



IN THE CROWN COURT AT LEEDS

Indictment No. T20197651

HHJ Tom Bayliss QC

Regina v Paul Crowther

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**SENTENCING REMARKS**

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**Bethany Fields**

Our first thoughts must be and my first words will be about Bethany Fields.

In September 2019, Bethany Fields was aged 21. Her mother, in her moving Victim Impact Statement, gives Bethany's exact age down to the day. Bethany was an undergraduate at York University. She was reading environmental geography. She obviously had a bright future ahead of her. The statements that I have read about her paint a very clear picture of the sort of person she was. Certain characteristics shine out: in summary she was a talented, intelligent, kind, thoughtful and loving person.

Her friend Mattieu Scoot describes her in this way: "She never did anything wrong to anyone. She was very, very clever she just liked people."

In the words of Alice Holland, her friend. She was "funny, caring, protective and wise beyond her years",

Her mother Pauline says this of her: "Bethany was beautiful inside and out, talented, intelligent, ambitious, also selfless, kind, gracious, giving, loyal and very loving, inspirational to many. A daughter who any parent would have been proud of."

Bethany worked for an organisation called 'Beat It'. That organisation works with people with disabilities and learning difficulties providing music therapy. On the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019 Bethany Fields, and her friends Mathieu Scott and Alex Whitelaw, who also worked for that organisation, went to the Irish Club in Huddersfield. They were there to host a 'Beat It' event.

It was there that you Paul Crowther ambushed her, attacked her with a knife and then repeatedly stabbed her as she lay prone on the floor, ending her life.

**Plea**

On 03 August 2020 you pleaded guilty before me to the offence of Manslaughter of Bethany Fields. On the basis of your Diminished Responsibility. That plea was accepted and the case adjourned for further psychiatric reports to deal with sentence. In the circumstances it is agreed that I should treat the plea as having been tendered at the first available opportunity.

### **Background**

From the age of 16 Bethany Fields had had jobs at the Old Chapel, a music studio run by the Leeds Music Trust. And it was there that she first met the defendant, Paul Crowther.

Paul Crowther had also been going to the Old Chapel since he was a teenager. Unhappily for many years, certainly since 2014, he has suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. The severity of his symptoms has fluctuated, and, although at times he has been able to work, there have been several admissions to hospital under the Mental Health Act.

Paul Crowther began a relationship with Bethany Fields in October 2017. Bethany Fields did what she could to help him with his mental health issues, but it all became too much for her to cope with and she ended their relationship on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 13<sup>th</sup> August, the Defendant saw the psychiatric liaison team at Dewsbury District Hospital. He reported feeling 'overwhelmed ... in part due to his partner Beth ending the relationship'. He said that he wanted to attack others and to kill himself.

Thereafter he came to believe that Bethany was in a relationship with a young man named Mathieu Scott, and began making threats to her to harm Mathieu.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August, the Defendant sent messages to Nigel Murphy a volunteer at the Old Chapel about Bethany Fields: among other things, he said that it was "about to get messy."

Bethany Field was sufficiently concerned to report these occurrences to the police. She made a statement on 19<sup>th</sup> August in which she sets out the history of their relationship. She describes the defendant as manipulative, abusive and controlling. She told police that the abuse, which was initially low key, began to intensify. In her words: "He would constantly text me asking me where I was, who I was with. He would often self-harm cutting his arms and hands. He would punch himself and try to strangle himself if we ever argued".

"I wanted to finish things but he was relentlessly threatening me that if broke up with him he would kill himself and or people I loved. On 15<sup>th</sup> June I had to do something and decided to end things with him. Since then I have received a barrage of abuse and threats and this has been constant. He has an obsession with killing someone and what it would feel like. I genuinely don't know what to do. I am scared and frightened of what he will do and it's made me fearful for others. All I want is for him to leave me alone".

### **12<sup>th</sup> September 2019**



On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September, Bethany Fields, Mathieu Scott, and Alex Whitelaw drove to the Irish Club in Huddersfield. They arrived at 6pm and began unloading their music equipment.

