

**DERBY CROWN COURT**

**11 FEBRUARY 2026**

**THE KING**

**V**

**ANNA PODEDWORNA**

**SENTENCING REMARKS OF MRS JUSTICE HEATHER WILLIAMS DBE**

*Anna Podedworna, you may remain seated until I tell you to stand up.*

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Anna Podedworna you murdered your partner Izabela Zablocka in late August 2010 at the house where you both lived at 113 Princes Street, Derby. You tried to conceal this by cutting her body in half and burying her remains in the rear garden of that address. In the months and years that followed, you lied and lied again about what had happened to her. Your crimes and Izabela's gruesome fate only came to light in 2025.
2. On 10 February 2026, the jury convicted you, on Count 1, of the murder of Izabela Zablocka. They also convicted you of two offences relating to your subsequent cover-up: preventing a lawful burial of her body

(Count 2) and perverting the course of public justice (Count 3). Anna Podedworna, I must now sentence you for these offences.

3. I have had the benefit of hearing from Clive Stockwell KC, assisted by Emma Coverley, on your behalf, and from Gordon Aspden KC assisted by Katrina Wilson for the Prosecution. I take account of everything that has been said.
4. It is clear from the evidence given during this trial that Izabela Zablocka was a loving and much loved family member. She enjoyed a close bond with her mother, her grand-mother and, in particular, with her daughter, Katarzyna Zablocka. After she moved to England in 2009 she stayed in regular telephone contact with her family members back in Poland. Izabela did not call her daughter, as Katarzyna had expected, on 4 September 2010, the day of her tenth birthday. Izabela was unable to do so because she was no longer alive.
5. Today Ms Wilson has read the very moving Victim Personal Statement made by Katarzyna Zablocka. As a result of your violent, manipulative and cruel actions, Katarzyna grew up not knowing what had happened to her beloved mother who had suddenly vanished from her life without any trace or explanation. As Katarzyna vividly describes in her statement, this left a very deep wound in her psyche that she has endured to this day. For her, the worst part was not understanding why her mother had left her. During the trial, we also heard evidence from Bozena Kopczynska, Izabela's mother. She was also deeply affected by Izabela's disappearance, remembering vividly the last telephone

conversation she had with her daughter, as it turned out, shortly before her death.

6. Had it not been for the steadfast persistence of Bozena and Katarzyna who did not give up hope of uncovering what had happened to Izabela, it is likely that your crimes would have remain undetected. I pay tribute to their tireless dedication. I also commend the dignity and restraint with which they gave their evidence during this trial in what must have been very harrowing circumstances for them. It is right to recognise as well, the valuable support and assistance they received from Polish based organisations who help the families of missing people and are run by volunteers, in particular “Missing For Years”.
7. Anna Podedworna, no punishment that this court can impose could ever put right the loss and the pain that you have caused. The period of imprisonment you must serve does not reflect the value of the life that you took away and does not attempt to do so.

### **THE FACTS**

8. I set out my conclusions upon the evidence that was heard at your trial. I sentence you only on the basis of the facts of which I am sure. If I am not sure of something, I will give you the benefit of the doubt, as the law requires.
9. Your date of birth is 5 November 1985 and you are now 40 years old. You were born and brought up in Poland. You knew Izabela Zablocka from childhood. Izabela was married at the time she gave birth to

Katarzyna, but after she had separated from her husband, you began a relationship with her. You lived together in a flat in Poland and Katarzyna lived with you at weekends. In 2009 you and Izabela came to England in the hope of obtaining employment. The two of you had discussed Izabela having a gender reassignment operation but there was insufficient money to pay for this. Izabela presented as a man and you preferred to be in relationships with men.

10. After living in London for a few months, you and Izabela moved to Derby and you became the tenant of a house at 113 Princes Street. You worked at a turkey processing plant then known as Cranberry Foods. You were a hard worker and after initially working on an agency basis you were made a permanent employee. Izabela also worked at Cranberry Foods but on a more sporadic basis. This was a source of frustration to you, as was the level of Izabela's alcohol consumption, which you believed the two of you could ill-afford. In these circumstances the prospect of Izabela undergoing a gender reassignment operation faded into the background and I am quite satisfied from listening to your evidence that you grew increasingly angry with and bitter towards Izabela who you felt was too reliant upon you and was not keeping up her side of the bargain.

