

THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE MURRAY

In the Crown Court at Portsmouth

R v Norbert Maiksner – Sentencing Remarks

30 March 2026

NOTE: There is a reporting restriction order in effect apply in relation to the identity of the victim of the child cruelty offence. This version of the sentencing remarks is edited to exclude details of the victim of that offence.

1. Norbert Maiksner, on 27 March 2026 at this court, the jury found you guilty of the murder of Frances Obiefuleh. They also found you guilty of one count of child cruelty. It falls to me to sentence you today for these offences.
2. This afternoon, we have heard the moving personal statements of four of Ms Obiefuleh’s siblings and her niece. We have heard from her brother Sydney, her sisters, Michelle, Ella, and Iffy, and her niece, Triona. In her statement, the eldest sister, Michelle, also includes her daughter’s statement as to the impact on her and the family. These statements speak with heart-breaking eloquence of their profound grief, and the enduring emotional, psychological, physical, and social impact of Frances’s loss on themselves and on the wider family.
3. The depth of the pain and grief that they have suffered as a result of your crimes cannot be fully understood by those who have not experienced such a tragedy. No sentence that I pass today can possibly reflect the value of Frances’s life or in any way offset the depth of grief and sense of loss of her family and everyone else who loved her.
4. Before turning to the sentence that I must impose, it is necessary to say something about the facts of this case in order to make clear the factual basis on which you are sentenced. Except where I have indicated otherwise, I am sure to the criminal standard about the following matters of fact. In relation to certain matters where I may express a view on the facts, but I am not sure to the criminal standard, I make clear now that I sentence you, as I must, on the factual basis most favourable to you.
5. On the morning of 17 April 2025 at 9.10, a member of public rang 999 to report seeing a man walking along the London-bound carriageway of the M40 between junctions 3 and 2 in the direction of London. A National Highways Officer, Mr Timothy Routen, was dispatched and about 10 minutes after the 999 call came across you walking along the hard shoulder a few hundred metres after the

end of a slip road. Mr Routen pulled up behind you, whereupon you slumped to the ground.

6. Mr Routen got out of the vehicle and spoke to you. You appeared to have small cuts to your face and hands. At first, you did not respond to questions, and so he asked for his control room to arrange for police attendance. Eventually, he heard you say “You will need to call police. I have killed my girlfriend.” He thought you also said you had killed your daughter, although this subsequently proved to have been a mistake by Mr Routen.
7. Naturally alarmed by what you had said, Mr Routen contacted his control room again to chase up police attendance as a matter of urgency. He told you that he had done so, and after a while you said that he needed to check for a child who was still in the house. You also said to Mr Routen that the child would be scared. Mr Routen asked for the address of the house, and you wrote in his notebook the address of the house in which you had lived with Frances Obiefuleh on Timsbury Crescent in Havant. Mr Routen then passed this address to his control room, who in turn informed the police.
8. A few minutes after this, two officers of the Thames Valley Police, PC Barton and PC Howells arrived where you were on the M40. They found you crouched down near to the barrier on the hard shoulder. They noticed you had scratches to your face and arms. When they asked you what had happened, you replied, “I have killed my partner in Portsmouth” or words to that effect.
9. Meanwhile, the address that you had given to Mr Routen was passed to Hampshire Police, who attended the house on Timsbury Crescent along with paramedics. Within a few minutes, they managed to get into the house. Immediately upon entry, at 9.50, they discovered Ms Obiefuleh’s dead body. They also found a small child in the house. There was no one else there. By that stage, rigor mortis was relatively well-developed, which meant that she had been dead for at least several hours. She was declared dead at the site.
10. News of this discovery was relayed to Thames Valley Police and then to PCs Barton and Howells. PC Barton arrested you on suspicion of murder and of child cruelty. You were then conveyed by the officers in a police vehicle to a custody suite in Portsmouth.
11. At the house in Havant, the police found Ms Obiefuleh’s body on the floor in the sitting room with reinforced blue tape wrapped two or three times around her head, covering her face from the margin of her upper eyelids down over her nose and mouth to her chin. While the tape itself measured 4 cm in width, the multiple layers of tape measured 8 cm from top to bottom over her face. The tape passed around her neck and the back of her head. The tape was tightly applied, covering and compressing her nose and mouth, with no gaps, and compressing her neck.
12. The small child had clearly been alone in the house with the dead body for several hours. I am certain this was a period of at least 11 and a half hours, since there is clear evidence that you had left that house the night before at 22.20, and

I am sure that Ms Obiefuleh was dead by that time. There is also clear evidence that the child woke up some time between 1.11 and 2.11 in the morning, and thereafter remained with the body, telling police officers in their video witness interview that it took “a long time to get to morning”.

