

R v MARCUS STANIFORTH and "MSL"

SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS

20 FEBRUARY 2026

CARDIFF CROWN COURT

REPORTING RESTRICTIONS

Orders under section 45 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 have been made in this case. No matter relating to "MSL" may be published that would identify him, including his name, address, any educational establishment or any workplace he attends, and any picture of him. This order lasts until he reaches the age of 18 on 25 February 2027.

Introduction

Marcus Staniforth and MSL:

On the night between 30 June and 1 July 2025 you both murdered a man you did not know. Kamran Aman was a dutiful family man. He had just delivered some shopping to his mother's house. He was in his car ready to go back to his partner and 4 year old child when you picked on him and killed him in the street.

As well as ending his life, you ruined the lives of the family he left behind. We have heard dignified and moving statements from his wife and his mother. They explain the impact of the murder on Mr Aman's little daughter and his brothers and his wider family too. I am sorry that no sentence I pass can bring him back to life. But it is clear that his memory will live on.

Marcus, you were 17 years and one month old when you killed Mr Aman; you are still 17 today. MSL, you were 16 years and four months old; your 17th birthday is next week.

I am going to make what I say now as short as possible, because of your age. But I have taken into account every single thing which has been said by the prosecution, and by the defence,

both here in court and in writing before today. I have also read and reflected on the expert reports and the Pre Sentence Reports and the other documents I have been given, including a text to me from MSL. I have paid particular attention to the Sentencing Council Guideline on Sentencing Children and Young People, and to the guideline on Sentencing Offenders with Mental Disorders, Developmental Disorders, or Neurological Impairments, and to Chapter 14 of the Child Defendants in the Crown Court Bench Book. Because you are children, that is, under 18, I must adopt a very special and individualistic approach to your sentencing, which is fully explained in all those documents, and I do.

For example, I recognise that developmental and emotional age is at least as important as chronological age.

It is also important for me to consider, amongst other things, whether each of you had the maturity to appreciate the consequences of your conduct, the extent to which you acted on an impulsive basis and whether your conduct was affected by inexperience, emotional volatility or negative influences.

The sentence required by law

The sentence for murder is fixed by law. This means there is only one sentence I can give you. For a person your age it is called detention during His Majesty's pleasure. This is a custodial sentence. This means that today you will go back to a secure place. You will not be allowed to leave that secure place until you are told you can. I must decide the shortest length of time you must stay in custody. This is called a minimum term.

The Parole Board decide when it is safe for a person to leave custody. After you have spent the minimum term in custody, **they** will decide if you can leave then or not. If they decide it is not safe, then you will stay in custody for a longer time. When you do leave custody, you will be on licence for the rest of your life. This means that there are rules, or conditions, that will be decided when you leave custody. You will have to follow those rules for the rest of your life.

If you break those rules, you may have to go back into custody.

Marcus, you have already spent 232 days in custody before you came to court today, on remand.

MSL, you have also spent 232 days in custody on remand.

I will take those days off the minimum terms starting today. That will make them shorter by the number of days you have already been in custody.

Before I tell each of you what your minimum term will be, I will highlight some of the key points which have influenced my decision. But I have taken everything into account, including things there is not time to refer to in detail now.

The facts

I will start with facts I can be sure of from the evidence given at the trial.

You are friends. On 30 June 2025 you spent the day together, drinking. You were both very drunk. MSL was volatile and aggressive. You ended the day at a house in Barry Road in Barry where MSL's cousin Shauna had been living with her partner Amina. At one point there was an argument about Shauna and Amina breaking up in which Shauna's family were involved, and police were called. MSL was still volatile and aggressive. Marcus was calmer, although he was drunk too. The reason that MSL was volatile and aggressive was because he had been drinking and taking cocaine. He was upset by the family arguments earlier but he calmed down about that after the police and family left. His age and immaturity played a part, but, comparing his behaviour when intoxicated and his behaviour when sober, with the benefit of the reports, and particularly the Pre Sentence Report, intoxication was the driving force in his aggressive mood at this point.

MSL had violence on his mind. MSL is on Snapchat saying to Marcus "Marcus, watch we get outside bro" and "On my dead grandad's grave, I will murder bro. I will stab you bro, watch".

This was between 10 and 10.30 pm.

MSL also had racist thoughts on his mind. He painted “Where they niggers at?” and “Ty who?” and “Who is Ty?” on the wall of a room in Shauna and Amina’s house. “Where they niggers at” was a social media trend from TikTok but MSL was linking it to a black man he thought Shauna might have been seeing, called Ty and he had very much in mind that he was black.

