex, but after stopping briefly, you continued.

7. After returning inside and drinking further, you asked Victim A to accompany you to the downstairs bathroom. Despite her saying that it had hurt previously and she didn't want to have sex again, you pulled her onto your erect penis and had sex with her.
8. You returned to the lounge and sat on a sofa between the two victims. You began playing with Victim B's vest top, groped her left breast through her top, grabbed her thigh and put your hands into her underwear and fingered her. She became panicked and stressed, and you stopped, left the room, and went upstairs to sleep in an 11-year-old's bed.
9. We heard the victim impact statements of each Victim, which bravely told of the significant and ongoing impact of your offending on each of their lives.
10. Victim A's statement told of flashbacks, the effect of your offending on her intimate and family relationships, different things triggering her, and that night of 9th April 2022; "being a constant in her mind forever".
11. Victim B's statement told how you "destroyed her mental wellbeing and you have been in her mind every day"; she attributes your actions that night to a suicide attempt she made at the age of 16; she told poignantly of her aggressive self-harm to manage the severe physical and mental pain. She told of her daily struggles, and: "He's left a mark I'm afraid will never heal".

Your circumstances

12. You are 54 years old. You have 5 previous convictions for 8 offences committed between 1999 and 2019. None are relevant to the matters for which I sentence you today.

Sentencing guidelines

Counts 3 and 4

13. I take Counts 3 as the index offence – a count of penetrative sexual activity with a 14-year-old child. This count covers you having sexual intercourse with Victim A in the garden of her friend's property. Using the guideline for sexual activity with a child:
 - a. In terms of harm, this falls in category 1 due to vaginal penetration.
 - b. In terms of culpability, this falls in Culpability A due to the use of alcohol to facilitate the offence, including your failure to consider the effect of alcohol on the self-protective capabilities of these girls; I also take account of the disparity in age between yourself and the victims.
 - c. A category A1 offence has a Starting Point of 5 years' custody, with a range of 4 to 10 years' custody.
 - d. The same categorisation applies to Count 4.

Counts 1 and 2

14. Counts 1 and 2 cover the two offences of sexual activity with a 14-year-old child. These cover your touching the breast and vaginal areas of Victim A whilst you were sitting in the garden. Using the same guideline as for Counts 3 and 4:
 - a. In terms of harm, this is category 2 due to the touching of genitalia and the breasts of the victim.
 - b. In terms of culpability, this is again category A due to the use of alcohol to facilitate the offence, and the significant disparity in age.

- c. A category A2 offence has a Starting Point of 3 years' custody with a range from 2 to 6 years' custody

Count 5

- 15. Count 5 is penetrative sexual activity with a child, covering the penetration of the vagina of Victim B with your fingers. Using the relevant guideline for s.2 offences:
 - a. In terms of harm, I place this at the top of category 3,
 - b. In terms of culpability, this is again category A due to the use of alcohol to facilitate the offence,
 - c. A category A3 offence has a Starting Point of 4 years' custody, with a range from 2 to 6 years' custody.

Count 6

- 16. Count 6 is sexual activity with a child, covering you intentionally touching the breasts of Victim B. Using the s.9 sentencing guideline:
 - a. Harm is category 3 due to the touching occurring over the clothing
 - b. Culpability again is category A.
 - c. A category A3 offence has a Starting Point of 26 weeks, and a range of a community order to 1 years' custody.

Aggravating factors

- 17. The aggravating factors are common to each of the above offences, and I take care not to double count. I put weight by each victim impact statement and consider this offending aggravated because Victim A and Victim B each experienced significant psychological harm in what should have been a safe and protected space during the night.

Mitigating factors

- 18. In terms of mitigating factors, I have carefully considered the psychiatric report your legal team provided. You have a diagnosis of ADHD, and have likely been intermittently dependent on alcohol since the age of 12 or 13. More recently, you have suffered from fluctuating levels of depression, anxiety and paranoid ideation, more likely than not fuelled by alcohol dependency. Treatment with anti-psychotic medication has benefitted you, and I note that your longer-term prognosis will depend primarily on whether you can continue to abstain from alcohol. I note the challenges that these disorders will cause you in the custodial environment and ask that the psychiatric report is shared with the relevant prison authority.
- 19. I attach limited mitigation to your mental health difficulties, but do not find that these disorders are linked to the commission of your offending, and so consequently they do not reduce your culpability.
- 20. I have carefully considered the character statements that you provided from family members. These show the positive sides to your character, and your commitment to your family and instances where you have assisted those in need. I attach some limited weight to this mitigation. However, your focus has remained throughout on the impact on you and your family of your offending, rather than taking any responsibility or showing any insight

into the harm caused to your victims. Given the seriousness of the offences for which you are being sentenced, your lack of acknowledgement of the offending, or any discernible remorse on your part, this limits the extent to which mitigation can be available.