11. The relationship between the two of you involved frequent heated arguments and on occasions, pushing and shoving. I do not doubt that you could become violent when you were angry. I am sure that Katarzyna was telling the truth when she described an argument in Poland in 2008 during which you pushed Katarzyna's great-grandmother to the ground and you pursued Izabela out of the flat

holding a large knife used for cutting meat, albeit you did not injure her on that occasion.

12. I reject your account of an alleged incident two or three weeks before you killed Izabela when you said she tried to strangle you. You told no-one about this until after you were charged with murder many years later, although you were in regular contact with family and friends; and your explanation for not reporting it to the police at the time lacked credibility, not least as police officers had been called to the address by Izabela Zablocka a few months earlier.

13. You attended work as usual on 28 August 2010. The next two days were your weekly rest days. After that you took two weeks holiday. You told the jury you could not remember what you had done during this period. I do not believe you. I am sure you had killed Izabela Zablocka by 31 August 2010 when this leave began. You used it to conceal the murder.

14. The precise circumstances in which you killed Izabela Zablocka are known only to you. Your subsequent dismemberment and concealment of her body meant that no specific cause of death could be established when her skeletal remains were examined 15 years later at her post-mortem. However, I am sure from all the evidence that Izabela Zablocka died a violent death at your hands. I accept that matters started with an argument between the two of you. I am sure that you killed her in anger and frustration rather than when you were under attack from her and that the account of acting in self-defence which you gave to the jury was untrue. You provided no evidence of any injuries that were suffered by you and you were unable to explain why

you had not photographed the marks to your neck if Izabela had been forcefully strangling you at the time, as you claimed. I attach no credibility to your account, given you lied repeatedly in the aftermath of the murder and you lied to this Court when you denied the 2008 knife incident that Katarzyna had described and in claiming you remembered so little of your conduct in the aftermath of Izabela's death. You had no adequate explanation for why you failed to call the police and the ambulance services. Your many subsequent internet searches frequently included terms such as "murderers" "sinners" and "prison" but never "self-defence". The way you set about brutalising Izabela's remains without any apparent remorse was consistent with you killing in anger the partner you had come to despise.

15. After removing some of her clothing, you cut Izabela Zablocka's body in two, slicing through her spine at the L4 vertebrae. In the opinion of Dr Stuart Hamilton, the Home Office forensic pathologist, this would have required severe force. You also inflicted cuts to her left hip bone and to her left lower leg bone. You trussed up her legs, taping them so they were bent up against her buttocks and you put the two halves of her body into black plastic bin liners, tied at the top. You managed to dig a pit in the back garden, which was nearly 1 metre deep. You dumped the black plastic bins liners containing Izabela Zablocka's remains, along with another bag containing some of her clothing, into this makeshift grave and covered the items with soil. As you remained worried that Izabela would be found, you subsequently arranged for this area to be concreted over. You cleaned up the house and removed all traces of Izabela Zablocka's belongings. To all intents and purposes you then

carried on your life as if nothing untoward had happened. Your mother and younger sister came to live with you at the Princes Street address and in due course you started a new relationship, moved out and had two children.

16. You lied to Izabela Zablocka's mother and to your own mother about the circumstances of Izabela's disappearance. In November 2010 you lied to the police when they investigated a missing persons report made by Izabela's family. Over the years you continued to lie. In June 2024 you were contacted by the Polish organisation, Missing for Years. Over the weeks that followed they asked you a series of questions via Facebook Messenger, trying to discover what had happened to Izabela. You repeatedly provided dishonest and misleading answers. Katarzyna Zablocka had contacted Missing for Years and various journalists in Poland as she was desperate to find out the truth regarding her mother. As a result, a number of posts and videos about her mother's disappearance were published. Your internet searches show you were aware of these materials. In May 2025, Missing For Years told you that a television journalist with Polsat TV, Rafal Zalewski, wanted to speak with you. You declined. However, on 21 May 2025, he arrived unexpectedly at the house you now lived in and interviewed you on your doorstep. You repeatedly lied to him too.

