



# THE RECORDER OF SHEFFIELD

## SENTENCING REMARKS

OF

THE RECORDER OF SHEFFIELD  
HIS HONOUR JUDGE JEREMY RICHARDSON KC

AT

THE CROWN COURT AT SHEFFIELD

ON

WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026

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REX

V

NEIL TRENNAN

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### Preamble

You may remain seated. You must listen with care to what I am about to say.

In the printed version of these sentencing remarks there will be headings for ease of reference.

These sentencing remarks will be made available to you, your lawyers, the press and the public a short while after the conclusion of this hearing. I also direct that the printed version of these remarks shall be placed within the relevant section of the Digital Case System.

These sentencing remarks will also be published on the website of the Judiciary of England and Wales.

These sentencing remarks are also being recorded for television news.

It is important the press and general public are made aware of the serious circumstances of this case and the sentence imposed upon you.

It is my intention to send these sentencing remarks to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice – as the responsible minister for prisons – to call his attention to the decision to permit you to have day release from two life sentences in the circumstances I shall come to explain.

I would not be justified in making any criticism of anyone or any public body which made that decision. I appreciate that such decisions are often very difficult. It is not part of my role to inquire into that decision. Some may feel it was the wrong decision and it had appalling consequences as demonstrated by this case. It is my view the Lord Chancellor should consider conducting an investigation as to how this occurred, but that is ultimately a matter for him.

It is my role to sentence you for the crimes you committed, and you have admitted.

It is also very important these sentencing remarks be made available to the prison authorities and to the Parole Board should you make any applications for release from the overall sentence I shall impose upon you.

## **Introduction**

The complainant in this case is a woman who is entitled to lifelong anonymity. She will not be referred to by name in these sentencing remarks. She will simply be known as C (which is not one of her real initials). That equally applies to all the complainants in the cases in which you have previously been sentenced and to which reference will be made in this case. The provisions of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 apply to the circumstances of this case and to the other cases. Nothing must be published or reported which in any way seeks to identify the complainant in this case unless waived by her. That is extremely unlikely. It also applies to all the other complainants in the previous cases.

By referring to her as C, and the other complainants in previous cases by random letters, I intend no discourtesy at all. It is simply a mechanism to ensure anonymity of all involved as victim of the defendant. That must be respected and maintained.

Neil Trennan, you are aged 61 years.

You fall for sentence in respect of the following crimes:

- Count 1 – Remaining unlawfully at large having been temporarily released from custody, contrary to section 1(2) of the Prisoners (Return from Custody) Act 1995.

- Count 2 – Having an article with a blade or point (namely a kitchen knife) contrary to section 139(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Count 3 – Aggravated Burglary contrary to section 10(1) of the Theft Act 1968
- Count 4 – Trespass with intent to cause a sexual offence contrary to section 63(1) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

I have already directed the remaining counts, where not guilty pleas have been entered, shall remain on file on the usual terms. Those counts will not be the subject of trial without the leave of this court or the Court of Appeal Criminal Division.

Count 1 has a maximum sentence of 2 years.

Count 2 has a maximum sentence of 4 years.

Count 3 has a maximum sentence of Life Imprisonment.

Count 4 has a maximum sentence of 10 years.

Counts 2, 3, and 4 were committed on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Count 1 was committed between 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

I make it clear the principle of totality, by reference to the definitive guideline of the Sentencing Council on that subject is front and centre of my consideration in this case.

You pleaded guilty to count 1 and 2 at the PTPH. Those individual sentences may be reduced by one-quarter. You pleaded guilty to counts 3 and 4 on the day of trial but before a jury was sworn. The individual sentences on those counts may be reduced by approximately one-tenth. It may not be exactly one tenth as the guideline indicates that is the maximum.

I shall have regard to the stages at which you pleaded guilty when making my assessment in relation to the principle of totality.

It is my intention to pass a sentence on count 3 which reflects overall totality for your offending on this occasion. I have also taken care not to double count factors when forming any judgment in this case.

At the time you committed these crimes you were subject to two sentences of Imprisonment for Life. One of the key issues for me to consider is whether it is right for me to impose a third sentence of Imprisonment for Life in this case.

I make it clear at the outset that there are two purposes of sentencing which are at the forefront of my consideration. These are the future protection of the public and punishment of you for your egregious offending.

I am indebted to Mr Richard Wright KC and Mr Gordon Stables as counsel for the prosecution for the careful and helpful way in which this case has been presented to me. I am also very grateful for the helpful, succinct and realistic submissions made on your behalf by Miss Michelle Colborne KC and Miss Abigail Langford.

