NEWPORT CROWN COURT

R

V

(1) GEORGIE MEARS
(2) CONNOR PALFREY

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Tristan Kerr was only 17 years old when you both killed him. He had his whole life ahead of him and you took it from him. We have heard of the devastating impact of his death on his family and on all his friends. They have lost a loving son, grandson, brother, nephew, a devoted friend. He's been described as a funny, intelligent and energetic boy and dog lover too – especially his lurcher Wilbur - who enjoyed playing football and being outdoors as well as gaming indoors. His family will never see him grow to be an adult and see where life would take him. The grief of his mother and father was heartbreaking to hear.
2. One of the most distressing features in this very sad case is that Tristan's family and friends do not know why you killed him. You have both refused to say why you did what you did. That missing piece of the jigsaw will be unbearable for them, always wondering and never knowing why you killed him, unless one day you tell the truth.
3. It is the court's task today to sentence you Georgie Mears for Tristan's murder when you stabbed Tristan through the lung and heart on 5 February 2026 in Ieuan Crane's house in Lower Francis Street in Abertridwr, Caerphilly. And to sentence you Connor Palfrey for his manslaughter for your role in the operation.
4. No sentence that this court can impose will ever bring Tristan back and nothing that I can say will make it better for his mother, his father, siblings, grandfather Jason and all his many friends and family and everyone who knew and loved him.

The facts

5. I am satisfied so that I am sure from the jury's verdicts and all the evidence that we have heard over this last six weeks that, Mr Palfrey you were the one who organised and planned the attack on Tristan on 5 February this year. You were the prime mover. You organised for Elexi Manny to drive to 29A Lower Francis Street and had arranged beforehand that she would drive you to Hereford afterwards. It is not possible to say exactly when you planned it, I accept that it may not have been long in the planning, but it must have been at least when you arranged the lift to Hereford. Your explanation that you had planned all along to go to Hereford to sell drugs was ridiculous when you had taken no drugs with you to sell and told us your supplier was in Cardiff.
6. Neither Ms Manny, nor Ricardo Elliot who was also in the car, knew of the plan or shared your intention to attack Tristan, it was known only to both you two. Ms Manny was treated as the hired driver – at your beck and call that day Mr Palfrey. The dismissive way in which you referred to her in your evidence had the ring of truth. She was Tristan's friend and was shocked and upset by his death. She is a vulnerable person, prone to manipulation and exploitation.
7. Quite what Mr Elliot was doing in South Wales is another unsolved mystery in this case, but he also lacked agency. He was being used by you Mr Palfrey as a drugs runner, being told what to do, you treated him as your "boy", even if he was not the "boy" you referred to in Bridgend that was a different individual. He had been dependant on you for accommodation in the previous few days and had no money. You both hardly knew Mr Elliot and Ms Manny only through her ex boyfriend, so would not have trusted them with your plans. You used Mr Elliot by taking him with you to the scene, as he had nowhere else to go and was an imposing figure, and Ms Manny to drive you there. I have read the psychologist's report on Mr Elliot and underneath his veneer of confidence he too is vulnerable and was prone to exploitation and

had high levels of suggestibility. Unlike all his co-defendants no friend or family member ever came to court for him.

8. Mr Mears, you were aged 18 at the time, considerably younger than you Mr Palfrey who was 24. It is clear from the evidence that Mr Mears you were under the control and influence of you Mr Palfrey. You bossed Mr Mears around and told him what to do and he followed you. Your evidence, Mr Mears, that you thought Mr Palfrey was a "muppet" that you would not trust to be left with the knife was utterly implausible. You did his bidding and what he said went. You were not equal partners and it was telling how much you tried to cover up and protect Mr Palfrey in your evidence. You obviously lied for him – to give just one trivial example you said he was just blowing up a balloon with his own breath in the car which was captured on CCTV, when even Mr Palfrey accepted that he was using the balloon to inhale nitrous oxide, as was obvious to everyone anyway.
9. Mr Palfrey you must have not only known that Mr Mears had the knife, but I am also sure that arranged for him to collect it from the garden in 29A. As Kai's cousin and friend I am sure you knew that he was unhappy with where Ms Manny had hidden it when he was on the run from the police. You got Mr Mears to pick it up and you intended him to use it on Tristan. Where your case differs from Mr Mears is that you did not intend Mr Mears to cause Tristan really serious harm with it, whereas Mr Mears you intended to cause him at least really serious harm.
10. Mr Crane is a vulnerable person and his house at 29A was used by drug users and dealers, including Tristan, as somewhere to congregate and take and deal drugs from. You both knew that Tristan would be there and you two went into the house in part of a co-ordinated plan to attack Tristan. Mr Palfrey you went in first and took the lead to throw the people in the house off guard, so while Mr Mears quickly ran in behind you with the knife out. You were the aggressor Mr Mears. You went straight to Tristan and slashed the knife twice at Tristan, slicing his puffa jacket open on the arm and on his body, but the knife did not penetrate through the rest of his clothes or into his body. But the third stab in a right hook motion went straight into his