Dangerousness

21. Your offending includes Schedule 18 offences, so I am required to consider the issue of dangerousness – in this context this means whether there is a significant risk of you committing further specified offences and, if so, whether there is a significant risk of your causing serious harm to the public thereby.
22. I have carefully considered the pre-sentence report, and concur with its conclusions that the risk you pose is medium, and does not meet the threshold that would be required for such a finding. This is consistent with the assessment in Dr Kooyman's psychiatric report. I am satisfied that you do not present such an ongoing significant risk to the public of serious harm by the commission of further specified offences to make such a finding, and, in your case, a standard determinate sentence is appropriate.

Imposition guidelines

23. Considering the imposition guidelines, your offending inevitably passes the custodial threshold. It is so serious that only a sentence of immediate custody can be justified.

Totality

24. Having regard to totality, for sentencing purposes concurrent sentences are appropriate in respect of the 6 offences – the offending occurred in the course of a single night, in a single location, within a short period of time, arising out of the same facts, and comprised offending of a similar nature.
25. Being mindful that the notional sentence on any single one of these offences would not adequately reflect the overall offending, I have applied some upward adjustment to the index offence to ensure the overall sentence is just and appropriate.

Custodial sentence

26. Mr Shannon, would you stand. I need to determine what is the least sentence I can pass to mark the totality of your offending.

For the lead offence of Count 3 – penetrative sexual activity with a child contrary to s.9 Sexual Offences Act 2003 – a sentence of 8.5 years' custody

For Count 1 - sexual activity with a child contrary to s.9 Sexual Offences Act 2003 – a sentence of 3 years custody to run concurrently to the index offence

For Count 2 – sexual activity with a child contrary to s.9 Sexual Offences Act 2003 – a sentence of 3 years custody to run concurrently to the index offence

For Count 4 – penetrative sexual activity with a child contrary to s.9 Sexual Offences Act 2003 – a sentence of 6 years' custody to run concurrently to the index offence

For Count 5 – assault by penetration contrary to s.2 of the Sexual Offences Act – a sentence of 4 years' custody to run concurrently to the index offence

For Count 6 – sexual assault – a sentence of 8 months’ custody to run concurrently to the index offence

27. Mr Shannon, I have imposed a total sentence of 8.5 years’ custody. You will serve up to two-thirds 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 offences, or you will be liable to be recalled, and you may then serve the rest of your sentence in custody.
28. I am not making an order for costs. If the statutory surcharge is applicable, this should be drawn up in the usual manner.

Notification requirements

29. I certify that you have been convicted of a sexual offence 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.

Restraining order

30. In order to protect each of Victim A and Victim B from fear of violence or harassment you will be subject to a restraining order, prohibiting contact with either victim directly or indirectly. I am satisfied of the necessity for such an order. This will remain in place until further order.
31. This means that you must have absolutely no contact with either victim, and must not attempt to contact them, or instruct anyone else to do so on your behalf.
32. I must warn you that the court takes orders of this nature extremely seriously, and were you to disobey this order, even after a significant period of time, you would be committing a further offence, punishable with up to 5 years’ imprisonment.

Sexual harm prevention order

33. Finally, the prosecution have sought a sexual harm prevention order. I am satisfied that you pose a risk of sexual harm to female adults and children. There is a risk, identified in the pre-sentence report, of you committing a further sexual offence. The lack of any explanation for, or acknowledgement of, your behaviour suggests you pose such a risk. The order is necessary to protect members of the public, women and children from sexual harm by you in the future.
34. The sexual harm prevention order I am making will remain in place from today until further order. These prohibitions and requirements are a proportionate response to the risk that you pose. Unless and until the court orders otherwise, you are prohibited from:
 1. Having any contact with any female child under the age of 18 years, except:
 - a. With the consent or in the presence of that child’s parent or guardian AND
 - b. The parent or guardian has full disclosure of your conviction; AND
 - c. Contact is approved by Social Services in the area in which the child resides; OR you obtain written permission from the Public Protection Unit,AND this is save for any inadvertent or unavoidable contact.

2. Prohibited from entering any residential property where female children under 18 are present unless you obtain prior written permission from your Public Protection Officer; and
3. Prohibited from supplying any child under 18 with alcohol.

Recorder Caroline Overton

Crown Court at St Albans

14 January 2026