



Judiciary of
England and Wales

THE KING

v

VLADIMIR IVASHIKIN

(also known as VLADIMIR HOUNSOME)

Sentencing remarks of the Honourable Mr Justice Saini

At Southampton Crown Court

On 19 July 2024

1. Vladimir Hounsome you are also known as Vladimir Ivashikin. Earlier this week, on 17 July 2024, you were acquitted by a jury here at Southampton Crown Court of the murder of your step-father, Barry Hounsome. You had earlier entered a plea of guilty to his manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility. The trial for murder took place in circumstances where this plea was not accepted by the prosecution. The prosecution was entitled to test the evidence and to require you to prove the defence before a jury even though, as I describe later, it was strongly supported by unanimous expert opinion.
2. You were just 16 years of age when you killed Mr Hounsome and you are now 22 years of age. It now falls to me to sentence you for the manslaughter of Mr Hounsome. As I will describe, the nature of his killing was horrific. At the time you took Mr Hounsome's life you were deeply psychotic. That remains the position today. Indeed your mental health has progressively deteriorated since the killing. A number of eminent forensic psychiatrists are confident in their diagnoses of paranoid schizophrenia at the time of the killing.
3. The jury's verdict follows a retrial and the case came to Southampton Crown Court via an unusual route. In short, on 1 May 2019 you appeared at Winchester Crown Court and entered a not guilty plea to the charge of murder of Mr Hounsome but guilty of manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility. This plea was supported by the independent assessment of three psychiatrists. The reason, accepted by these medical professionals, for your killing of Mr Hounsome, was voices and commands which you said had caused you to attack Mr Hounsome, as well as something taking control of your limbs and forcing you to strike him. You said you could not resist these voices and forces. Each expert agreed that you were

suffering from a severe form of psychosis. The Crown accepted the plea. A not guilty verdict was entered in respect of murder. On 1 May 2019, Garnham J, the trial judge, sentenced you in respect of the admitted manslaughter to a Hospital Order with restrictions under the Mental Health Act 1983. Under that order you went to Ravenswood House, a medium secure psychiatric unit.

4. Some years later, while still detained at Ravenswood, you made disclosures, from February 2022 onwards, to a number of health professionals. Your disclosures were to the effect that you had *made up* the stories of voices and commands, and control of your body by some outside force. You also said that you in fact killed Mr Hounsome as a result of violent fantasies you had experienced since being a child.
5. Having considered the position with some care and having removed your medication to see if you were in fact psychotic, the treating medical professionals at Ravenswood concluded that you were not in fact mentally unwell. You appeared at that time, between February 2022 and March 2023, to be free of any mental illness and despite withdrawal of anti-psychotics, and you appeared to display no symptoms of psychosis.
6. I pause here to record that the evidence shows that you were provided with treatment of the very highest quality by Dr Jane Collier, an experienced and respected consultant forensic psychiatrist, at Ravenswood over a period of 3 years. As she observed in her evidence, your case was one of the most complex and difficult cases she had come across during a long career. That view was also shared by a number of the experts who gave evidence before me.
7. In due course you were given an absolute discharge by the Mental Health Tribunal under the Mental Health Act 1983 in January 2023. Before that could happen, however, you were re-arrested, detained, and charged with perverting the course of justice in relation to what were said to be the false statements of claimed voices/commands made for the purposes of the original case. The Crown also took the matter of your acquittal of murder to the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division). By that time, you had in effect retracted the February 2022 statements that you had fabricated the voices and commands. For reasons given in a detailed judgment (see [2024] EWCA Crim 41), the Court of Appeal held that it was in the interests of justice to set aside your acquittal of murder, and it directed a retrial of the murder count. That is the trial which took place before me and a jury over the last 3 weeks. Before I turn to the facts, I wish to say something about Mr Hounsome.
8. Mr Hounsome married your mother in 2007 when you were a young boy of 5 years. He and your mother were both academics. He became your father. You called him *Dad* and he loved and cared for you like a son. You had an excellent relationship with him. Indeed, my view is that the evidence shows that in many respects you had a relationship with him which was much closer than the relationship you had with your mother. You regarded him as a role model. I have heard this morning the moving Victim Personal Statement from Mr Hounsome's brother, Nicholas. Mr Hounsome provided invaluable and unending support to his octogenarian father Brian, who was living independently. The family have a continuing sense of bewilderment in seeking to process the violent and brutal nature of Mr Hounsome's death at the hands of a person who he treated as his son. Mr Hounsome was only 54 years of age. His was the life of an outstanding family man and a successful academic. At the time he was killed he was working on clinical trials leading the work to prevent loss of sight. It is hard to imagine the loss felt by his family. Going through a second trial and hearing again

of the way in which his brother lost his life will have caused unbearable pain to Nicholas and to Mr Hounsome's family and friends.