The Defendant had discovered that they were to be there, and I am quite sure that he had planned to attack Bethany. He armed himself with two knives, including a 6" long kitchen knife. He had bought the knives eight days before. During the day he went to his local police station and made a report, in which he made allegations about Bethany.

He drove from his home address in Batley to Huddersfield. He arrived as Bethany, Mathieu Scott and Alex Whitelaw were unloading their equipment. He parked his car, took out the 6" knife, and ran across the street, with the knife in his hand, towards Bethany.

What then happened is captured by CCTV. I have watched that footage. It is of high quality. I need say no more than that it shows a targeted and sustained attack. She was stabbed multiple times and after the attack the Defendant ran back to his car and drove off.

Alex Whitelaw, Mathieu Scott, and several passers-by tried to render first aid. Paramedics arrived shortly afterwards, but despite the best efforts of those who attended to resuscitate her Bethany Fields died. The time of death is recorded, at 18:39.

Cause of death was multiple stab wounds; they led to catastrophic blood loss.

The Defendant's registration number had been noted by a witness, and police found him on the A58, driving back towards his home address. He drove onto the M62. He became aware of the police following him and began cutting across lanes and undertaking other vehicles. He left the motorway and ran the red lights before speeding on to a bridge over the M621, stopping his car running to the edge of the bridge jumping over the railings and holding a small knife to his throat. Two police officers PC Josh Setterfield and PC Samuel Johnson, persuaded back to safety. He was arrested. He told police that the weapon was in the car.

He was taken to St James's hospital and then to Huddersfield police station; at hospital and in police custody he was behaving intermittently bizarrely, holding conversations with himself and referring to 'Osiris', the voice in his head. When being booked in he said, "I did what you fucking said" and later "I've done what you asked, now fuck off."

In formal interview he responded to all questions "No comment." To all the doctors he has professed amnesia about killing Bethany Fields.

### **Impact**

I have read Victim Impact Statements from Bethany Fields mother (Pauline), her father (James) and her friend Mark Hubbard. I am aware that many members of her extended family have attended court today.

Pauline Jones read her statement in court today, as well as a poem about Bethany. No one in court could fail to be moved as Pauline Jones read spoke in court. Her grief is obvious, her loss is indescribable.

Those statements demonstrate what is true of all cases of homicide; whether it be categorised as murder or, as in this case, manslaughter. The crime ends one life; but it harms countless other lives.

### **Psychiatric reports**

The prosecution having accepted a plea to manslaughter, on the grounds of diminished responsibility, it is necessary for me to consider the medical evidence and the reports that have been prepared on the defendant

#### **Dr Green**

Dr Green's opinion is that, at the material time, the defendant was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and dissociative fugue. The schizophrenia gave rise to auditory hallucinations and associated delusional (false) beliefs, leading to irrational conduct. According to Dr Green the dissociative fugue explains the defendant's professed amnesia for events surrounding the killing; meaning that he was, according to Dr Green, in "a state of altered awareness", because of the dissociative fugue, at the time of the killing.

#### **Dr Quinn**

Dr Quinn's opinion is that at the material time the defendant was suffering from schizophrenia (coloured by abnormalities in his personality) which would have impaired his ability to form a rational judgement at and around the material time, and would have been a significant contributory factor in causing him to carry out the killing. But as to defendant's complaints of amnesia Dr Quinn explains it, not by dissociative fugue, but as a coping mechanism for the overwhelming nature of the behaviour and as a means of the defendant (psychologically) dealing with his behaviour.

#### **Dr Kent**

Diagnosis – Paul Crowther suffers from a serious mental illness, namely Schizophrenia. In addition, there is evidence of longstanding personality disorder (PD) with an early onset of problems and continued maladaptive behaviour throughout adulthood. Although he has been diagnosed as having an Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder there is also evidence of antisocial traits.

### **Antecedent history**

Paul Crowther is aged 36. He has no convictions for violence other than a conviction for harassment in 2015. In the context of this case, that conviction is a significant one.

You were in a relationship with a young woman. She describes you as controlling. Your relationship broke down; at your instigation, but when you thought better of it, and tried to get back with her, and she refused. Thereafter you began harassing her, even at her place of



work. She left her job because of it. In May 2015 she went to the trouble of asking the police to issue a harassment warning. After that you met her on two occasions and were abusive and threatening towards her. You were clearly jealous of the fact that you believed that she may be seeing another man. You were making threats about what you might do to her father and to the man she was seeing. you continued to contact her by text, and social media. Those messages were abusive and aggressive in their nature and included threats towards her father and the other man.

