

IN THE COUNTY COURT AT CLERKENWELL & SHOREDITCH

Case No. M00EC327

Courtroom No. 12

The Gee Street Courthouse
29-41 Gee Street
London
EC1V 3RE

Wednesday, 3rd December 2025

Before:

DISTRICT JUDGE KATHRYN SHAKESPEARE

B E T W E E N:

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

and

LAURA NEWMAN

MS O'BRIEN appeared on behalf of the Claimant
THE DEFENDANT appeared In Person

JUDGMENT

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DJ KATHRYN SHAKESPEARE:

1. This is the adjourned sentencing hearing in claim number M00EC327, an application for contempt that was brought by the claimant, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, against the defendant, Ms Laura Newman.
2. At the hearing today, the claimant has been represented by Ms O'Brien of counsel. The defendant attended the hearing late, which had been called on late in any event. The defendant, as I understand it, had attended court, had left court but then came back in. She came into the court room around 10 to 15 minutes after the hearing had started. I had intended to proceed in her absence, but given she then attended I have heard from her directly.

Background

3. The background to the application is as follows.
4. On 6 February 2025, at a hearing on notice, this Court made an injunction under Part 1 of the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act, 2014. That injunction prohibited the defendant, Ms Newman, from:
 - (1) Using or being in possession of drugs paraphernalia within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This includes but is not limited to cannabis grinders, crack pipes, items that have been adapted to be a crack pipe such as miniature bottles, syringes and hypodermic needles, gas canisters, or any other drugs paraphernalia unless with an accompanying doctor's note.
 - (2) Loitering or being found in the locality of any residential area owned by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets without lawful permission from Tower Hamlets, which includes but is not limited to bin chutes, communal areas, stairwells, doorways, car parks, and storage areas.
 - (3) Entering the area outlined in red on the attached map ("the exclusion zone"). For the avoidance of doubt, the exclusion zone is bordered by Grundy Street, Kirby Street, India Dock Road, A13, and Mayflower Primary School.
 - (4) Engaging in any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress, harassment, nuisance or annoyance to any person in any public or residential area in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, this includes but is not limited to shouting, screaming, threatening, using foul language, playing loud music, spitting, urinating,

defecating, buying prescribed drugs, taking prescribed drugs, littering, and drinking alcohol.

5. That injunction remains in force until 23:59 on 6 February 2026.
6. It was personally served on the defendant on 17 February 2025.
7. On 9 May, the claimant made this application for committal which alleged that the defendant had breached the injunction on eight occasions.

Hearing of 30 September 2025

8. There were a number of intervening hearings in that application which the defendant did not attend or attended after the hearing had concluded. A bench warrant had been issued to secure her attendance.
9. Those culminated in a hearing on 30 September 2025 which was before me. I proceeded to hear the application in the absence of the defendant, having considered that it was appropriate to do so in light of the factors set out in *Sanchez v Oboz* [2015] EWHC 235 (Fam).
10. At the hearing on 30 September, I considered the alleged breaches and found that five out of eight of them had been proved to the requisite criminal standard.
11. I then applied the framework set down by the Court of Appeal in *Lovett v Wigan Borough Council* [2022] EWCA Civ 1631 to sentence the defendant. For reasons that I gave at that hearing I concluded that the appropriate course of action was to adjourn sentence for a period of six weeks to allow the defendant to seek legal advice and to consider her behaviour in the meantime.
12. A hearing was subsequently listed on 17 November, unfortunately that hearing was not listed before me so had to be adjourned again. However, I note that the defendant did not attend the courtroom, although she says she attended outside court but felt unable to enter the building. The judge at that hearing made another bench warrant to secure her attendance today.

Hearing of 3 December 2025

13. The matter therefore came before me to sentence her today for the five proven breaches.
14. As I say, I heard from the defendant directly. I did not consider it appropriate to adjourn again. I considered that she had had sufficient opportunity to seek legal advice and had not availed herself of that.