9. I turn to the facts. I am sure of the facts I set out on the basis of the evidence called at trial. I also have the benefit of forensic psychiatric evidence from leaders in this field. The expert witnesses who gave oral evidence before me on the issue of diminished responsibility were Dr Hales, Dr Hill, Professor Blackwood, and Dr Sandford. There were also a number of written reports from others including Dr Nabi, Dr Bacon and Dr Hillier.
10. The experts on the issue of diminished responsibility each unequivocally stated their opinion that at the time of the killing the voices (called *auditory hallucinations*) and the control of your limbs (called *passivity phenomena*) had caused you to kill Mr Hounsome. These are well known symptoms of developing psychosis. Each expert also described how since February 2023 you had become even more psychotic in detention at Winchester Prison on remand and then when returned pending trial to Ravenswood. You have been self-harming and have developed a complex delusional belief system involving electromagnetic fields, depositing your DNA, entities known as *the makers*, and cutting, cooking in a kettle, and then eating pieces of your own skin and flesh. I return to the facts.
11. There was nothing out of the ordinary in your upbringing. At aged 16 you were a conventional boy. You did reasonably well in your GCSEs. You enjoyed the cadets and had a few close friends. There was no outward indication of any mental illness. You displayed some odd behaviours but nothing too different from the types of things teenage boys do in terms of difficulty with human interaction and communication. Medical professionals have not found you to be autistic. Some months before the killing, you began to hear a voice commanding you to do violent things. At first this was in relation to animals but as time progressed the voice asked you to attack people including your parents. You did not tell anyone about this but did your best to resist. You could not resist and that led to the events on 29 October 2018, which I will now outline. The facts are distressing but I need to set some of them out because they form a vital part of the evidence on which the psychiatric opinions are based.
12. The 29 October 2018 was a teacher training day in Gosport. As a result, you did not have to go into college. Instead, you stayed at home. Your mother went to work in Sussex as normal at around 7.30am that morning and your stepfather was working from home that Monday. On that morning, as you walked past your stepfather's room, you heard the voice telling you to kill him. As you went downstairs the voice got louder and louder, telling you that you needed to kill him and to get a hammer
13. At some point after 7.43am, when your stepfather logged on to his account on his work computer network, you attacked Mr Hounsome and killed him. You killed him in the course of a vicious and ferocious attack. There was detailed evidence at trial from the pathologist, Dr Purdue. That evidence, and accompanying recreated images, was distressing in the extreme.
14. You first attacked Mr Hounsome with a hammer, repeatedly striking him about the head. You said the voice "took control of my arm and made me hit him with the hammer." You caused him multiple scalp lacerations and fractures to the skull. He asked you what you were doing. You replied by saying that you were sorry but you kept on hitting him. You then attacked him with a knife or knives. Mr Hounsome suffered at least 35 stab and slash

wounds to his face, head and neck and to his abdomen. There were also knife wounds to Mr Hounsome's hands, clearly evidence of attempts by him to ward off your attacks. It is clear from the number and variety of these defensive injuries that this was a prolonged struggle. Mr Hounsome grabbed the knife and twisted it, causing injury to your own hand. You sprayed Mr Hounsome with ammonia at that point to try to disorientate him. As he tried to escape downstairs you pushed him down the stairs. As he tried to get to the front door of the house, you pulled him back and forced him to the floor. You then went to the cupboard under the stairs and picked up two electric drills. You used these tools to drill into his head. The drill bit found at the scene was stained with blood and matted with hair. There was blood and body tissue within the matted hair. A second drill was found caught up in a T-shirt. Hair was twisted and matted around the drill bit of that drill too. You told the police that you thought he had still been alive at the point you were drilling into his brain. You then again struck him repeatedly about the head with the hammer. At that point, Mr Hounsome became unconscious but he was still breathing. So you went to the kitchen and collected a large kitchen knife which you plunged through his fractured skull into his brain, twisting it around as you did so. The neuropathology evidence shows that the knife entered into and disturbed central structures of Mr Hounsome's brain. If he had not died earlier, this would have been fatal. On any view, Mr Hounsome would have appreciated for a sustained time that he was being assaulted, he would have felt extreme pain and anguish.