As a result, you were charged with an offence under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. On 16 November 2015, about two years before you began your relationship with Bethany Fields, you were sentenced to a community order for that offence. It is against that background and in that context that your subsequent behaviour towards Bethany Fields must be viewed

### **Sentencing guidelines**

The Sentencing Council has issued a definitive guideline, on sentencing for manslaughter. The guideline makes plain that the starting points and sentencing ranges are to be determined in all cases by the degree of responsibility retained

The Guideline at page 22 reads: A conviction for manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility necessarily means that the offender's ability to understand the nature of the conduct, form a rational judgment and/or exercise self-control was substantially impaired. The court should determine what level of responsibility the offender retained. The court should consider the extent to which the offender's responsibility was diminished by the mental disorder at the time of the offence with reference to the medical evidence and all the relevant information available to the court.

I have carefully assessed all the relevant circumstances preceding and following the killing. I have concluded that your animosity to Bethany Fields and your decision to kill Bethany Fields was entirely irrational and was undoubtedly driven by your condition. But as Dr Quinn points out it would be naïve from a psychiatric perspective to say that your behaviour is wholly attributable to your illness." And, according to Dr Kent your behaviour was targeted, and goal directed in a sequential way to commit homicide.

Dr Green and Dr Quinn both case oral evidence.

Dr Green's opinion is that it is possible that the defendant was in "a state of altered awareness", because of the dissociative fugue, at the time of the killing. But that opinion is based upon the history given by the defendant. If this were a case dissociative fugue then it would render the level of retained culpability as low. When pressed as to how the purposeful purchase of knives eight days before the killing fitted with the concept, he said that it was not inconsistent. But he did concede that it was only explicable if there were two separate episodes of fugue.

Dr Quinn also gave evidence. He has seen the CCTV footage of the event and that it is organised goal directed, determined behaviour. There is no chaos. Had he considered this was any form of dissociative state he would have raised it in her report. All things are

possible. Amnesia by conscious denial is possible; and a coping mechanism to allow them to deal with the aftermath of what they have done. Amnesia and crime are often comfortable or uncomfortable bedfellows. Dissociative fugue is no more than a possibility

I reject the suggestion that you were suffering from dissociative fugue. I am quite sure that you knew perfectly well what you were doing. You may have amnesia for what you have done. But you knew what you were doing. You were not suffering from dissociative fugue.

Once you had made a decision to kill Bethany Fields your actions, in carrying out what must have been your purpose, are characterised by entirely logical and rational actions with a view to carrying out the course that you had determined upon. You acquired a knife, you found out where she would be, you drove yourself to that location, you took the knife with you to the scene, you chased her when she ran away, and, having stabbed her multiple times, you escaped the scene by driving yourself away, when you became aware of the police following him and began cutting across lanes and undertaking other vehicles in order to get away from them.

It follows that I have concluded that, for the purposes of the sentencing guideline, you retained a high level of criminal responsibility.

### **Aggravating features**

I have identified a number of aggravating features in this case. Those aggravating features are:

1. The statutory aggravating feature of your previous conviction for harassment in 2015
2. The history of your relationship; which Bethany Fields, which she herself described in her statement to the police as abusive and controlling; a relationship characterised by threats to harm her, her friends, and her family
3. The fact that you took a knife to the scene intending to have it available to use as a weapon and used that knife in committing the offence. That in my judgement is a seriously aggravating feature, particularly where (as here) it is in the context of a significant degree of preparation and planning which has given rise to a high level of retained responsibility. As Leveson LJ made clear in Odegburne [2013] EWCA Crim 711 the provisions of para. 5A of Schedule 21 Criminal Justice Act 2003 (which changed the law to increase the minimum term from 15 to 25 years where an offender used a knife or other weapon to commit murder having taken it to the scene) , mean that, in order to preserve consistency of approach to sentencing across the range of offences, that change in respect of sentences for murder must inevitably have an impact on offences of manslaughter committed with a knife or similar weapon.

