Case No.: T20220310

IN THE CROWN COURT AT SOUTHWARK

10 July 2026

BEFORE:

HIS HONOUR JUDGE BAUMGARTNER
THE HON. RECORDER OF WESTMINSTER

BETWEEN:

REX

- v -

ADAM MEJRI

Defendant

SENTENCING REMARKS

Laura Hollingbery (instructed by the **Crown Prosecution Service**) for the **Prosecution**
Tom Edwards (instructed by **Saunders Solicitors**) for the **Defendant**

1. Adam Mejri, you may remain seated for the moment. I will ask you to stand when I come to pass sentence.

2. I must sentence you following your guilty pleas before me on 10/11/2025 to Counts 1, 3, 4, and 6 of the Indictment. Those guilty pleas came on the day of trial, and relate to offences of dishonesty and fraud in claiming benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions. They are acceptable to the Prosecution, and so I order that Counts 2, 5, and 7 lie on file, not to be proceeded with without leave of this Court or the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division). Coming when they did, you are entitled to 10% credit for your guilty pleas and I shall give it.

Counts

3. The Counts for which I must sentence you are as follows:

   Count 1: dishonestly failing to notify a change in circumstances, in respect of Housing Benefit (from 01/02/2014 to 04/11/2019);

Count 3: dishonestly failing to notify a change in circumstances, in respect of Employment Support Allowance (from 01/02/2014 to 08/11/2019);

Count 4: fraud, in respect of a Grenfell Tower Fund claim made in the name of Munir Altaib (on 01/03/2018); and

Count 6: fraud, in respect of a Universal Credit claim in name of Munir Altaib (from 18/07/2019 to 04/09/2019).

4. The facts are these.

Facts

5. Operation Dhaka is an investigation launched when officers from the Counter-Fraud Unit of the Department for Work and Pensions (the **"DWP"**) were contacted by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to alert them to a suspected identity fraud in relation to an individual named Munir Altaib.

Count 4

6. I deal first with the two fraud offences. The first offending in time is Count 4. Munir Altaib once lived at 538 Hurstway Walk, London, W11. This property was situated minutes away from Grenfell Tower, within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (the **"RBKC"**).

7. Mr Altaib was granted tenancy at the council property on 30/11/2009. In early 2018, Metropolitan Police officers conducted a visit to the property; two illegal immigrants were present at the address and arrested. The Council secured the property so that it could only be accessed by Council officials.

8. There is no evidential trace or any clear link between you or Munir Altaib.

9. Daoud Hussain was employed by RBKC as a Neighbourhood Manager following the Grenfell Tower fire and was based at Baseline Studios, London W11. On 01/03/2018, you attended Baseline Studios, claiming to be Munir Altaib. You informed Mr Hussain that you had come home to your flat and found it to be inaccessible, stating that you had been in Manchester for the past fortnight. You told him that you had allowed two illegal immigrants to stay there. As Mr Altaib had an active tenancy in his name, the Council removed the metal security door to the property.

10. The location of Mr Altaib's property to Grenfell Tower, entitled him to £5,000 compensation from a fund that had been created to support victims of the fire in 2017. Qualifying tenants were not required to complete an application form; they were merely required to present themselves at the Council's offices with a utility bill (to show proof of address), photo ID, and evidence of bank account details.

11. You told Mr Hussain that you had lost your passport around the time of the fire; due to concerns over your identity, you were photographed. You provided various documents in the name of Munir Altaib, which included a photocopy of a Freedom Pass and Driving Licence, a Mastercard letter addressed to 538 Hurstway Walk, a photocopy of a Cashplus card and a Barclays debit card. You requested the £5,000 be paid to an account ending *1524 in Mr Altaib's name. You told Mr Hussain that your DWP benefits had been

stopped, and that you were relying on food hand-outs from a mosque. You regularly attended the Council's offices and chased for payment of the compensation; however, due to the concerns over your identity, compensation was never paid. What you did, nonetheless, was a despicable thing, taking advantage of the tragedy which befell those who lived in and around Grenfell Tower when and after it had caught fire and the catastrophic loss of life which resulted.

12. On 17/04/2018, a message was received via the Council's Housing Contact portal from Munir Altaib, which stated that he had left "*Britain a year ago forever*", that he was "*now resident in Tunisia*", and that there was "*someone who uses my name and my house for terrorist acts*".