All counsel have assisted me in my difficult task to a marked degree.

### **The Facts**

The Facts of this case disclose a very serious history of sexual offending where it appears you harboured an insatiable appetite for physical violence upon women coupled to sexual violence.

It is crucial that I examine your criminal past with some care as well as the circumstances of the acutely serious criminality perpetrated by you in early July 2025.

History has repeated itself.

I will do all that I can to ensure there is no further risk of repetition of ingrained sexual perversion which, if unleashed, has caused, and could cause again, immense physical and mental harm to women. No woman is safe while you are at large in the community.

### **Previous Criminal History**

It is important I set out your criminal past with some care. I shall annexe to these sentencing remarks the full sentencing note of the prosecution prepared by Mr Stables giving the full details of your criminal history. That is necessary to demonstrate the immense dangers you have posed and continue to pose.

I note all of your criminal history when making my decisions. The crimes you committed even going back to the mid to late 1980s are redolent with sexual motives and malevolent intent against women.

It is also important to note what you stated to the Parole Board on subsequent occasions – many years later – about this offending.

It is not without significance in 2023 you told the Board the sexual offending against women at that time in the 1980s was more about “power and control”. You told the Board also that the sexual aspect of these cases was “satisfying”.

I note the episode in 1990 when you indulged in what would now be called a form of voyeurism.

In 1990 the first of two life sentences was imposed upon you when you were convicted of Rape, Wounding with Intent, and resentenced for breaching the probation order for sexual offending in 1989.

You went into the home of a young woman in Sheffield and struck her with a dumb-bell causing her very serious head injuries and rendering her unconscious. You also caused further injuries with a knife. You then raped her whilst she was unconscious. Despite forensic evidence you denied any responsibility.

In 2015 you admitted to a prison psychologist that you broke into the home of the woman with intent to rape her. You admitted being aroused by the violence and the angrier you became the greater the arousal. You told the psychologist you felt like a volcano which overflowed. You admitted you enjoyed violent "non-consenting" sex. By 2023 you told the Parole Board you had been in a "really bad place". You said you behaved as you did because every girlfriend had let you down and you had lost trust. You admitted you had no emotional control and took out your anger on others. You told the Board you became sexually aroused by violence. By 2024 you told a Community Offender Manager you had consumed alcohol to excess and cannabis. You stated you were an angry young man who did not care about anyone. You explained you committed the rape because you felt you could get away with it. You repeated how you became aroused by sexual violence.

In June 2002 you were aged 37 years. It appears you were on supervised day release from prison with a prison officer. You were in Norwich at the time and you escaped from that officer whilst he was distracted.

You went to Norwich College and went into the women's lavatory. You attacked a young woman with a brick in there. She suffered a deep wound to her head.

Following your arrest a further Life Sentence was imposed upon you. At the time you told the probation officer there was no sexual motive for the attack.

In September 2015 what you told the Prison Psychologist is instructive and can be summarised in this way:

- You had an interest in sexual violence.
- You used women as "sex objects" and were there purely for sex.
- You believed all women were deceitful.
- You went into the college because you heard police sirens and thought the victim was staring at you in a funny way or giving you a dirty look (this was despite you being in a women's lavatory)
- You, therefore, attacked her.
- You acknowledged having violent sexual fantasies.
- You told staff you could "blow at any time".
- You ruminated on previous violence.
- Violent fantasies were a source of enjoyment for you.
- You began to accept there was a sexual motivation in relation to the attack.
- You were interested in sad-masochistic sex and had been from a young age
- You told the psychologist the best sex you had was after being violent.

By 2022 you told a prison psychologist you found committing offences more sexually arousing than consensual one night stands. You said the offending made you feel equal with women. The sexual violence gave you a feeling of control.

In 2023 you repeated much of what you stated in 2022 but denied there was a sexual motivation for the offending but you could not be sure what might have happened had you remained in the lavatory after the attack with the brick instead of making off. In the September of 2023 you gave a further explanation to the Parole Board and escaped from the prison officer because you were angry with the prison psychologist. You accepted the assault could have had a sexual motive. You told the Board you would not abscond again. In July 2024 you told the Community Offender Manager that violence is the trigger for sexual arousal.

Having considered the material (which I annex to these sentencing remarks) I have no doubt whatsoever you posed, and continued to pose, a substantial threat to women during 2024 and 2025.

It is plain you are a sexual deviant who derives enjoyment from sexual violence which heightens your arousal.

It is against this backdrop of an obvious risk of serious harm and posing a massive danger to women it was an extremely surprising, and potentially wrong, decision that you were transferred to open prison conditions at HMP North Sea Camp.