13. The precise time that Frances died at your hands will never be known, but she must have been dead by 22.20 on 16 April, if not earlier. She had spoken to a friend, Nabi Durnush, on a phone call that ended at 20.17 that evening. Mr Durnush, who gave evidence during the trial, told the jury that Ms Obiefuleh had sounded fine and completely normal during the call, which had lasted for 52 minutes. So, she must have died between 20.17 and 22.20 on 16 April 2025.
14. You and Ms Obiefuleh had been in a relationship for, it appears, at least 18 months, if not longer, by the time you killed her. You had lived together in the house on Timsbury Crescent for about a year, having spent six months prior to moving in having it refurbished, while you remained living together in Croydon. It appears that the relationship had largely come to an end by 16 April, if not before.
15. Without having said anything to Ms Obiefuleh, you had been gone from the house in Timsbury Crescent for more than a week, during which you had, in fact, been at Disneyland Paris with a former partner of yours and your 13-year-old daughter with that former partner. You flew out to Paris on 7 April and returned on 14 April but made no contact with Ms Obiefuleh until you arrived back at the house on Timsbury Crescent on the afternoon of 16 April.
16. During the trial, we heard an audio recording of an argument that you had with Ms Obiefuleh on the afternoon of 16 April, during which she made clear your relationship was over. During her phone call with Mr Durnush that evening, Ms Obiefuleh referred to you as her “ex”. Mr Durnush told us during the trial that she had also referred to you as her “ex” when they had spoken a few days earlier on 13 April.
17. Mr Russell Delaney, the Home Office registered forensic pathologist who conducted the post-mortem examination of Ms Obiefuleh’s body, concluded that she died from smothering with an element of neck and/or chest compression. The smothering was caused by the tape applied to the face. As it was tightly applied, it also compressed the neck at the sides, possibly cutting off the carotid arteries, in which case she would have been unconscious within seconds.
18. According to Mr Delaney, at best Ms Obiefuleh would have fallen unconscious and begun to suffer brain damage within a couple of minutes as a result of the obstruction to her airways. Mr Delaney also found intense congestion below the tape, external injuries to the neck and upper chest, and a couple of rib fractures, all likely to reflect additional elements of neck and/or chest compression, perhaps during the incident in which the tape was applied to the face. It was Mr Delaney’s view that Ms Obiefuleh was still alive when the tape was applied.

19. Mr Delaney also considered images of the injuries that you had suffered, and which had been observed by Mr Routen, the police officers who arrested you, your former partner, whom you had seen the prior night after you left Timsbury Crescent having killed Ms Obiefuleh, and, no doubt, others. Mr Delaney noted that there were multiple linear abrasions on your upper back, upper chest, arms, hands, and left cheek. They were consistent with the possibility that you were scratched by Ms Obiefuleh's fingernails during a dynamic incident as she attempted to defend herself. I am sure that, in fact, is the case, having regard to the whole of the evidence concerning her death, including the forensic evidence that your blood was found under her fingernails on both hands.
20. Ms Obiefuleh's blood was also found on rolls of blue tape seized at the scene of the type used on her face, as well as on your t-shirt, your trousers, and one of your trainers.
21. You have no prior convictions, cautions, or warnings in the United Kingdom, but in Poland on 17 April 2003, you were indicted for an offence of domestic abuse that was said to have occurred in 2002. I understand that the case concluded by way of consent order rather than a conviction on 19 March 2008. I have not been provided with the facts of the offence, which are apparently not available, but the seriousness can to some extent be assessed by the fact that you were sentenced for it to 8 months' imprisonment, suspended for two years. I do, however, bear in mind that the offence occurred some 22 years before these offences.
22. You were 48 years old at the time of the offences. You are 49 years old now.
23. The sentence for murder fixed by law is imprisonment for life. I must now set the minimum term that you will serve before the Parole Board can consider you for release.
24. I have considered the provisions of Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020, which governs the determination of the minimum term in custody for the mandatory life sentence for murder. There are no factors that indicate that this offence falls within paragraphs 2(1), 3(1), or 4(1). The starting point for determination of the minimum term is therefore 15 years before considering aggravating and mitigating factors.
25. Given that this murder occurred in the context of an intimate relationship, I have had regard to the Sentencing Council guideline for domestic abuse: overarching principles.
26. There are two particularly weighty aggravating factors in this case, namely:
 - a. the fact that this murder was committed in a domestic context and in the context of the ending of an intimate relationship; and
 - b. the fact that it occurred while there was a child in the house, with Ms Obiefuleh's body having been left in the living room of the house with her head taped, where it would inevitably be discovered by the child.