13. You had contacted Royal Mail purporting to be Munir Altaib on two separate occasions, and requested redirection of Mr Altaib's mail on 25/04/2018 to 4B Errington Road, and again on 27/03/2019 to 41 Sutherland Avenue.

14. On 09/09/2019, a Notice to Quit was sent to 538 Hurstway Walk, as it had become clear to the Council that the flat was being sub-let. Mr Hussain met with someone called Mareks Mednis, who provided a copy of a Tenancy Agreement that showed you were renting the flat from 17/04/2019 for £1,200 a month. The landlord of the flat was named as Adam Mejri – you.

15. Mr Mednis had met you at the flat, having seen an advert on SpareRoom. You told him that you were in business with your brother (who used to live at 538 Hurstway Walk) but following the traumatic events of the fire at Grenfell Tower you were unable to continue living there. Clearly, that was a lie. You also told him not to open the door to anyone, due to what had happened.

Count 6

16. The next fraud offence is Count 6.

17. On 18/07/2019, you made a claim for Universal Credit in Mr Altaib's name. Following the application, Vats Pandya, a Universal Credit Work Coach at the North Kensington Job Centre, organised an appointment for Mr Altaib on 22/07/2019.

18. On 22/07/2019, you attended the Job Centre purporting to be Mr Altaib, and provided a bank statement in his name (with account number ending *1524), a tax document, and rent card reference. An advance payment request was completed for £700.

19. On 29/07/2019, you attended the Job Centre again to complete a form in respect of your commitments, *e.g.* time spent searching for work, etc. You claimed "Munir Altaib" was starting a job as an administrator. The claim was managed via an online portal. Between July and September 2019, there were numerous communications between you and Vats Pandya. You purported to be starting a job as an administrator at a catering company, and provided a letter from Professional Catering to that effect.

20. You repeatedly avoided attendance at appointments, claiming to be physically and mentally unwell, and that you were unfit for work. When police looked into your Facebook account, the missed appointments coincided with times when you had travelled to Saudi Arabia.

21. On 04/09/2019, you finally attended the Job Centre for an appointment. By this stage, officers had you under surveillance, and you were observed travelling from your home address at Sutherland Road to the Job Centre in a Nissan Micra (VRN Y464 LGW). At 12:19, Munir Altaib's name was called and you attended the appointment and completed a self-certified health condition form upon which you recorded your conditions as depression and schizophrenia.

22. After you had left the appointment, you were cautioned and arrested by PC Joshua Lowther. You were searched and found in possession of a Barclays bank card in the name of Munir Altaib; a Job Centre appointment card, and two mobile phones.

23. Officers then searched your car and found numerous documents in Munir Altaib's name, which included the letter provided to the Job Centre from Professional Catering, a Fitness for Work statement with a letter from the Notting Hill Medical Centre, a Universal Credit document with handwritten notes including the login details for the portal, and a Cashplus account statement for account *1524.

24. Your home address was also searched and further documents in Munir Altaib's name were recovered, which included letters from the RBKC, a letter from the Home Office Minister for Grenfell Victims, and a polling card displaying a redirection sticker from Royal Mail.

Counts 1 and 3

25. Counts 1 and 3 are the dishonest failure to notify a change in circumstances: Count 1, for Housing Benefit, and Count 3, for Employment Support Allowance, as it was then known. These offences took place over a very long period of time, between February 2014 and November 2019, some 5 years and 9 months.

26. DWP officers conducted an investigation into the benefit claims made in your own name for both Housing Benefit and Employment Support Allowance, or "ESA" in short.

27. You were awarded ESA from 25/08/2012, having been in receipt of Income Support from around October 2005. ESA is based upon the circumstances of everyone in the household, and all other income or capital going into the household is taken into account. It will be paid as long as the person continues to have a limited capacity for work, and all other income or capital is below the limits set. Claimants are sent letters to advise that they are required to immediately report any change in circumstances or those of their partner.

28. The amount of ESA awarded to you was based on your declared circumstances, namely that you lived with your partner, received Child Tax Credit, that neither of you had any income from earnings or any other source, and their joint capital was under the prescribed limit.

29. When police searched 41 Sutherland Avenue, they recovered documents, including tenancy agreements, that suggested you were receiving regular income from sub-letting properties.

30. Trevor and Corrina Colman are the owners of a 2-bedroom flat, 4B Errington Road, London, W9. They let the property to you and your wife on 05/03/2016. The lease was

renewed on 05/09/2018. You passed a reference check, and the Colmans were told that you were a director of Dubai Services Limited and undertook chauffeuring and security for high end clients from the Middle East.