flank, between his seventh and eighth ribs, through his left lung and into his heart while he was trying to defend himself by trying to rugby tackle you. The blade plunged 5 and ¼ inches deep into his body and was fatal. Tristan had bravely tried to avoid injury and fight you off, but unarmed he was no match for the knife that you had. We do not know exactly what the knife was or looked like as you have thrown it away, there have been various different descriptions, but it was certainly some type of combat knife with a hilt, not an ordinary kitchen knife. It must have been a special knife for Kai Raven to be so concerned about protecting it and keeping it hidden from the police.

11. Whilst I accept that you may not have intended to actually kill Tristan and only cause him really serious harm, using a knife in the way that you did carried such a high risk of death it is a distinction almost without distinction and affords you very little mitigation.
12. While you were doing this Mr Mears, Mr Palfrey was deterring the others in the room from going to Tristan's aid by waving a stick and telling them not to intervene. I accept that the prosecution could not prove that you took the stick into the property and that you may have found it in the room. But the fact remains that you found and used the stick to assist Mr Mears attack Tristan. You intended Mr Mears to only cause some harm to Tristan, not the really serious harm that Mr Mears intended.
13. When you Mr Mears were briefly stuck in the flat because of the broken living room door handle before Mr Crane let you out, Mr Palfrey you waited outside the door so that you could both run back into the car together to get away. The whole episode was over in just 1 minute 56 seconds from you both getting out of the car to the car driving off. It was a slick operation.
14. Mr Palfrey you then made sure that Ms Manny took a circuitous route via backroads as you used her phone to navigate and direct her. You had of course already turned your phone off, no doubt to try to minimise the risk of being linked to the offence, but had no qualms about using her phone and thus wrongly implicating her. It was a ridiculous story that your phone was temperamental because as a drug dealer you need your phone on at all times.

15. You Mr Mears destroyed your SIM card, threw that and the knife out of the car window and discarded most of you clothes in a field outside Abergavenny. You turned your phone off as soon as you got into the car in an attempt to avoid detection.
16. You both hid from the police after you arrived in Hereford as they searched for you when they arrested Ms Manny.

Personal circumstances and mitigation.

Mr Mears

17. As already noted you were 18 years and 10 months old when you committed this offence. You have some previous convictions but none for violence, nothing remotely as serious as this and have never received a custodial sentence before. I have had the benefit of a psychological report from Dr Gobbett who has assessed you as in the borderline range of cognitive functioning on the 8th centile. That means that 92 percent of the population have a higher cognitive ability than you. You struggled as school and failed to get any qualifications and completed your education in a pupil referral unit. You almost certainly have undiagnosed ADHD which will have made school harder for you. It was very difficult for you when your father died of bowel cancer when you were 12 and it affected you badly. But your mother has provided a stable background for you where you live and she attended court every day. You have not experienced the adverse childhood experiences that we sometimes see in court. However you appeared immature and young for your age in court, consistent with your cognitive functioning difficulties and are immature developmentally.
18. The way in which you were physically sick after you had killed Tristan indicates that you were shocked by the enormity of what you had done and is consistent with immaturity and not fully understanding beforehand the significance of your actions. I accept that your emotional and developmental age is lower than your chronological age.
19. There are testimonials speaking of your positive qualities. The commitment and belief in you of your family friend Charlie Thomas John is impressive but

you did not respond well to his help. Instead of sticking with the opportunity he gave you in his building company you packed it in to become a drug dealer.

