

IN THE CROWN COURT  
SITTING AT AYLESBURY

R

v.

GWYN SAMUELS (formerly known as JAMES BUBB)

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SENTENCING REMARKS

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20<sup>th</sup> March 2026

12 noon

Reporting

1. Nothing can be reported that can identify any victim of sexual misconduct.  
Spelling this out, the provisions of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 apply to this offence. Under those provisions, where an allegation has been made that a sexual offence has been committed against a person, nothing that might identify that person can be included in any publication in their lifetime. In the course of this judgment I shall refer to the victims throughout as "AC" and "VB".

## Overview

2. Gwyn Samuels, you are to be sentenced for five counts of serious sexual misbehaviour against two young females, AC from the age of 12, VB from the age of 18. You were convicted of all five offences after a trial and have no credit for any pleas of guilty. It is important for you and anybody considering this sentencing exercise to understand the extreme and highly unusual nature of your conduct. This unique context, coupled with your lack of remorse, contrition or insight, demonstrates a high degree of risk in the future which must be reflected in the type of sentence I impose.
3. You abused the most intimate trust of each of your victims. In each case you systematically groomed your victim, first to befriend them, then to abuse them, finally to bend them to your will. This was a campaign of abuse against each that was intended to break their will entirely. At certain times you convinced your victims that they were involved in reciprocal, loving and loyal relationships with you. At other times your victims recognized your behaviour for precisely what it was. It must have been entirely obvious to you that these two very vulnerable young women were ill-equipped to manage your unsettling behaviours – your mood swings, your threats of violence, your repeated performative violence and then your manipulative love-bombing. It seems to me to be inescapable that you intended to de-stabilise the mental health of each victim with a range of coercive and controlling techniques and you succeeded in doing so.
4. The observations I have made above are not unique to this case – sadly they arise in many instances of very serious sexual abuse. However there are aspects of this particular case which take it well outside the context in which such

behaviour commonly occurs, and hence the need for a sentence that is not blind to the future risks that your own behaviours represent. Firstly, the context in which you initially sought out contact with each victim was a space on the internet that already made them highly susceptible to exploitation. The court heard evidence that you made first contact with each victim online in forums where children and young adults who question their sexuality and gender may well seek out advice, guidance, and support, and also sometimes sexual expression. This has been an unregulated space, ripe for exploitation by predators. Secondly, in the years that followed, some of your behaviours came to take place in a very specific and potentially dangerous context – that of BDSM sex involving the re-enactment of rape scenes in which you played the role of the rapist. You ultimately turned this from roleplay to reality as you terrorized each of your victims by repeatedly escalating your behaviours, ignoring their clear wishes for you to desist, brutalizing and humiliating them, and continuing well beyond any prior consent.

“AC”

5. AC gave evidence at trial. She was measured and fair in her descriptions of your behaviours. She acknowledged that her own interests at the age of 11 and 12 had taken her into some unusual spaces on the internet, and having faced sexual abuse from predators intent on grooming her she had welcomed the attention and understanding you gave her, at least at the outset. However this was simply a springboard for more sophisticated grooming by you. She confirmed that she had tried to present as older than she was, but throughout her evidence AC maintained that you must always have known that she was a confused and

impressionable child. You engaged as if a supportive peer, not a predator. You said that you were a volunteer police officer. You turned the engagement quickly to sexual activity asking for nude pictures, nude chats and reported that you were masturbating. These online contacts developed into tentative meetings in real life. You got AC to travel across the country to a Christian festival, getting her to profess an interest in order to get her parents to bring her. It must have been obvious to you as a 21 year old that she was a child of around 11 or 12 years old. It was some time later in 2019, just before her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday that you started to encourage her to travel hours on the train to come to London to meet you, sometimes without her parents' knowledge or consent and it was on one of those visits that the first offences against AC were committed. You got her to give you oral sex in a public place (Count 3 – Category A2, starting point 13 years – up to 17 years) and in a second public location you digitally penetrated her vagina even though AC told you not to (Count 2 – Category A2, starting point 11 years – up to 15 years). In each case the “A” element reflects the highest level of culpability, involving sustained grooming; and the numbered element reflects the considerable harm arising from these sustained incidents involving a child who was particularly vulnerable. She was vulnerable because, as you knew, she had told you that she had already been the subject of online predation, you had added your own layer of sexualization to the online exchanges between you, and for these offences she was far from home, she was away from her parents, and you were assaulting her in public spaces in London that she had never been to before.