### **Mitigating features**

There is no mitigation other than your guilty plea.



### **Surcharge**

The statutory surcharge applies. The order will be drawn up in the appropriate amount and a collection order will be made.

### **Criteria for a Hospital Order**

Having heard the medical evidence which has been given in court today by Dr Green and Dr Quinn, and having read the reports prepared by Dr Quinn, Dr Kent and Dr Green, all of whom are approved by the Secretary of State under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983, I am satisfied that the criteria for a hospital order are met:

- You are suffering from a mental disorder, namely paranoid schizophrenia
- This disorder is of a nature which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment; and
- Appropriate medical treatment is available for you at Newton Lodge Secure Unit under the care of Dr Green.

In your case however a hospital order on its own, even with a restriction order, would not meet the justice of the case; there must also be a penal element to the sentence, in order to reflect the harm caused by you and your level of retained culpability.

As to the harm caused by you: this is a case of manslaughter; the harm caused by you is the needless loss of a young life. Nothing could be more serious.

As to your culpability: of course, your plea to diminished responsibility has been accepted and I accept that you would not have committed this offence but for your mental illness. But that does not, in the circumstances of this case, relieve you of all responsibility. Your culpability and your responsibility, though diminished, is, on the reasons I have already given, high.

Having concluded that there should be a penal element to the sentence, I next turn to the length and nature of that sentence.

### **Dangerousness**

Manslaughter is a serious specified offence within the meaning of Chapter 5 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and for the purposes of sections 224 and 225(2) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

There is consistency between the psychiatrists as to the Defendant's continued dangerousness. As Dr Quinn, His risks going forward should not be understated."

The requirements of section 225 (2) CJA 2003 are fulfilled in your case. I am quite sure that you present a significant risk of causing serious harm by committing further similar offences. You are a very dangerous man.

The offence of manslaughter is punishable with life imprisonment and in my judgment the seriousness of the offence committed by you is such as to justify a sentence of life imprisonment; neither a determinate nor an extended sentence will adequately protect the public given the ongoing danger that you present.

### **Life imprisonment**

**Paul Crowther**, for the offence of the manslaughter of Bethany Fields, I sentence you to life imprisonment.

In addition I make a hospital direction, under the provisions of section 45A of the Mental Health Act 1983, and so instead of being removed to and detained in a prison, you will be removed to and detained in Newton Lodge Medium Secure Unit under the care of Dr Green

You will be subject to the special restrictions set out in section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983 without limit of time.

What this means is that you will be detained in hospital for as long as necessary. If and when it is no longer necessary you will be transferred to prison. Once in prison you will serve the remainder of the life sentence, which I have imposed.

### **Minimum term**

As to the minimum term of that life sentence which you must serve before being even considered for parole: as I have already said I have assessed your level of retained responsibility as high. The guidelines published by the sentencing council, which I follow suggest a starting point of 24 years' custody and a category range of 15 – 40 years' custody. In your case, if passing a determinate sentence after a trial, in accordance with those guidelines, and taking account of all of the aggravating and mitigating factors in this case, I would have sentenced you to 36 years' imprisonment. Giving you full credit for your plea of guilty I would have reduced that to 24 years. Because you would have served up to half of that sentence in custody, I fix the minimum term which you will serve at half of 24 years: that is 12 years. Finally, I reduce that minimum term of 12 years by the number of days, which you have spent on remand in custody. 357 days. or whatever the correct figure proves to be. This means that the minimum term which you will serve before the Parole Board may consider your case is one of 11 years and 8 days



It is most important that you – and everyone concerned with this case – should understand what this in fact means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will automatically be released but the minimum time that you will spend in custody before any consideration can be given to your release on parole. Given your history and the continuing danger to the public which you pose, the prospects of your being released at that or any stage must be very slim indeed. It will, in the end, be for the Parole Board to say whether and if so on what conditions you are to be released. But unless and until the Parole Board consider that your release is appropriate you will remain in custody.

If and when you are ever released you will be subject to licence; and this will remain the case for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked, you would be recalled to prison to continue to serve your life sentence in custody.