20. You are however doing well in custody where you have been since 7 February and have enhanced status. Your letter to the court demonstrates a degree of insight now into what you have done and I accept remorse. However you have not revealed why you and Mr Palfrey killed Tristan and if you truly wanted to lessen the hurt for Tristan's family and friends you could enlighten them.
21. Although the planning for the attack on Tristan was organised by Mr Palfrey, you took a knife to the scene intending to use it. There are no statutory aggravating features in your case as using a weapon is built into the starting point in schedule 21 paragraph 4.
22. As to mitigating features your age and immaturity are highly relevant. I have had close regard to the sentencing guidelines for sentencing children and young persons and also the youth bench book and the principles set out by the Lady Chief Justice in *R v Kamarra-Jarra*. So too is your limited history of offending, although that must be tempered by the knowledge that you were a drug dealer making between £200- £250 per day selling class A and B drugs. I have paid close attention to Dr Gobbett's report, but it's relevance is to your immaturity, exacerbated by your poor intellectual and cognitive functioning, and I find that your culpability is not otherwise reduced by any mental disorders or neurological impairments. But you were used and manipulated by Mr Palfrey and for reasons that were not clear to me you did what you were told to do by him. You are very suggestible as is evident from your referral to the national referral mechanism with a conclusion that you should not be prosecuted for drug supply offences because you were a victim of modern slavery by older males.

Mr Palfrey

23. You were 24 when you committed this offence and are now 25. You are lightly convicted – four convictions for six offences from 2020 to 2023. There

is no pre-sentence report for you and none was requested by your counsel or the prosecution and everyone wanted your and Mr Mears' sentences to be set without delay. I have read Dr Derek Indoe's psychological report and the intermediary reports and consider that in the circumstances of the case it is unnecessary to obtain a pre-sentence report.

24. I have also had the benefit of seeing your behaviour in court this last six weeks and of you giving evidence over two days. The way in which you gave your evidence, your ability to answer questions, the language that you used and the way in which you challenged counsel, especially prosecuting counsel was entirely inconsistent with the contents of both the psychological report and the intermediary report. You told the intermediary that you were unable to say what 6 plus 5 equalled. You also told her that you did not know which order the months of the year came in. You were assessed as having no understanding of any figurative language. You told the intermediary and the psychologist that you had no idea of any court language or the legal process.
25. In your interview with the psychologist you appeared to have difficulty identifying that "blue" and "green" were colours. From the answers you gave in the tests that the psychologist conducted you fell into the category of "extremely low intelligence", and you had an age equivalent score of between 6 and 8 years and 2 months year old and you were on the 0.4th percentile of IQ. That means similar aged adults will have 99.6 percent higher IQ than you. That is abilities and intelligence of a primary school child in year 1 or 2, possibly 3.
26. However the significant cognitive difficulties apparently identified in the reports were wholly at odds with your ability to express yourself, your intelligence and cognitive functioning in court and much of the evidence. You were fluent, regularly used images in your language – talking of killing 2 birds with one stone for example. You had considerable linguistic dexterity and fluency and were, for example, easily able to follow Mr Ivers KC complex questioning. You had very good understanding and nor were you suggestible. You were articulate in your text messages and you could

navigate using google maps on a mobile phone. I do not accept the conclusions of Dr Indoe about your intelligence and cognitive functioning. You must have also lied to the intermediary when you told her that you could not add 6 to 5. You were an experienced drug dealer able to compute fractions, prices and profit margins with facility and running several "boys" as you called them. I accept Mr Tully's submission that you may have tried to mask symptoms and cognitive deficits identified by Dr Indoe, and have taken that into account.