31. In January 2019, Mrs Colman became aware that the property was being sub-let, and she found advertisements on Spare Room with the landlord named as "Adam". As a result, the Colmans did not renew your tenancy and gave notice on 04/03/2019. They were granted a Possession Order by the Courts, and you had until 30/09/2019 to vacate the property. As at 20/10/2019, you had not done so.

32. Baoyu Chen had moved into 4B Errington Road on 05/05/2019, paying you a deposit of £700 and a further £700 on 02/05/2019 as one-month's rent upfront. £700 a month was then paid every month until October 2019. These payments were made to your bank accounts. Despite the fact that the tenancy was not due to end until 05/11/2019, on 18/10/2019 you called Baoyu Chen and asked Baoyu Chen to vacate the property immediately due to its dangerous condition. You refused to return half a month's rent and the deposit.

33. On 22/02/2019, you approached David Campbell of Westways Estate Agents to advertise Flat 4, 41 Sutherland Avenue. When Mr Campbell attended the property on 16/09/2019, he found two people; one told him that they slept in the lounge and was paying £750 a month, the other said they slept in the rear bedroom and paid £700 per month. Following the visit, you contacted Mr Campbell and told him that your brother had been sub-letting the room, which was a mistake, and that you were abroad following surgery.

34. You were also in receipt of rent income from Mareks Mednis, who was living in Mr Altaib's property, 538 Hurstway Walk.

35. None of the lettings were declared by you to Westminster Council at any point, and, as such, you were overpaid ESA in the sum of £52,398.45 between 01/02/2014 and 08/11/2019. When you were notified of this by letter dated 02/11/2020, you did not agree and said that you wanted to appeal as you had no money to live on. You were advised that you could claim Universal Credit if you believed you were entitled. You appealed the decision to Westminster Council. In your appeal you said that you were not aware of the use of your bank accounts, as they were under the control of your best friend and carer. You said that, due to your mental health, you had needed a carer to manage for most of your life.

36. You and your wife were also in receipt of Housing Benefit from 25/04/2005. No notification of self-employment or any other income was declared apart from other benefits. You signed a Housing Benefit Form in relation to Flat 1, 107 Portnall Road, London, W9, dated 29/11/2010 and received on 08/12/2010. You provided identification documents in support of your application. You signed a further Housing Benefit Form in relation to 4 Chippenham Mew, London, W9, dated 18/04/2014. Change of Address Forms were received by the Council in respect of 4B Errington Road on 03/03/2016 and 41 Sutherland Avenue on 15/04/2019.

37. None of the lettings I have already set out were declared by you to Westminster Council at any point, and, as such, you were overpaid Housing Benefit by £107,058.04 between 03/02/2014 and 04/11/2019.

Antecedents

38. You were born on 03/07/1979. You are now 47.

39. Before the commission of these offences, you had 4 convictions for 10 offences, which include relevant offences of dishonesty, namely:

    On 21/06/2005, for taxi touting and driving without insurance, on 12/06/2005;

    On 16/04/2007, for taxi touting and driving without insurance, on 16/12/2006;

    On 29/04/2015, for three counts of making a false declaration to obtain a vehicle or trade excise licence, on 17/10/2011, 23/04/2013 and 07/12/2013; and

    On 28/07/2016, for three counts of shoplifting on 13/06/2016.

Sentencing Guidelines

40. The Sentencing Council has issued Guidelines for offences such as yours, and I have followed them.

Benefit Fraud

41. For the two offences of dishonestly failing to notify in Counts 1 and 3, the Benefit Fraud Sentencing Guidelines apply. Your offending falls into Category A High Culpability, given the sophisticated nature of the offending and the significant planning involved. Harm is determined by the amount obtained. On Count 1 (Housing Benefit), Harm falls in Category 2, and on Count 3 (ESA) falls into Category 3.

42. The starting point for a Category 2A offence is 4 years' custody, with a category range of between 2 years, 6 months' custody and 5 years' custody. This is based on a starting point of £300,000. Your offending resulted in a Housing Benefit overpayment of £107,058.04.

43. The starting point for a Category 3A offence is 2 years, 6 months' custody, with a category range of 2 years' and 3 years 6 months' custody. This is based on a starting point of £75,000. Your offending resulted in an ESA overpayment of £52,398.45.

44. This offending is aggravated by your previous convictions for offences involving dishonesty and the length of time over which the offending was committed.