6. On the wider question of the assessment of harm in these cases, AC provided a powerful VPS. Her distress was palpable. She considers that quite apart from

the impact of individual offences, the combined effect of your proven behaviours during this period was to overtake and dominate many of her thoughts and actions, day after day, throughout her teenage years; to do profound damage to her mental health; and to cast a deep shadow on her past and future relationships. After enduring your behaviours she struggles to feel safe, or to trust.

7. Returning to your offending in Counts 2 and 3, the following aggravating factors are present. As to the assault by penetration, this was something your victim clearly did not do willingly in the public place you had chosen, and in relation to Count 3, she specifically asked you not to insert your fingers but you carried on regardless. In law, the offence is complete at the time the behaviour occurs, whatever the victim's view of it. In this case your victim's reluctance to touch you and to be touched by you makes your behaviours that much more reprehensible.
8. Count 4 reflects a time when, as the jury found, you knew full well that AC was under 16 (in fact she was 15 and you were 23) and you 'took her virginity' repeatedly having sexual intercourse with her during one stay in London with you (Count 4– Category A1, starting point 5 years – up to 10 years). This encounter was not initially resisted by AC, but soon after it started you unexpectedly choked her and beat her. You wore no protection and you ejaculated inside her. Here the A element reflects the grooming element which by now had continued for several years, the fact you were targeting a child you knew to be vulnerable, and the significant disparity in age. The harm element reflects penile penetration of the vagina. The context and accompanying

behaviours amount to powerful aggravating features, requiring a very significant uplift from the starting point.

9. Turning to the remaining offence, it was several years later again, when AC was over 18, that you subjected her to an extreme sex act which frightened, horrified and sickened her and went well beyond any consent she had given, and which she believed, rightly, was highly dangerous. In a context that already included extreme and brutal behaviours, including beating and gagging her, so she could not speak and subjecting her to a brutal rape re-enactment, you inserted a bottle into her vagina. Your conduct plainly risked serious injury to her, as she feared at the time. This conduct is likely to have an impact long into the future. (Count 6 – Category B1, starting point 12 years). Consensual behaviours in a BDSM context obviously require very enhanced levels of trust and respect for agreed boundaries. In this case I have considered carefully whether this behaviour amounts to the concept “abuse of trust” – an element in category A, but I consider that the phrase as used in the guideline is probably not apt to describe BDSM dominance. In my view this element of a gross abuse of trust should not be a factor in the initial categorization or starting point but it should be considered as a powerful aggravating feature, a matter to take into account when deciding where the sentence should fall in the range, which is up to 15 years.

“VB”

10. In relation to VB you initially posed as a teenage girl to befriend her when she was 18, and again you purported to be a peer rather than a predator, playing a role with a fake persona to gain trust, and then in due course you made your

reveal of a more authentic role with a backstory to explain the deception. Like your relationship with AC, this started in the online world and was already highly sexualized in terms of content and activity, even before you met VB in real life. From the moment you did meet her you sought to direct this relationship specifically towards your own sexual preferences.

11. As with AC, these included BDSM conduct. VB agreed to certain sexual activity with you on specific terms (so called kink behaviours associated with bondage, domination, submission, sadism and masochism) but as with AC you breached that trust on repeated occasions, stepping well outside the rules of consensual engagement with each of them. You were exerting your power. You were involved in hate behaviours, assaulting, humiliating and degrading your victim – not as part of consensual role play, but for real. In doing so you were undermining the sense of autonomy of VB, her sense of self, and her power to decide for herself what she would or would not do.
12. VB gave evidence that you introduced a knife to the sexual scene (you describe it as a butter knife but she described it as a kitchen knife) and used it to make threats of body mutilation of her nipple or clitoris. In one particularly shocking episode you forced her, clearly against her will, to submit to a prolonged brutal and sadistic rape simulation. The reality was this was not a simulation but, as the jury found, a rape in real life (Count 1 – Rape, Category B2, starting point 8 years, range 7-9 years).
13. Once again, in this case I have considered carefully whether this was an abuse of trust – an element in category A, but I consider that the better course is for it to be a matter to take into account not in initial categorization but when

deciding where the sentence should fall in the range, which in this case is up to 9 years.