I have been given no adequate explanation why this decision was made and this is something which the Lord Chancellor may wish to investigate. I sincerely hope so. A mistake was, in my judgment, made. I trust it will never be made again.

It is astonishing to me that you were permitted to leave the prison in Lincolnshire on an unsupervised basis simply trusting that you would return.

Given the history and the obvious risks you posed – and you were expressing as late as 2023 and 2024 – it is astonishing you were subject to this liberal regimen.

### **The Events of 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

Let there be no misunderstanding at the time you were permitted to leave the prison on unsupervised day release you were serving two life sentences, and in respect of one of them, you committed the serious sexual offending whilst also on day release from prison.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July you were expected to return to HMP North Sea Camp in Lincolnshire at 1.30pm. You failed to do so. It was a bright summer day.

You travelled to Sheffield – which is a city you knew well.

You obtained a kitchen knife and used it as a weapon.

You went to the Nether Edge suburb of Sheffield. CCTV footage reveals you around and about the traffic junction at one of the roads in Nether Edge. I shall not mention the names of roads as I do not want to risk any form of identification of C. You then walked along that road and sat on a wall.

C was 19 at the time and a student studying for a degree. She shared a house along this road in Nether Edge.

C was walking home during the mid-afternoon and passed you. She went into her home a short distance away changing into less formal clothing in order to go to the bathroom upstairs to have a shower.

She heard the front door open and close. She had left it unlocked as her friends were expected to visit. You took advantage of that situation having followed her to her home. You went upstairs and went into a spare bedroom.

C saw you and you pretended to apologise due to being lost. That was not the truth. You grabbed C and began to touch her all over her body using significant force. She tried to defend herself as best she could, but you were overpowering her to the floor.

You reached into your pocket and brought out the knife.

C was immensely brave and managed to knock the knife from your hand. You went to get it and it was at this point C secured her escape from your violent attack. She ran to the bathroom and locked herself in that room. She shouted for help and you left.

Someone who occupied another room in the house was at home and heard the commotion. She called the police who attended with commendable haste.

There is no doubt that had C not escaped by managing to knock the knife from your hand, you would unquestionably subjected her to a violent rape. That is now admitted. You targeted her for that purpose once you appreciated she was a young and attractive woman.

### **The Aftermath**

You remained at large until 13<sup>th</sup> July 2025. When you were arrested in York. When interviewed by the police you made no answer to any questions.

It is now accepted by your guilty pleas that you intended to inflict very serious physical violence on C and then rape her.

That has been and remains your perverted sexual predilection.

### **The Consequences for C**

The consequences for C have been exceptionally serious. I have considered her personal statement with particular care. She displayed remarkable courage when she read her personal statement to the court yesterday.

She was very courageous during the appalling events I have just set out. She is only too aware of what was going to happen to her.

I have well in mind the entirety of her personal statement when making my decisions in this case. Her life was shattered and she is taking time to recover from the ordeal she experienced. I shall simply list some of the consequences for her:

- She was undertaking therapy in respect mental health problems at the time of the attack and was vulnerable.
- This was exacerbated by what happened to her by you.
- She had flashbacks and panic attacks
- She has to take anti-depressant and other drugs
- She has taken a lot of time off work
- You robbed her of an enjoyable time at university

I have simply summarised a long statement and there is no doubt C was vulnerable at the time and has been very badly affected by what you did.

### **The Law**

In the ordinary course of events when the court is considering whether a person is a dangerous offender it is usually necessary for there to be input from the Probation Service by way of PSR pursuant to section 30 of the Sentencing Act 2020 (the Sentencing Code). That is not necessary in this case as the facts are so egregious and the history so starkly, and exceptionally, serious. It is accepted by Miss Colbourne that such a report is not necessary. There would be no advantage to the court by obtaining such a report. I have a wealth of information about you.

It is accepted you have a personality disorder and the psychological information about you from the prison is considerable.

As I have already stated it is my intention to treat the aggravated burglary as the lead offence and I will pass a sentence on that count to reflect overall criminality.

I must – and do – assess whether you are a dangerous offender because you have been convicted of a specified offence. I do so in accordance with section 280 of the Sentencing Code. I must decide whether there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission of further specified offences by you.

That poses no difficulty and it has not been argued otherwise by Miss Colborne. It is as plain as plain could be that you are a dangerous offender by reference to the statutory test.

I am then required to consider section 285 of the Sentencing Code. I must first consider section 285(1). Those provisions are all met. I then consider section 285(2) and, as I have already explained a PSR is completely unnecessary when forming my judgment about dangerousness.