17. You first contacted Derbyshire Police on 21 May 2025 and via emails sent on 23 and 24 May 2025, you told them where Izabela Zablocka's remains were buried. You attended Pear Tree Police Station on 24 May 2025 and for the first time admitted you had killed Izabela Zablocka, but said you had done this by accident when acting in self-defence. I

have already explained why I am sure that this was not true. You contacted the police with this false account to try and get ahead of things as you felt the net was closing in on you. You were arrested for murder and subsequently charged with the offences I have referred to.

## **THE SENTENCE FOR MURDER**

18. There is only one sentence that the law allows to be passed for the offence of murder: that is a mandatory life sentence. For an adult, it is called a sentence of imprisonment for life. That is the sentence I will pass.
19. I am then required by section 322 and Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 to specify the minimum term.
20. The minimum term is not your sentence: your sentence is imprisonment for life. I emphasise to you, and to everyone concerned with this case or reading about or reporting this sentence, that you will not automatically qualify for release after the minimum term expires. It is a minimum, not a maximum. A minimum term is the shortest period that you will serve in custody before the Parole Board can conduct its first review of whether, and, if so, when you might be released on licence.
21. You will not be released before the minimum term has expired. There is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time after that point. After that period elapses it will be for

the Parole Board to consider your case; and it is only if the Parole Board decides you can safely be released that you will be released. If the Parole Board concludes it remains necessary for public protection, you will continue to be detained.

22. If and when you are released, this will be on licence for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked, such as if you reoffended, you will be recalled to continue to serve your sentence in custody. It is in these ways that a life sentence protects the public for the future.

## **THE SENTENCING PRINCIPLES AND THEIR APPLICATION**

23. Schedule 21 sets out the appropriate starting points for setting the minimum term.

24. The parties are agreed and I conclude that paragraph 5 of Schedule 21 applies in this instance. The starting point for setting the minimum term laid down by Parliament is therefore 15 years. However, the starting point is just that; it is not the end point. I must decide whether and to what extent to adjust the minimum term taking into account the relevant aggravating and mitigating factors.

25. I shall first consider the aggravating factors. Prosecution and Defence Counsel are agreed that the aggravating factor identified at Schedule 21 paragraph 9(g) applies, namely “concealment, destruction or dismemberment of the body”. You mistreated Izabela Zablocka’s body

in not just one, but all three, of these ways. You cut her corpse in half, you cut into other bones and some of her bones were missing altogether when her remains were discovered. You bound up her legs and stuffed her remains into plastic bin bags before burying them in a dirty pit of earth which you covered over with concrete. Her body was left there to decompose. You then told repeated lies to multiple persons so as to ensure that her body would not be discovered for many years. Accordingly, I regard this as a very serious aggravating factor in this case. As well as the indignities you inflicted on Izabela's body, your actions caused untold misery and trauma to Izabela's family, who were left with no idea where she was or what had befallen her and who desperately sought to find out what had happened. They were unable to hold a funeral for her until October 2025, over 15 years after she had disappeared. More recently they have had to cope with the knowledge of the appalling way you treated her body after she had died. Your actions also hugely delayed and impeded a police investigation into the circumstances of her death.

26. I accept that none of the other potential aggravating factors listed in Schedule 21 paragraph 9 apply. However, this is a non-exhaustive list. I also take into account that you killed Izabela Zablocka in a domestic setting, namely her home where she was entitled to feel safe.

27. In terms of the mitigating factors set out in Schedule 21 paragraph 10, I cannot be sure you intended to kill Izabela Zablocka or that killing her was other than spontaneous. Accordingly, I accept that the following factors apply: "an intention to cause serious bodily harm rather than to kill" and "lack of premeditation". However, I am sure you were not

acting in self-defence to any extent, for the reasons I have already identified.

28. I take into account that you were of previous good character and that you have not experienced custody before. However, these factors are of limited significance when offences of this seriousness are committed. You are the mother of an 11 year old girl and a 6 year old boy and I take account of the impact on them, but as on any view you are facing a lengthy custodial sentence away from your children, this feature does not have the impact that it may have in instances of lesser offending. You have shown no remorse. I do not consider that you deserve credit for belatedly contacting the police in May 2025, albeit this led to the discovery of Izabela Zablocka's remains; you only did this in the circumstances I have already described and in order to put forward a false account of her death.