MSL looked out of the window and saw Kamran Aman sitting in his car on the street. He did not know him. He did not recognise him. He had never seen him before. Mr Aman was about to go home after visiting his mother, who lived further down the street. MSL noticed he was not white and he told Amina it was Ty, although he didn’t really think it was Ty, and she took it as a joke. Mr Aman caught MSL’s eye because he was black, like Ty, and MSL felt provoked by his race, not because MSL thought he was really Ty. Mr Aman noticed MSL looking at him. MSL shouted down “What you looking at bro?” and “I’m going to beat people up”. He picked up a hammer. Marcus said “Come on bro. Let’s go. I’ll back you.”

Unlike MSL, Marcus wasn’t racist. But he was violent. And he wanted to back his friend MSL with violence even though there was absolutely no reason for it.

They went downstairs. Amina took the hammer from MSL so they both went into the street without a weapon. MSL made for Mr Aman’s car and tried to open the door from the passenger side. Mr Aman got out from the driver’s side. MSL punched him and Mr Aman warded off punches and kicks and moved around and also threw a few punches trying to defend himself. At one point, he got MSL on the ground, because MSL was drunk and unsteady, but only briefly.

MSL knew for certain by this point that Mr Aman was not Ty. He admits that. But he was still determined to fight and he wanted to do Mr Aman really serious injury in the fight, although not to kill him. He wanted to hurt him really badly because he was not white. That was his only reason. He was shouting racist abuse at him, calling him “nigger” and “Paki”, over and over

again.

Marcus backed his friend MSL in the fight but MSL was fighting more than him. Marcus decided to go and get a knife so he could stab Mr Aman. He knew it wasn't necessary. Mr Aman was defending himself, but he was never the aggressor. All Marcus and MSL had to do was to stop fighting and go back into the house and it would all be over. They both knew that. They both wanted to carry on. They both wanted to win the fight MSL had started.

Marcus wanted to win it with a knife. So he got the knife, came back, hid it behind his back so no-one would realise what he was about to do, and then he stabbed Mr Aman through the heart, hoping he would die. He did die, there, on the street. MSL didn't know about the knife until afterwards, but he was happy to see Mr Aman on the ground and he went off shouting "Nigger, nigger".

The minimum term - starting points

In setting the minimum term for each of you, my starting point is guided by law.

For you, Marcus, the starting point is guided by your age, which was 17, and by the fact you brought a knife to the scene.

For you, MSL, the starting point is also guided by your age, which was 16, and by the fact that you were motivated by hostility towards Mr Aman because of his race.

That means, paying due regard to the statute, that I will adopt a starting point of 23 years for Marcus and a starting point of 20 years for MSL, but I will move up or down after that depending on other factors.

Marcus - aggravating and mitigating factors

Marcus, there are some other things in your case which make it worse. We call these "aggravating factors".

1. First, you were drunk.
2. Second, you were acting with MSL, which meant you outnumbered Mr Aman two-to-one.
3. Third, although MSL started the fight, your role in escalating it was the turning point. You turned a failing attempt to beat up an innocent man, into a murder. However, I do not double count the use of the knife.
3. Fourth, you tried to destroy evidence, by bleaching the knife to get rid of blood and DNA.
4. Fifth, you said in your prepared statement that MSL was fighting with Mr Aman and that you did not have a weapon at any stage, and did not stab Mr Aman and any weapon which caused the injury would not be linked to you. It followed that you were wrongly placing the blame on MSL.
5. Sixth, you have no previous convictions, but you accepted a youth conditional caution for an offence of section 20 causing grievous bodily harm. This was committed on 18 October 2024 at Bridgend Station. You were one of a group of youths who assaulted an older man by kicking and punching.

It is clear to me from the evidence that you are a very dangerous young person indeed. You thought nothing of what you did. You are exceptionally violent and showed yourself willing to use lethal force for the most trivial reason.

On the other hand, there are some things that count in your favour. We call these “mitigating factors”.

1. First, you did not plan this attack in advance. However, there was a degree of premeditation and planning in the way you deliberately left the scene to fetch the knife, deliberately hid it from view, and deliberately directed the knife to Mr Aman’s heart, before trying to clean off the evidence with bleach.
2. Second, you are of exceptionally low intelligence with limited capacity to consider consequences and make decisions, according to expert evidence from Dr Armstrong.

You were pathetically keen to support your friend MSL and win his approval.

3. Third, you are immature for your age. Your maturity was less than MSL's, although you were a little older than him. However, you know the difference between right and wrong and you know that it is wicked and wrong to get a knife and kill a man just to back up a friend, even though you have shown no remorse.
4. Fourth, you suffer from mental health and behavioural issues including ADHD, for which you were not taking your medication at the time of the murder. This affected your judgment. I accept this as mitigation although there was significant disagreement between Dr Sanikop and Dr Hales about the extent of your mental health diagnosis and impacts. I preferred the evidence of Dr Sanikop. Dr Hales reached conclusions before she had all the evidence, and her reasoning was less objective and persuasive than Dr Sanikop's. I reject her diagnosis of complex PTSD, as did Dr Sanikop. There was no reliable evidence of symptoms and Dr Sanikop presented a convincing case for rejecting that diagnosis on other grounds as well.
5. Fifth, you have been affected by a troubled childhood and, although it had become more stable when you went to live with your grandparents, you had recently been devastated by the death of your grandmother.