I must then consider section 285(3) of the Sentencing Code which provides:

“If the court considers that the seriousness of:

- (a) the offence, or
- (b) the offence and one or more offences associated with it,

is such as to justify the imposition of imprisonment for life, the court must impose a sentence of imprisonment for life”

If that is so, I must determine the minimum term to be imposed by reference to section 323 of the Sentencing Code which is two-thirds of the notional determinate sentence.

In the alternative, if a sentence of Imprisonment for Life is not warranted I must consider whether an extended sentence should be imposed pursuant to section 280 of the Sentencing Code.

In reaching my judgment about whether I must impose a life sentence I have considered the leading case on this namely ***R v Burkinskas*** [in particular paragraph 22 of the judgment of the court] where I am enjoined to consider the following:

- (1) The seriousness of the offence falling for sentence and other associated offences.
- (2) The previous offending of the defendant.
- (3) The court must make an assessment of the level of danger to the public including any reliable estimation of the length of time the defendant will remain a danger to the public.

I shall exercise my judgment by reference to the statutory test and this approach.

It is important I make reference to the offence specific guidelines of the Sentencing Council. There is complete agreement about this.

In relation to Aggravated Burglary the case is plainly in category A1. In terms of culpability the defendant targeted a vulnerable woman and followed her into her own home to attack her. The harm is plainly at level 1 where serious

violence was threatened and used upon her. The starting point is 10 years with a range of 9 to 13 years.

The aggravating features are your previous convictions and you were at large from prison when you perpetrated the crime in the home of the victim.

Trespass with intent to commit a sexual offence involves raised harm committed in the victims own home. The intended offence was rape and you had a knife. The starting point is 6 years with a range of 4 to 9 years. The aggravating features are identical to the earlier offence.

The bladed article offence falls into category A1 where there is a starting point of 18 months and a range of 1 year to 2 ½ years with the same aggravating features.

Finally, the crime of remaining at large does not have an offence specific guideline, but the general guideline for sentencing in this situation obtains where the court must assess culpability and harm. You committed a very serious offence whilst at large and you were serving a life sentence. Furthermore, you have behaved in this way before.

### **Mitigation**

Miss Michelle Colborne KC has said everything that could be said on your behalf and has advanced the various points with efficiency and skill.

Miss Colborne raises the following points of mitigation:

- (1) Your Guilty pleas and the stages at which they were entered.
- (2) She acknowledges on your behalf your acceptance of the prosecution case in full.
- (3) She emphasises you have saved a trial and valuable court time has not been wasted on a trial and thus has saved further anguish to the victim.
- (4) It is accepted you meet the criteria for a finding of dangerousness.
- (5) It is accepted that there can be no reliable estimate of when you will cease to be a danger to the public.

I accept all of those important points.

The main burden of her submission was the fact you did not follow through in your desire to commit a violent rape. She argues this may cause me to pull back from a life sentence. That is a matter I shall consider.

She also has argued that there are already in place two life sentences and protection is already there. It is argued I should therefore pull back from adding a further life sentence and measure the sentence appropriately by the imposition of an extended sentence. Again, I shall consider that submission with care.

## **Analysis and Conclusion**

I have already set out the facts and backdrop in some detail. I have also set out the law I must apply.

In my judgment I am justified in reaching the following conclusions:

1. You pose immense dangers to women. This is an enduring state of affairs and has been known for many years since you were first sentenced to life imprisonment.
2. You enjoy and relish sexual violence upon women. This is ingrained behaviour. I have no doubt this passion for acute levels of violence coupled to sexual violence of itself will hang menacingly for an indefinite period.
3. History has repeated itself. In my judgment it was very unwise to allow you to have any form of unsupervised release given what was known about you. I have been given no adequate explanation for the decision. The Lord Chancellor may demand one.
4. I am entirely satisfied you are a dangerous offender. That is not disputed. There is not a scintilla of doubt that you pose a significant risk to members of the public of committing very serious sexual and violent crimes against women. Indeed, I am sure it is a very high risk of that being the case – almost bordering a certainty – if you are at large in the community.
5. A pre-sentence report is completely unnecessary in this case – and it has not be argued otherwise. The facts of this case and your previous offending coupled to all I know about you from the various prison and other documents called to my attention obviates the need for any PSR which would simply repackage all that is known.
6. I am sure that the seriousness of this offending taken as a whole is so serious that I must impose a sentence of imprisonment for life:
  - (a) The facts are an almost replica of what has happened in the past, certainly a close variation on a malignant theme.
  - (b) Your previous convictions are exceptionally serious and you are serving two life sentences.
  - (c) It is clear to me that the level of danger you pose to women is immense. There is absolutely no reliable indication when – or if – there is any hope of improvement in this state of affairs. Your mind is flooded with perversion which embraces a cruel and inaccurate view of women coupled to a passion for acute physical violence and sexual violence.