Fraud

45. For the two fraud offences, the Fraud Guideline applies.

46. On Count 4, the Grenfell Tower Fund fraud, your offending falls in Culpability A, given the sophisticated nature of the offence and the significant planning using documents obtained and provided to the Council in Mr Altaib's name, and the use of a bank account in his name. As to Harm, your offending falls in Category 4 given the £5,000 claim, with a starting point based on £12,500.

47. The starting point for a Category 4A offence is 18 months' custody, with a category range of 26 weeks' custody to 3 years' custody.

48. Your offending is significantly aggravated by the impact on the community, given you were seeking to fraudulently claim compensation from a fund specifically created for the benefit of genuine victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. It is further aggravated by your previous convictions for offences involving dishonesty.

49. On Count 6, the Universal Credit fraud, the amount of Universal Credit claimed in Mr Altaib's name was £378.34. Again, your offending falls in Culpability A, given the sophisticated nature of the offence and the significant planning using documents obtained and provided in Mr Altaib's name, and the use of a bank account in his name. As to Harm, your offending falls in Category 5 given the low value of the amount obtained, with a starting point based on £2,500. I have no doubt, however, that had you not been arrested on 04/09/2019 you would have been successful in your fraud and you had in any event intended to obtain a great deal more money than you did. Precisely what that amount was I cannot say, and so I do not take Harm outside of Category 5.

50. The starting point for a Category 5A offence is 36 weeks' custody, with a category range of a high level community order to 1 year's custody.

51. Your offending is aggravated by your previous convictions for offences involving dishonesty.

Sentencing offenders with mental disorders

52. I have had regard to the Sentencing Council Guideline on sentencing offenders with mental disorders. While I have considered your mental ill-health outlined in the reports provided, in my judgment it has little impact on sentencing. I have considered the cautions urged upon the Court at paragraph 4 of the Guideline. Having regard to all the evidence placed before the Court in assessing your culpability, I do not consider that your mental ill-health impaired your ability at the time of the offending to exercise appropriate judgment, to make rational choices, or to understand the nature and consequences of your actions.

Mitigation

53. I fixed your sentence for 09/01/2026 and ordered the preparation of a PSR, not because I thought any sentence of imprisonment could be suspended but because I wanted some independent understanding about your insight into your offending.

54. When the matter was called on for sentence on 09/01/2026, you provided the medical note dated 02/12/2025 at M7, which was not uploaded until 08/01/2026, indicating you were due to undergo colorectal surgery on 16/01/2026, and sentence was adjourned until 10/03/2026. On that date the Court was told that you had contacted your solicitors at short notice, saying you were in Tunisia because your brother had a serious accident and you were exploring surgery there. Letters in support of that were uploaded at T4 to T7 of the Crown Court Digital Case System (the **"CCDCS"**). You indicated that you would return on 07/04/2026 and attend for sentence on 08/04/2026. You did not. The letter at T8 was provided instead. It said you had undergone major abdominal surgery on 07/04 for diverticular disease on 28/03/2026, which had required a stoma after complications.

I adjourned sentence for a further 7 days to allow your return or to provide sufficient evidence that you were involuntarily absent from Court. The evidence came in the letter dated 13/04/2026 at T10, which said your recovery would take “a few weeks” and that you were unfit for travel in the meantime. That being so I adjourned sentence to 06/05/2026, by which time the Prosecution had obtained the material uploaded at T11-T13, obtained as a result of enquiries made, which appeared to show that you were not under the treatment of the medical centre from where the medical notes at T8 and T10 have been produced. FCDO suggest you had been sentenced to 5 months imprisonment; but that as you had dual nationality there was nothing the FO could do to provide assistance. A further letter, from the same medical centre, was this time provided, dated 28/04/2026, at T14, which, I was told, had been passed on to your solicitors by someone claiming to be your brother.

55. I mention all this simply to account for the delay in sentencing you from when your guilty pleas were entered on 10/11/2025.

56. You have a history of mental ill-health, suffering from what is thought to be treatment resistant schizophrenia but that diagnosis is far from definitive. All that is documented in the reports at M1 to M4 of the CCDCS. Initially there was some concern about your fitness to plead or to stand trial, although the reports of Dr Kotallgi at M3 and Dr Cumming at M4 put pay to that. I am told by the NHS Mental Health Liaison and Diversion Officer (who has liaised with your treating Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Mbamali), that you have failed to attend appointments offered to you, and that you have not returned the Community Mental Health Teams’ (the **“CMHT”**) calls. As at 17/02/2026 you had disengaged from the CMHT and had not had any contact with them since prior to your hearing here on 09/01/2026. I have no further information about your mental ill-health or the current treatment plan, although I note from the chronology prepared by Ms Hollingbery at T19 of the CCDCS that you appear to have re-engaged with the CMHT.