27. You were the ring leader and the organiser of the attack on Tristan. You manipulated and used Mr Mears, who was six years your junior. You used and manipulated others too – ordering Tristan to send Conah Davies round to his house with scales; ordering Mr Elliot, the largest of all the defendants to climb through Fern Holden's open window which must have been a very tight fit, so that he could open the front door for you, rather than doing it yourself; swapping your sliders with Mr Mears trainers so that it was his feet, not yours that got wet in Hereford. I found the interaction between you and Lewis Hackney outside the Buddha Bar on cctv earlier that day was illustrative of your power and influence among elements in the community. You enjoyed behaving like a big shot, being driven round by Ms Manny that day like she was your personal chauffeur.
28. You had also smashed in Mr Crane's front door on a previous occasion and he was clearly in fear of you. It was telling that you did not need to use your stick to deter the others in 29A from defending their friend Tristan. You did not need to hit Mr Crane with the stick when he grabbed Mr Mears arm, as you would have seen that Tristan had already been stabbed by then. The job was done.
29. You did not however intend Mr Mears to cause really serious harm or kill Tristan, only some harm. But knowing, as you did, that Mr Mears had Kai's combat knife and that he intended to use it to cause some harm to Tristan, you must have had an intention that Mr Mears would cause harm falling just short of really serious harm. The carrying and use of the knife like that also carried a high risk of death or really serious harm, which must have been

obvious to you. I find that your culpability falls into category B under the guidelines.

30. There are two culpability B factors present in this case, which although are not sufficient to take the offence up to category A, it is on the cusp, and I also make an upward adjustment to reflect the way you had a leading role in the group and planned the offence. The way in which you also involved others, principally Mr Mears, but also Mr Elliot and Ms Manny as unwitting assistants, through exploitation and manipulation. The offence involved the use of the stick as a weapon. You were as well involved in the actions after the event to avoid detection – turning your phone off, getting out of the country into England, directing Ms Manny onto minor roads; working with Mr Mears in throwing away the knife which I find you were and must have been doing at the petrol station in Abergavenny, his SIM card and his clothes; hiding from the police in Hereford and finally pretending to the police that Ms Holden's flat was empty when you knew Mr Elliot was in the bedroom.
31. I do not accept that your expressed remorse was genuine. Your behaviour in court towards Tristan's family of smirking and joshing with your co-defendants in front of them was understandably very upsetting for them and quite unnecessary. Your refusal to come to court on several days, your refusal to come into the court room promptly when asked meant we were kept waiting by you most days and it delayed court. Your behaviour smacked not of remorse, but of selfishness and entitlement. Your refusal to say why you organised an attack on Tristan that day is inconsistent with true remorse.
32. I did not find you immature for your age and no reduction can be made on that account. But you are still relatively young and you have very few previous convictions, that goes in your favour.
33. Whilst it would not be appropriate or just to impose a life sentence on you I conclude that there is a serious risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission by you of further specified offences. You organised a cold blooded attack on someone who thought you were now his friend and you did so by violating the home of Mr Crane, who you

knew was a vulnerable individual and whose house you had previously barged into, without invitation, smashing the door down as you left. You did not wield the knife but you set up the attack and got Mr Mears to do it. The public cannot be protected from you by a determinate sentence alone.

The sentences

Mr Mears

34. By law, the sentence for murder is life. The court must decide the minimum term of imprisonment you must serve for murder by reference to Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020. The starting point for the minimum term you must serve before you will be considered for release on licence is 25 years as the offence falls within paragraph 4 of Schedule 21 – you took a knife to the scene intending to use it. However, 25 years is the starting, not the finishing point. This was a planned, targeted attack on Tristan and although Mr Palfrey was the planner and the instigator, you went along with it and must have known about it at least a few hours beforehand. That would result in a small upward adjustment to the starting point. There must then be a downward adjustment to reflect the many points in your favour.
35. I can only give limited credit for your remorse because of your failure to explain, even now, why you did it. It may be that others are putting pressure on you not to tell, but even so, if you were truly remorseful for what you had done you would help Tristan's family and friends by now telling the truth. In the 18 years of your life you had clocked up 5 convictions for 15 offences so although none were for violence or sufficient to require a custodial sentence, they are not insignificant and provide only limited mitigation. But there are three important mitigating factors. What is most important is your immaturity: you are young for your age and you genuinely have limited cognitive ability on the 8th centile. You were also heavily under the influence of Mr Palfrey and thirdly you have made considerable progress you in custody over the last 9 months all of which significantly reduce your culpability.