14. The extent of the harm you caused VB was evident at trial, and also from her VPS. She refers to the profound impact on her including nightmares, anxiety, self-harm and repeated suicide attempts – psychological harm which on any view is very significant indeed, even in the context of other similar offences.

### Offences

15. From this brief summary it will be apparent that the most serious assaults occurred in two different time frames: first, at the very beginning of the indictment period when AC was aged 12, and you were in your early 20s: latterly, towards the end of the indictment period when both AC and a second victim, VB were adults, when you subjected each of them to extreme sexual ordeals. However it is worth noting that your manipulative behaviours continued inexorably from beginning to end of the entire four year period. The full catalogue of your offending cannot be reduced to a small number of moments. Your entire approach to both females was predatory from the start, and throughout those relationships.
16. I pause to say that I have made observations and findings about your behaviours which go beyond the specific offences that are before me, but I make clear that I am sure to the criminal standard about each factual finding I have made. Sometimes it is because I accept what you yourself were happy enough to acknowledge in your own evidence about the nature of your relationships and of the behaviours and sexual activity they included. Sometimes it is because I accept the evidence of your victims over yours, again to the required standard.

You are to be sentenced only for those matters the jury found proved, but it seems to me to be essential to consider your specific offences in a realistic, accurate and fair context, both to assess the commensurate sentence and in particular to assess the danger you represent in future.

### Sentencing Council Guidelines

17. I have referred to the SC Guidelines for individual offences, and specific categorisations. These are not disputed by the defence. This leads, for each offence, to a starting point and a sentencing range. Where a sentence should fall will depend on the presence or absence of aggravating factors not already included in the initial classification, and also on mitigating factors, where present. I have referred to the fact that behaviours in breach of agreed BDSM rules by a person trusted to play a dominant role must be treated as a gross breach of that trust, and must lead to a very significant uplift from any relevant starting point. Turning to the offence specific SC guidelines for each count, if sentencing each case to a commensurate sentence on the basis of the facts and the aggravating features, I would have been drawn to sentences well above the respective starting points in each case: those starting points being 13 years for the rape under 13 of AC, 12 years for assault by penetration, 5 years for sexual activity with a child, 12 years for your subsequent rape of AC and 8 years for the rape of your second victim, VB.

### Mitigation

18. However before coming to individual sentences, I have to consider potential mitigating factors suggested by Mr Amer on your behalf.

19. The first thing to say is that I note the total absence of remorse. As to your approach to the offences, you denied them in the police station when first challenged, and you denied them at trial. You claimed that behaviours in relation to AC as a child never occurred or that you never knew the age of the victim, and in relation to the victims as adults, that the only sexual behaviour – no matter how extreme it was - took place with consent. Going further, you indicate that you regard yourself as the victim of AC, the unlucky recipient of false allegations made by a person who felt abandoned by you. You say that VB has been caught up in this destructive game. Using these narratives you continue to deny the offending and do not accept any responsibility for it, whatsoever. You seem to have zero insight into the reality of what your behaviour amounted to, let alone the appalling impact it has had on each of your victims. You have no credit for pleas of guilty, but no credit either for any hint of remorse.
20. The absence of remorse is not an aggravating factor, but remorse is a potential mitigating factor where present. Where, as here, it is not present, the court must look elsewhere for potential mitigating factors.
  - a. I have taken into account the helpful and full PSR including its assessment of background matters relating to your own family and developmental circumstances, your attitude to your offending and its assessment of future risk.
  - b. I am mindful that despite the considerable age gap to AC who was not even into her teens when you befriended her, you were yourself a young man when this offending started, not long into adulthood yourself. I acknowledge that there was some level of immaturity as

you committed these offences in your early twenties and I am reminded that developing brains do not become adult overnight. You are now aged 28.