57. I think you are a malingerer, playing up whatever mental health issue you have when it suits you. That view finds support in Dr Cumming’s assessment, who says this at paragraph 114 of his report dated 21/06/2024, at M4 of the CCDCS:

> “Overall, I am concerned that his presentation with me is reliable and truly representative of his mental state and/or that the beliefs about MI5 have any relevance to the issues before the court. I am concerned that the dramatic and muddled approach is more a strategy of avoidance, throwing into his account themes of persecution. The account in interview with the police is clearly evolving as Mr Mejri tries to explain his actions with again no mention of MI5. I am also concerned about the timing – the rather dramatic presentation now does not seem to have been present in 2018/2019 and I have concerns that his access to mental health services is a mechanism to avoid prosecution.”

I cannot be sure that you are a malingerer, however, but given Dr Cumming’s observations I can be satisfied only that you do suffer from mental ill-health and have been treated in the past with psychotropic medication, and, indeed, the letter from your GP dated 25/06/2026 at T16-T18 indicates that you are currently treated with such medication.

You have a history of alcohol and illicit drug use. That seems to have contributed to your mental ill-health.

58. What is remarkable, however, is that neither your GP's letter nor the Imperial College Healthcare Trust note dated 06/07/2026 at T15 seeking to reschedule the colorectal surgery you were due to have before you left for Tunisia refer to the colorectal surgery you supposedly underwent in Tunisia on 28/03/2026. I find that surprising, given you were, apparently, fitted with a stoma which made travel difficult. I mention this simply because your medical presentation, diagnosis, and treatment are all matters that properly fall within mitigation. There is nothing in all that which cannot be accommodated within the prison estate, although I take into account that coping with such things within the prison environment would be more difficult for you.

59. I have considered carefully the PSR dated 24/12/2025. You told the PO that, at the time of these offences, you were experiencing significant psychological and financial hardship, and that you were not compliant with your schizophrenia medication and that your behaviour at the time was impulsive. She formed the view that you said this as a way to minimise the seriousness of your actions. She says that, while you referenced his mental health, this presented in a way that appeared to deflect responsibility rather than provide a credible or proportionate explanation for your actions. She notes that you deliberately used multiple aliases and employed varied and adaptive methods to engage with the benefit system over an extended period of time. To her that indicates a sustained pattern of offending, characterised by planning, organisation, and intent which significantly increases culpability. She is of the view that this level of organisation is inconsistent with behaviour arising solely from impaired judgement. I agree with that assessment.

60. I take into account the accident reported in the PSR, which occurred when you were a bus driver, and the effect that is said to have had upon you.

61. I am told that you are separated from your wife and estranged from your children aged 12, 16, and 18.

62. Whatever remorse you genuinely feel is reflected in your late guilty pleas, for which I have given credit as I have said. I am told you have been on unconditional bail since your arrest. I have made an adjustment to reflect the length of time which has passed since you were charged, and the date of sentence.

<u>Sentence</u>

63. Adam Mejri, stand up.

64. These offences show that you are a thoroughly dishonest person who preys on the innocence and misfortune of others. They are so serious that only custodial sentences can be justified.

65. The least possible sentences I can impose having regard to the seriousness of the offences are:

On Count 1: 32 months' imprisonment;

On Count 3: 27 months' imprisonment;

On Count 4: 10 months' imprisonment;

And on Count 6: 10 weeks' imprisonment.

66. The sentence on Counts 1, 3, and 6 will run concurrently to each other, with the sentence on Count 4 consecutive to them, making a total sentence of 42 months in all. That is the least sentence that I can impose to mark the totality of your offending. I do not accept the submission that such an overall sentence is severe in all the circumstances of your case; it is, in my judgment, one which reflects the overall level of your criminality and properly reflects totality.

67. You will be released no later than half-way through the sentence, namely after 21 months, and the remainder of the sentence will be served on licence in the community. You must comply with all the conditions of your licence, failing which you will be at risk of recall to prison to serve the remainder of the term in custody.

68. You will pay the surcharge applicable in your case.

69. I do not make any order for costs or compensation, considering what I am told about your means.

70. You may go with the officer.