Sentence

15. I therefore proceed to sentence the defendant for the five proven breaches as follows. I apply the sentencing framework set out by the Court of Appeal in *Lovett v Wigan Borough Council*, in particular paragraphs 46 to 57 of the judgment of Birss LJ.
16. The proven breaches are as follows:
 - (i) On 9 March 2025, the defendant was sighted within the exclusion zone in breach of paragraph (3) of the order of 6 February 2025.
 - (ii) On 12 March 2025, the defendant was found to be in possession of drugs paraphernalia in the public toilet of the Idea Store in Canary Wharf, London, E14 in breach of paragraphs (1) and (4) of the order of 6 February.
 - (iii) On 25 March 2025, the defendant was sighted within the exclusion zone in breach of paragraph (3) of the order dated 6 February 2025.
 - (iv) On 21 May 2025, the defendant was sighted within the exclusion zone in breach of paragraph (3) of the order dated 6 February 2025.
 - (v) On 2 June 2025, the defendant was found within the exclusion zone and in possession of drugs paraphernalia in breach of paragraphs (1), (3) and (4) of the order of 6 February 2025.
17. I take breaches (i), (iii) and (iv) together, because they all involve breaches of only paragraph (3) of the order, i.e. the exclusion zone. I assess those breaches at culpability level C; they are minor breaches involving her presence in a place she was prohibited from. I also assess them at harm level 3, the less serious end of the spectrum. They do not involve associated antisocial behaviour. That approach is consistent with the Civil Justice Council report endorsed in *Lovett* which suggests an example of level 3 harm is where the breach comprises mere presence in an unauthorised location other than in circumstances comprising greater harm.
18. The starting point for breaches (i), (iii) and (iv) at level C3 is adjourned consideration and the range is no order or fine to two weeks.
19. I then consider breach (ii). This involved a breach of paragraphs (1) and (4) of the order, i.e. being in possession of drugs paraphernalia and engaging in behaviour which was likely to cause nuisance or alarm.
20. I assess that breach at culpability level B. This involved, in my view a more deliberate action. The defendant entered into a public space with drug paraphernalia. I assess the harm of this breach at level 2. It was not proven that the defendant was using drugs, but she was in possession of drug paraphernalia in a public place, being a local library used by members of the community, including children. It is a serious matter to be in possession of material that

facilitates drug use in such a public place and constitutes, in my view, a practice which causes significant harm and distress to the local community.

21. The starting point for breach (ii) at level B2 is therefore one month, the range is adjourned consideration to three months custody.
22. Turning to breach (v), that involved a breach of paragraphs (1), (3) and (4) of the order, namely being in possession of drug paraphernalia, being within the exclusion zone and engaging in behaviour which causes a nuisance or alarm. I assess that at culpability level B, harm level 2, for the same reasons as breach (ii). Again, the starting point is one month, the range is adjourned consideration to three months.
23. I consider the aggravating and mitigating factors. The aggravating factors are that this case involves a pattern of behaviour over a period of time, the defendant is well-known to the authorities within Tower Hamlets and the fact that one of the incidents took place in a community space used by children and vulnerable people.
24. I also note that there have been allegations of breach in the meantime since the hearing on 30 September. I have witness statements from a Mr Firth and Mr Metland on behalf of the claimant that state that on 8 October the defendant was seen using drugs and that on 6 October, she was seen engaging in a suspected drug deal. I am, of course, not deciding today whether those allegations have been proven to the criminal standard, but I do take into account that evidence in my overall consideration of what has happened in the meantime.
25. In terms of mitigation, I am mindful that this is a first breach by the defendant. I have heard from her, directly, that she understood and understands the consequences and harm that her behaviour has caused. She has also told me that her life is now more stable now that she is no longer street homeless.
26. Having regard to all the circumstances and having stood back and considered the evidence as a whole, I find that the total appropriate sentence is 30 days custody. Custody is, of course, reserved for the most serious of cases and I must impose the shortest sentence commensurate with the proven breaches. However, I am satisfied that the behaviour involved in breaches (ii) and (iv) is of a level that means the custody threshold is met.
27. I then consider whether to suspend that sentence. I consider, in this case, it is appropriate to suspend the sentence in light of what Ms Newman has told me today about her current circumstances. I am mindful, in particular, that she has recently secured accommodation through an organisation known as Housing First, which is run by or involved with the London

Borough of Tower Hamlets. That happened on 19 November, so after the events described by Mr Firth and Mr Metland in their witness statement.

28. She has also told me that she has started to engage with Reset services, attending regular drop-in sessions to address the underlying cause of the antisocial behaviour which is her drug use. She has also engaged with psychological services.
29. It seems therefore that in recent weeks, she has tried to start to turn her life around and therefore I consider it is appropriate to continue to give her the chance to do that by suspending the sentence.
30. Therefore, my order is that the defendant is sentenced to 30 days' custody, suspended on terms that she comply with the order of 6 February 2025.
31. It is important that she understands that if she breaches the order in the meantime, she will be liable to be taken into custody, and if that happens, she will serve 15 days.
32. I therefore emphasise to Ms Newman the importance of complying with the order and making sure that she continues to put her life back on track and remain stable.
33. I remind Ms Newman that she has an automatic right to appeal this decision. Any appeal lies to a circuit judge at this court. Permission is not needed and appeal must be made within 21 days of today.
34. As I have sentenced the defendant to a period in custody, a transcript of this judgment will be published on the published website.
35. That is the end of my decision. Ms Newman, I have given you my reasons, as I say, it is important you comply with the order in the meantime, the sentence is for 30 days custody, suspended.

End of Judgment.

Transcript of a recording by Acolad UK Ltd
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