- c. You have no previous convictions. I acknowledge that previous good character counts for something, although in cases of this type, especially offending over a long period, it can count for very little. In practice, you used one aspect of what might be called your good character – your volunteering with police – specifically to gain the confidence of your victims, to entrench your friendships, to assert your status over them and in some respects to exploit your physical training to dominate your victims physically.
- d. I take Mr Amer’s observation that these offences took place against a backdrop of gender curiosity, sexual experimentation and dysphoria. You spoke in evidence about your challenges as a teenager, at school and within your adoptive family, in coping with uncertainty about your gender, and that for one reason or another you never felt that you fitted in or belonged until you were able to engage in personal relationships with people you felt could understand you.
- e. I note that there has been some delay in bringing these matters to trial, and that you have used your time in custody exceptionally well, engaging constructively within the prison and being a useful member of that community, especially in relation to two specific projects in which you made a significant contribution. That is all to your credit.
- f. The prisons are overcrowded and conditions might be more difficult for you for two reasons:

- i. You held a position with the police service as a volunteer  
Special Constable
  - ii. You currently identify as a trans woman.
  
21. Before going on I will say a word about your presentation. At all times during the indictment period you presented as a male although you were plainly thinking about your gender. You currently present as a trans female. I have no reason to suppose that your current presentation is inauthentic in any way. Your presentation was respected during the trial. In particular, you were referred to for present purposes by the personal pronouns you prefer, and the only deviation from that was when witnesses referred to you and your behaviours during the indictment period when they knew you as a man by the name of James. For sentencing purposes, your current trans status is entirely neutral. It neither aggravates nor mitigates the appropriate sentence. This case has not been about your trans status but about your crimes.
  
22. From what I can see, I am also satisfied that your presentation is not designed to, and will not in practice, influence where you are held in prison. You will remain in the male prison estate. The key point is that you are a very significant risk to women. This is not predicated on your trans status but on your criminal status. Every one of the crimes you are to be sentenced for was perpetrated by you as a male, and whatever your current presentation your risk to women remains so high that I must, and I will, make special lifelong rules to restrict your access to young women.

### Approach to sentence

23. I will set out the approach to sentence. I start by considering what is called the commensurate sentences – the sentence lengths that match the gravity of the individual offences. It seems to me to be sensible to impose one combined sentence for your crimes in relation to AC, the individual elements running concurrently; and another sentence in relation to VB; and direct that those sets of sentences be consecutive to each other. In principle they could simply be added together but I must check to ensure the total turns out to be no more than would be just and proportionate to the overall offending. That is only the start however, because I will then have to consider whether this or any standard commensurate sentence would be adequate to protect society from serious harm from you. This requires me to consider other options such as a life-sentence and other orders that may be available to address risk. I will ultimately have to arrive at an appropriate final sentence that carries out a number of aims: a sentence that punishes you for offending that should never have occurred, deters others from taking the same path, provides a structure for your rehabilitation, and which also addresses the risk to the public in the future of those offences being repeated.

24. Turning to the calculation of the appropriate commensurate sentence I start by considering Counts 2 and 3. If they had stood alone this behaviour taken together would inevitably have provoked sentences well above the starting point for either single offence. This behaviour took place in public, it was not in any way consensual, your victim was very uncomfortable about it. She asked you to stop touching her intimately but you didn't. None of those elements are implicit in categorization, and they aggravate the offending. The

sentences could have been no less than 14 years on each count, concurrent. I note that this represented the culmination of your initial grooming of AC but it was only the start of years of manipulation, abuse and sexual offending that followed it. Turning to later offences, for sexual activity with a child, involving taking a child's virginity in circumstances where you could not resist choking and punching her, there would have been a sentence at the top of the range – approaching 8 years. For the offence of raping the same child as an adult, in a shocking and terrifying departure from BDSM agreements – any uplift must again be towards the upper end of the range, which runs to 15 years.

25. I will adopt the following structure – I will treat Counts 2 and 3 as the lead offences in relation to AC, exacerbated by the later offending. The sentence on each ought to be 18 years, with the two remaining offences against AC to be met with concurrent sentences of 8 and 14 years respectively. As to VB – this was a whole new chapter of offending which you enthusiastically pursued. Inevitably this sentence needs to be made consecutive. It involved different choices made in relation to a new and highly vulnerable victim. It would be an affront to have that sentence run concurrently with sentences in relation to another victim. Count 1 is the only offence for VB. In my view the combination of elements and the inherent brutality of the offence could well, if standing alone, have taken the sentence beyond the 9 year range.