7. I have born in mind the submissions of Miss Colborne that you did not follow through on this occasion and you fled. However, that was only occasioned by the bravery of C and the good fortune she was able to lock herself in the bathroom and the presence of others in the house who heard the commotion. I have no doubt whatsoever, had the situation been slightly different, you would have executed your intention to cruelly and viciously rape that woman.
8. I have also considered the submission that you are already subject to two life sentences and a further life sentence is in effect otiose. I do not accept that at all. I must consider this offending and the situation here as it appears in this case. I must do what is demanded in this case by reference to the law. It is my view the facts of this case demand a life sentence. The fact there has been other protection imposed in the past is neither here nor there. It is the position now that matters.

This is an appalling case of history repeating itself and of insufficient heed being taken of that history when you were placed in open prison conditions. That must never happen again. As I have stated you pose immense and enduring dangers to women of acute violence and associated sexual depravity. No woman is safe whilst ever you remain at large.

I make it plain that although I am required by law to determine a minimum term you must serve before you may apply for release on licence, it is my view that I cannot envisage a situation arising where it is ever safe to consider you being released. You pose such immense dangers as clear from the facts of this case and all that you have done in the past. This is one of those fortunately rare cases where it is highly likely you will spend the rest of your life in prison in circumstances of considerable security, and you will die in custody.

As I have to set a minimum term I do so by reference to the guidelines to which I have called attention.

Had the crimes fallen for sentence standing alone and following a trial the following would have been imposed:

Aggravated Burglary – 12 years  
Trespass with Intent – 7 years  
Bladed Article – 2 years and 6 months  
Remaining at Large – 20 months

Given the guilty pleas and when they were entered the individual sentences would have been:

Aggravated Burglary – 11 years  
Trespass with intent – 6 years and 3 months  
Bladed Article – 22 months  
Remaining at Large – 15 months

The sentences do not stand alone and a judgment must be formed about the principle of totality having regard to the likely sentences following a plea and when the plea was entered. This requires the exercise of judgment. There is no arithmetical formula. I must fix a minimum term which reflects overall criminality and is both just and proportionate in all the circumstances.

It is my judgment that the minimum term should be 15 years. This is my judgment the appropriate level of punishment to reflect the criminality of you being at large and committing identical crimes to what has gone before in large measure, but equally paying some attention to the legitimate point that, although you intended dreadful harm, you did not in fact execute it despite your intention. Notwithstanding, a severe minimum term is required given your past and your intentions. Given the provisions of section 323 of the Sentencing Code you would be required to serve two-thirds of that, consequently the minimum term I am required to impose is 10 years.

However, I make it clear that is not the sentence of the court and I trust it will not be inaccurately reported that I impose 10 years. That figure is the term that has to be served before you may apply for release on licence. I am required by the Act of Parliament to fix such a term. I, however, have made it very clear that I cannot envisage a time when it will ever be safe for you to be released. I say this given the truly shocking history of your criminality and your perverted psychological state.

The life sentence will protect the public and the minimum term is designed to be punitive element.

The individual sentences will be as follows:

In respect of the Aggravated Burglary I shall impose Imprisonment for Life with a minimum term of 10 years which is the lead sentence to reflect overall criminality.

In respect of the other crimes I impose the following concurrent sentences of imprisonment:

Trespass with intent to commit a sexual offence – 6 years and 3 months.

Possession of a Bladed Article – 22 months imprisonment

Remaining at Large – 15 months imprisonment

I shall impose the necessary statutory charge in the appropriate amount with all necessary statutory orders in the wake of the sentences I shall impose.

### **Sentence**

You must now stand.

I impose the necessary statutory charge with all appropriate associated orders.

All other mandatory and statutory orders are made as well.

The sentence I pass upon you is Imprisonment for Life for Aggravated Burglary on count 3. That sentence reflects overall criminality as does the minimum terms I impose of 10 years. That sentence must run concurrently to the extant two life sentences.

There are now three life sentences in place. I cannot imagine it will ever be safe to release you in these circumstances.

I impose the following concurrent sentences on the other counts:

Count 1 – 15 months imprisonment

Count 2 – 22 months imprisonment

Count 4 – 6 years and 3 months imprisonment

Take him down.