29. I will impose sentences for the Count 2 and Count 3 offences that will be served concurrently with the life sentence and minimum term for Count 1 and I will take these offences into account in determining the length of that minimum term. I will not double-count your mistreatment of Izabela Zablocka's body, your concealment of her murder or any other aspect I have already referred to in the overall sentence I will pass. However, the sentencing principles applicable to Count 2 and Count 3 assist me in identifying the extent to which I should increase the minimum term from the 15 year starting point. I will bear in mind considerations of totality. I have derived some general assistance from *R v Atkins & Pereira* [2024] EWCA Crim 1316, although

I do not suggest the factual circumstances are on all fours with that case.

30. There are no Sentencing Council guidelines in respect of Count 2, however the Court of Appeal provided guidance in *R v Russell* [2023] EWCA Crim 1080. The Court said that where the crime was committed with the intention of preventing an investigation into the cause of an unnatural death, the offence would fall at the more serious end of the scale, as it involved a deliberate obstruction of the course of justice and justified a deterrent element. In such circumstances, sentences of five to six years imprisonment (prior to consideration of aggravating or mitigating factors) would be appropriate to mark the gravity of the offending.

31. The Sentencing Council's guideline "Perverting the course of justice" applies in relation to Count 3. Your culpability comes within the high category as your conduct was sustained over a long period of time, it involved significant planning and the underlying offence you sought to conceal was extremely serious. The level of harm comes within category 1 as your conduct caused serious distress to innocent parties, namely Izabela Zablocka's family, your conduct had a serious impact on the administration of justice and substantial delay was caused to the course of justice as you could not be prosecuted and tried for many years and only at a time when much of the evidence had been destroyed in consequence.

32. For high culpability and category 1 harm, the guideline provides a starting point of 4 years custody, with an offence range of 2 to 7 years

imprisonment. In this case, if this offence was considered in isolation it would be appropriate to very substantially increase the starting point given that nearly all of the listed high culpability factors and nearly all of the harm category 1 factors apply and given the seriousness of your conduct, which encompassed not only the indignities and degradation you caused to Izabela Zablocka's body but the repeated lies you told to so many people for so many years in an effort to conceal her murder. As I have already indicated, your previous good character and the other aspects of your personal mitigation are of limited effect but will be borne in mind.

33. For the reasons I have indicated, in respect of the minimum term, the aggravating factors substantially outweigh the mitigating features in this case.

34. The statutory surcharge will apply.

### **THE SENTENCE OF THE COURT**

*Stand up, Anna Podedworna*

35. Anna Podedworna, for the murder of Izabela Zablocka, I sentence you to imprisonment for life. Taking account of all the relevant circumstances, and the aggravating and mitigating factors I have set out, the minimum term I impose is one of 20 years and 116 days imprisonment. That is a minimum term of 21 years imprisonment

minus the 249 days you have already spent in custody on remand pending trial.

36. For the Count 2 offence you will serve 5 years imprisonment concurrent to the term I have imposed on Count 1.

37. For the Count 3 offence you will serve 6 years imprisonment concurrent to the terms I have imposed on Count 1 and Count 2.

*Anna Podedworna, you will go now to begin your sentence.*

**Before leaving this case:**

I want to thank all Counsel involved for the helpful way they have presented their respective cases. My thanks extend to the entire legal teams for all the careful preparatory work that has been undertaken. I also thank the police who carried out an exemplary investigation after Anna Podedworna contacted Derbyshire Police in May 2025.

My thanks, too, go to the members of the jury for their conscientious commitment to the case and to the Court staff who at all times ensured the very smooth and efficient running of the trial.

My concluding thoughts are with Izabela Zablocka's family and the trauma they have undergone with great fortitude over the last 25 and a half years. In her Victim Personal Statement Katarzyna Zablocka said the certainty that her mother loved her, gave her the strength to spend her entire adult life looking for answers. I hope these proceedings have brought a degree of comfort to her and to her family.