27. The latter factor also, of course, forms the basis of the Child Cruelty offence, for which a concurrent sentence will be passed. Although you made many inquiries about the child once you were in the hands of the police, the cruel reality is that, until then, you made no effort to direct anyone to the property, even anonymously, despite the fact that you were still in possession of your BlackBerry mobile telephone for most of the night after you left Timsbury Crescent. You acknowledged the situation in which you had left the child when you told Mr Routen that there was a child in the house, who needed to be checked on, and who would be scared.
28. I also bear in mind the brutality of the murder, involving the forceful application to Ms Obiefuleh's head while she was still alive, during a struggle in which she was literally fighting for her life, in which you overpowered her, and which resulted in her being suffocated. This would clearly have involved a degree of mental and physical suffering for her, even if the time from the beginning of the struggle until her loss of consciousness was a matter of only a few minutes and even if loss of consciousness was only a matter of seconds after application of the tape.
29. There is evidence that the CCTV at the house where you murdered Ms Obiefuleh was deliberately turned off some time after 20:56. It was switched off at the mains. This must have been done by you. I cannot be sure that your murder of Ms Obiefuleh was premeditated, but if not premeditated, this is an attempt to conceal evidence.
30. Given the age of your Polish domestic abuse offence and the lack of information I have about the facts of it, it is of limited weight as an aggravating factor, although clearly relevant, given that was a domestic abuse offence.
31. I am sure that your intention when you murdered Ms Obiefuleh was to kill her, given the manner in which you tightly applied the tape to her head, covering her nose and mouth completely, leaving no gaps, and then leaving the house. Your intention to kill is not an aggravating factor, but it means that you do not have available the mitigation of having a lesser intention to cause only really serious bodily harm.
32. In mitigation, I take into account the statutory mitigating factor of a lack of premeditation because there is no evidence on the basis of which I can be sure that this murder was premeditated. There is very little, if any, other mitigation.
33. I have reminded myself of the contents of the psychiatric report prepared by Dr Jane Collier dated 30 January 2026, which was principally prepared to assess whether you were fit to plead and participate in your trial. She confirmed that you were. She concluded that you were choosing not to engage with the criminal justice system, as part of a severe stress reaction caused by your own actions. This does not provide any mitigation of your offence.
34. I have listened to all that has been said on your behalf by your counsel. I do not believe that more could have been said.

35. Balancing the aggravating factors with the mitigation, I determine that the appropriate minimum term in this case is one of 24 years, before taking account of the time you have spent on remand in custody.
36. I understand that you have spent 343 days on remand in custody. The minimum term that you must serve will be reduced to reflect this. If the information that I have been provided with as to the number of days on remand proves to be inaccurate, then the prosecution or defence must notify the court so that the case can be relisted to correct the calculation as soon as possible and, in any event, within 56 days.
37. Deducting the days you have spent on remand in custody, the minimum term you will be required to serve is 23 years and 22 days.
38. You and everyone else in court should understand three things about that minimum term. First, you must serve every day of it before the Parole Board can even consider releasing you. Secondly, even then the Parole Board will only release you if it is satisfied that it is safe and appropriate to release you. Otherwise, you will remain in custody for the rest of your life. Thirdly, if you are ever released from custody, you will remain subject to the life sentence for the remainder of your life, which means that, if necessary, you can be returned to custody at any time.
39. I am also obliged to pass a concurrent sentence for your conviction for Child Cruelty. I have had regard to the relevant Sentencing Council guideline. I consider that your offence falls into culpability category A (very high culpability) due to the extreme character of your deliberate disregard for the welfare of the child, leaving the child alone with the dead body of Ms Obiefuleh for a period of over 11 hours, which could have been considerably longer had you not been stopped and arrested on the M40 on the morning of 17 April.
40. I am entitled to infer from these circumstances that the child will have suffered, even if only at this stage subconsciously, and will inevitably suffer serious psychological, developmental, and/or emotional harm as a result of this offence, and therefore it falls within harm category 1. The starting point for sentence is nine years' custody, with a category range of 7 to 12 years' custody.
41. For this offence, there are no particular aggravating factors, given that the murder of Ms Obiefuleh forms part of the assessment of culpability and harm. Your frequent expressions of concern for the child to Mr Routen and to police officers once you were stopped and arrested may be taken as showing a degree of remorse. In a case such as this, however, that provides no mitigation of any weight given that you could have, even anonymously, directed someone to the house but failed to do so.
42. Taking all of this into account, I consider that a concurrent sentence of 9 years' custody is the just sentence to impose for your offence of Child Cruelty.
43. The statutory surcharge applies to this sentence.

44. Norbert Maiksner, for the murder of Frances Obiefuleh, I sentence you to life imprisonment with a minimum term to serve, after deduction of days served on remand in custody, of 23 years and 22 days.
45. For the offence of Child Cruelty, I sentence you to 9 years, concurrent to your life sentence.