26. However before arriving at the eventual overall sentence I am required to stand back and consider the totality of the offending against both victims, and to identify a total commensurate sentence that is just and proportionate overall. Given the gravity of this sustained offending behaviour a

commensurate sentence could be no less than 24 years. Such a sentence would be sufficient to reflect its gravity. For this reason, the sentences on Counts 2 and 3 should be adjusted to 17 years, and the sentence on Count 1 will be adjusted to 7 years consecutive making 24 years in all. If this were to proceed as a commensurate sentence the total custodial element would be 24 years imprisonment. It would mean that you would be released as of right after 16 years, and the sentence would expire after 24 years after a period on licence.

### Dangerousness

27. However the nature of these offences requires me to consider whether the degree of danger you represent, and will represent in future, is such as to require a life sentence or an extended sentence to protect the public from repetition in your lifetime. I have to assess whether there is a significant risk of serious harm arising at the point of your release due to you committing specified offences in the future.

28. I have read the PSR indicating relatively low risk figures applying their standard tools. The writer describes these figures as optimistic. Mr Amer on your behalf says that the evidence base for comparison – assuming you continue in your trans-female journey – is insufficient for proper statistical comparisons to be made in any event. The suggestion might be made that the statistical risk is lower in this cohort, or that your risk, in particular, might in future be lower if you are happier in yourself and no longer feel the need to climb out of your own difficulties by punching down at more vulnerable people as you did. For myself I am not sure about this. My own perception is that your emotional hygiene is poor, that your transgression of social and sexual boundaries, and in particular your willingness to transgress agreed

boundaries for sexual activity, is such that your level of danger to others is, and will remain, very high. Whereas in many instances an individual's capacity to change during the lifetime of a sentence means that the level of risk diminishes over time, especially during a sentence which is lengthy, I fear that this may not apply to your situation and to your type of offending.

29. Looking specifically at the facts in this case, and considering the dangerousness provisions of s279 of the Sentencing Act 2020, I note the following elements:
- a. You are adept at gaining digital access to children or young adults, including by taking on a false persona,
  - b. You weaponised your own vulnerabilities, the one area where I do consider that you do have some real insight
  - c. You have powerful and well-developed grooming techniques, and were able to sexualise online interactions
  - d. You were able to separate vulnerable people from their real life support networks,
  - e. You were able to turn online encounters into meetings in real life
  - f. Once you were together with your victims in person you were willing to use your physicality, including restraint techniques learned for the purpose.
  - g. From the outset of your very first interactions with AC and throughout the indictment period you had an obsession with what were described as 'kink' sexual behaviours, including latterly, BDSM encounters, including some extreme physical actions including use of potentially dangerous objects.

- h. You acted out repeated episodes of hate actions and humiliation, both within a sexual context and outside it.
  - i. You demonstrated appalling personal discipline within BDSM practice, and you repeatedly failed to act within agreed rules.
  - j. Finally, standing back, I consider that you intentionally blurred the boundary between BDSM as an intermittent consensual practice, on the one hand, and, on the other, living out in real life, and against the will of your sexual partner, a BDSM fantasy as a full-time bully and as a full-time sexual abuser.
30. These seem to me to be enduring traits that must inform the assessment of your future danger to the public. I consider it no less plausible that you would wish to continue your behaviours in your 40s, 50s and 60s than that you would do so in your 20s. For these reasons I am quite certain that the dangerousness criteria are met.

Life sentence or Extended sentence

31. I do consider that an extension of some sort is necessary to the licence period. Indeed, I am required to consider whether I should impose life sentences. I have thought carefully about the latter option, which in principle is a sentence of last resort. Before coming to consideration of a life sentence, I should stand back and consider the lesser alternatives - the extended sentence of imprisonment, namely a sentence with the same custodial element but with an extension of the licence period for up to 8 years – ie from 24 to 32 years – especially in the context of a second order, a SHPO that would operate for life.