The balance of all these factors brings me down from my starting point for Marcus's minimum term.

For completeness, I should say that I do not accept that you genuinely believed that MSL was under serious threat from Mr Aman when you got the knife. That was an excuse you gave to Dr Hales, although you did not give evidence to the jury. Mr Aman was on his own, unprepared, and without a weapon, although he did show his car keys in a failed attempt to put you both off. Mr Aman talked about getting help but he was in no position to do so while he was under constant attack from you two young males and that was obvious. He was always on the defensive and when he got the better of MSL it was only briefly and MSL came back up at him. MSL didn't need defending and you never thought he did. You acted with MSL as the aggressor.

MSL - Aggravating and mitigating factors

Now I will talk about you, MSL.

In your case, also, there are things which make it worse, the “aggravating factors”, on top of the racism which is already reflected in the starting point.

1. First, you were drunk and had also been taking cocaine. You were heavily intoxicated by the time of the killing.
2. Second, you were very much the leader in starting the fight and carrying on with it.
3. Third, you were acting with Marcus, which meant you outnumbered Mr Aman.
4. Fourth, you were on police bail at the time of the offence.

There are things in your favour, the “mitigating factors”.

1. First, you did not intend to kill, although you did intend to cause Mr Aman really serious injury. You did not foresee any risk of death, because it was only a fight with fists and feet, and you didn’t know about the knife. This is a very weighty mitigating factor.
2. Second, you didn’t plan this fight in advance. You started it on the spur of the moment, and impulsively.
3. Third, when you heard that Mr Aman had died, you showed remorse, and you told police upfront that Marcus had stabbed him. I accept your remorse is genuine. By remorse, I mean that you are truly sorry for what you did, and for the death of Mr Aman, which you did not expect, or want.
4. Fourth, you were not only young (which I have already reflected in your starting point) but you were somewhat young for your age, although less so than Marcus. I have assessed this from the reports and from my observation of your behaviour during the trial (although you did not give evidence) and from watching the extensive video evidence recording your behaviour over many hours before, during and after the murder. Dr Knowles says in his report that you present as someone “far younger

mentally” than your stated age but I disagree. He gives no convincing reasons for saying that and it is not consistent with the view I have been able to form over a much longer period of observation and from the wide range of evidence I have about you. You were only a little more immature than an average 16 year old.

5. Fifth you have a diagnosis of mild Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) although without accompanying intellectual difficulties. Your mental health conditions are much less severe than Marcus’s.
6. Sixth, you have personal mitigation from a troubled childhood which has affected you deeply.

Whilst I do count the fifth and sixth points as mitigation, they are of limited weight in this case. You instigated a deliberate, unprovoked, sustained, violent, racist attack. You were old enough and mature enough to know that trying to cause a complete stranger really serious injury because of his race was wrong, and you knew exactly what you were doing. I have not held you responsible for the use of the knife, and I have already given you credit for having no intention or expectation that the injury would be as serious as it turned out to be. But you do bear responsibility for your own actions and intentions, subject to the points I have made.

Balancing all these things brings me down from the starting point for MSL’s minimum term too.

You must both pay the statutory surcharge for 16 and 17 year olds subject to a custodial sentence, which I understand to be £41, but the correct figure will be applied administratively.

The sentence of the court on Marcus and MSL

Stand up now, Marcus. I am going to pass the life sentence required by law, and I’m going to tell you what the minimum term before the Parole Board looks at your case will be.

For the murder of Kamran Aman, I sentence you to detention during His Majesty's pleasure with a Minimum Term before the Parole Board can look at your case of 17

years less the 232 days you have already spent in custody before today, which leaves a Minimum Term from today of 16 years and 133 days.

You may go down.

Stand up now, MSL. I am going to pass the life sentence required by law, and I'm going to tell you what the minimum term before the Parole Board looks at your case will be.

For the murder of Kamran Aman, I sentence you to detention during His Majesty's pleasure with a Minimum Term before the Parole Board can look at your case of 15 years less the 232 days you have already spent in custody before today, which leaves a Minimum Term from today of 14 years and 133 days.

You may go down.

Many people have been affected by this case. I commend the police for their prompt attendance and arrest of both defendants on the street. I commend the medics who also arrived quickly and went to extraordinary lengths to try and revive Mr Aman and save his life at the scene. Above all, I express my profound and sincere condolences to Mr Aman's family.