36. I therefore make an overall downward adjustment from the starting point of **4 years and 6 months** from minimum term so that you must serve **20 years and 6 months** before you may be considered for parole.
37. I shall reduce the length of the minimum term by the **282** days that you have spent on remand since you were arrested so that the minimum term takes account of the entire period of your incarceration in respect of these offences.
38. It is important that everyone concerned with this case should understand what this means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will automatically be released. It is the term that must be served before the Parole Board can undertake their first review of the case. They will review the risk that you present at that stage and will consider whether you can properly be released from custody subject to licence and, if so, on what terms.
39. If you are released, you will be subject to licence for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence is revoked, you will be recalled to prison to continue to serve your life sentence in custody.
40. It follows that unless and until the Parole Board consider that your release is appropriate you will remain in custody.
41. The statutory surcharge will apply.

Mr Palfrey

42. In your case I have considered whether a standard determinate sentence is appropriate. If imposing such a sentence the least period of detention I could have imposed in all the circumstances of your case would have been

one of **16 years**. This case fell into category B, but was on the cusp of category A. As such, the starting point is 12 years. But there were very many aggravating features in your case and you had very little mitigation. You were the architect, instigator and planner of the operation, manipulating those around you, as explained in detail above. Your level of culpability means that the shortest possible determinate sentence consistent with the seriousness of the offence must be the top of the range.

43. Furthermore, such a sentence would not fully address the risk you currently represent and I consider it necessary to impose an extended sentence in order to protect the public in the future. The scale of your involvement and role and manipulation of events that day requires it. The fact that you are lightly convicted carries little weight when compared with your culpability for this offence. Mr Tully has prayed in aid your age, but at 24 you were not immature either in developmental terms or chronological age. It is unnecessary to obtain a pre-sentence report as there is sufficient information before the court to conclude that you are dangerous within the meaning of the act.

44. The extended sentence is made up of two parts: a custodial period, which will be no longer than the **16 year** period I mentioned, and an extended licence period of **5 years** making an extended sentence of **21 years** in total.

45. You will serve two-thirds of the custodial period in prison before the Parole Board will consider whether it is safe to release you, and if so on what terms. The days which you have spent on remand in custody will automatically count towards the custodial term of your sentence. Once

released, you will serve on licence any part of the custodial period which remains, and you will then be subject to the extended licence for a further period of **5 years**.

46. If, when you are subject to licence, you commit another offence or fail to comply with the terms of your release, you are liable to be recalled to custody and may serve the entire sentence in custody.

47. The statutory surcharge will apply.

Commendations

48. I want now to pay tribute to the neighbours who attended at the scene and dealt so professionally with what they found there. They came out in the cold and the rain and the dark and did everything they could to try to keep Tristan alive and make him comfortable. They were all good Samaritans that Thursday night. I am recommending them all for a High Sheriff's Award for their outstanding contribution to their local community. Living next door to number 29A must have had it's challenges over the years, but they all came out to help when needed and nursed Tristan in his dying moments. Those neighbours are Andrea Jones and her husband Windsor Jones, the neighbours Andrew and Sharon Muir and who rushed out with pillows and blankets as soon as they saw the ring doorbell footage of Tristan falling by their car. Some neighbours would have remonstrated with a person touching their car but all Mr and Mrs Muir and wanted to do was to help an injured boy, and finally the veterinary nurse Rachel Hatton who lent her stethoscope to help Mrs Jones nurse Tristan.

49. The team of detectives approached this awful case with compassion and professionalism. I wish to thank all the police officers and civilian staff who investigated the case and for their detective work, so that this case could be brought to justice.

50. I thank all counsel and their solicitors for their hard work and advocacy.

51. I once again want to thank the jury for their hard work who approached their role with such concentration and close attention to the evidence and the distressing details. I could see what a traumatic experience it was for them to perform their valuable public service. I hope they too will now feel some closure as the case has now ended.

52. I want to thank all the staff here at Newport Crown Court especially our court clerk Ms Weir and our principal usher Ms Holbrook who have gone above and beyond throughout the last six weeks, to ensure a smooth running trial and hearing today in challenging circumstances at times.

53. Finally I now return to where I started. The last word and thoughts of all of us go to Tristan's family and friends for their tragic loss. No sentence can lessen their pain. I thank them for the quiet dignity and way in which they have behaved in court today and throughout this trial as they had to listen to the harrowing evidence about their boy Tristan's final hours.

Mrs Justice Stacey

18 November 2026