32. Dealing first with the SHPO. This would restrict the following activities, both in prison and when you are eventually released:

- a. Your ability to access young women online
- b. Your ability to access other internet services
- c. Your ability to be present with young women in person
- d. Your ability to contact either of the two victims in this case

33. Breach of such an order during your prison sentence – for example, misusing a prison computer or using a contraband phone - would not just be a prison disciplinary matter, it would be a criminal matter, likely resulting in a consecutive sentence that would have to be served on top of any sentence I impose now. Such an order would also be sufficiently flexible to be varied in due course to adapt to the future world of communications at whatever stage you are able to be released, to the dangers you then represent, and to provide some measure of public protection by ensuring that for the rest of your life you are regularly monitored in the community by police officers from the Public Protection Unit. This is an important power. Any assessment by me of what type of sentence is needed to manage your risk in the community must take into account the potential preventive powers of a SHPO.

34. I turn, secondly, to an extended sentence of imprisonment. If the court were to impose such a sentence, the custodial term, would remain at 24 years, but the release provisions and licence conditions would be different. You would not be released as of right at 16 years. Instead your release would be considered by the Parole Board. The period you would serve would therefore be flexible between 16 and 24 years. The Parole Board would have public protection at

the heart of any decision to release you, but would be open to recognize any genuine progress you have made in custody. Whenever you are released – and you could be released as of right only at the end of the 24 year sentence – you would be subject to licence conditions for up to a further eight years. Breach of those would lead to your recall.

35. These are the options. Although I have thought carefully about imposing a life sentence, it seems to me that the impact of a SHPO for life, coupled with a sentence that will impact you directly until you are in your late 50s will be sufficient to meet the very real risks that your unfortunate victims know only too well. It recognises your capacity for change over the custodial element of the sentence and will be flexible enough to respond to a significant change if you can demonstrate it. However it will also be flexible enough, if you cannot do so, to keep the community safe for much longer by keeping you in custody.

### Sentences

36. Accordingly I pass the following sentences: I will impose concurrent extended sentences of 21 years on Counts 2 and 3 (comprising in each case a custodial term of 17 years and a licence extension of 4 years) and a consecutive extended sentence of 11 years on Ct 1 (comprising a custodial term of 7 years and a licence extension of four years). On Counts 4 and 6 the sentences will be 8 and 14 years' imprisonment respectively, to run concurrently with the others.

37. Stand up please Gwyn Samuels. I have set out the detailed reasoning but the headline figures are these: the total sentence I pass on you will be an extended sentence of imprisonment of 32 years with a custodial element of 24 years.

You might conceivably be released by the Parole Board on or after the 16 year anniversary of the date you went into custody but only if you make sufficient positive progress in prison to demonstrate your risks can be managed in the community. Until you can establish this you will stay in prison up to the full 24 years. In any event you will, when released, be subject to close supervision on licence and liable to recall until 32 years have passed.

38. I impose a Sexual Harm Prevention Order in the terms set out on DCS, which will operate for the rest of your life even after this extended sentence is over. The notification provisions will also last for the same period. The SHPO restricts certain behaviours both in the prison estate and when eventually you are released. That order is flexible enough to adapt to future developments, both good and bad, and to be amended to meet future circumstances. The bottom line is this: breach this order at any moment in your lifetime and you will be liable to spend further time in prison.

39. I make no order for costs or compensation. The statutory surcharge applies to this case and will be calculated in the usual way.

40. You may leave court.

#### Commendation to victims and to the police investigation team

41. I will save my final words for the complainants in this case. But first I must commend the remarkable work done by the police investigation team, led by DC Kirsty Pendle and supported by officer Emma Clinton, who together worked in a painstaking way in difficult circumstances, to listen to and subsequently to support each victim.

42. To AC and VB I say this: I have described you as complainants, as victims – referring to your victim personal statements, for example. But over time, I hope the fact that you are survivors of abuse is ultimately more important to your future lives than the fact you were victims of it. I have to acknowledge that your ordeal at the hands of this defendant was made infinitely more challenging by your experiences of the criminal justice system. There were delays and frustrations at every turn. At various times you felt that power was in the hands of the defendant. Ultimately, power was in your own hands, and particularly in your own voices. The power of your evidence was heard and recognized by the jury in this case. Each of you read your Victim Personal Statements with power and dignity. It is fair to say that try as we might to support survivors of sexual abuse, the criminal justice process can sometimes bring them to despair. It may well have done so at various points for each of you. Sometimes however, the process can also reveal resources and strengths that were not known before. I am quite sure that, for each of you, this is the case. I wish you both well.

HHJ Jonathan Cooper

20.3.26