15. You then cleaned yourself up and closed the curtains. You attempted to destroy two hard drives and a tablet computer by putting them in the kitchen microwave. You then wrote a note of apology, and left it on Mr Hounsome's body (which you had covered in black bin bags). It appears that you then contemplated killing yourself and left home for a location to throw yourself from. You left written messages of apology to your mother, and you recorded videos sent by Snapchat to your two closest friends. In those you expressed regret, explaining that voices had made you kill Mr Hounsome. When you found yourself unable to kill yourself you returned home and telephoned the police. You reported what you had done. That call was made to the police at about 17.35 hours that evening. You then gave a full account in interview about the voices and commands as well as control of your limbs.
16. Your account of events has been considered at length at trial and in some detail by the forensic psychiatrists. Unlike the position at the time of the first trial in 2019, these experts now have the benefit of 5 years of medical data and observation. They have what they called the *longitudinal* perspective. This perspective allows assessing psychiatrists to make a more confident diagnosis of schizophrenia. Considerably more material is available to the current assessors than was available to those at Ravenswood in 2022-23 and to the Mental Health Tribunal that ordered your discharge in 2023.
17. I am satisfied that it was on the basis of the uncontradicted medical evidence, that the jury acquitted you of murder. The jury had before them other matters which went against your case that mental illness caused you to kill Mr Hounsome. Ultimately, however, they were satisfied that at the time of the offence you were suffering from schizophrenia, a recognised medical condition; and that at the time of the offence that illness substantially impaired your ability to exert self-control. That condition also explains why you killed Mr Hounsome. Indeed, I accept, as stated by Professor Blackwood, that but for the condition you would not have killed your step-father. The diagnosis of the experts rested on more than the truthfulness of your original accounts that voices had commanded you, an account which you later claimed you had fabricated.

18. I turn to sentencing for manslaughter. I have more material than Garnham J had before him and also the advantage of more oral evidence. I must make my own decisions as to appropriate sentence, but I have had regard to his sentencing remarks.
19. You were 16 at the time of this offending. I approach the task of determining the appropriate sentence in this case by following the definitive guidelines for sentencing children and young people and the definitive guidelines for manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility. Counsel have also drawn to my attention the relevant case law concerning Mental Health Act 1983 disposals.
20. First, I must consider the degree of responsibility that attaches to you and to your conduct in the light of your diagnosis. I am satisfied in the light of the medical evidence that your responsibility is substantially diminished by your mental illness. There were periods of time before the fatal episode when you were unaffected by the psychosis. You ought to have sought medical assistance during those lucid periods. Had you been an adult at the time that would have led me to conclude that you would have to bear a significant degree of responsibility. But you were a boy of just 16 and it is hardly surprising that you did not want to tell anyone what was going on in your head. Given that your condition was undiagnosed, it is my view that responsibility retained by you fell within the lower category identified in the guidelines. You retained some responsibility but as all experts agreed there was substantial impairment of your ability to exercise self-control, and the fatal assault would not have occurred but for the psychotic symptoms.
21. The starting point, therefore, is 7 years with a custody range of 3 to 12 years. There are a number of aggravating features in this case. The main matter is the significant suffering you caused to your stepfather. There was also a degree of planning but I do not consider that is a major aggravation when seen against an overwhelming psychotic episode.
22. On the other side of the scales there are a number of mitigating features to which I have to have regard. You were a boy of good character. You are plainly remorseful based on what you have said to the many medical professionals that assessed you. Your actions have not only deprived your family of Mr Hounsome but have also deprived you of a man you loved and who loved you.
23. In a conventional sentencing exercise I would have arrived following a balance of factors at 9 years. That would fall to be reduced, however, to reflect your guilty plea. That would reduce the total imposed to 6 years. I would then reduce that on account of your age to 3 years.
24. Next, I consider dangerousness. I have no doubt that you were at the time of this offence, and that you remain, highly dangerous for the purposes of the relevant legislation. Absent the question of a Hospital Order, this would plainly be an appropriate case for an extended sentence. By reason of your psychosis, as it has developed since you killed Mr Hounsome, you are a serious danger to the public and to yourself.
25. Having heard the medical evidence which has been given in court by Professor Blackwood, Dr Sandford, Dr Hales and Dr Hill, and having read the reports prepared by them for the court, together with those from Dr Bacon all of whom were approved by the Secretary of State under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983, I am satisfied that you are suffering from a mental disorder, namely paranoid schizophrenia.

26. For reasons I will explain in more detail I consider that the appropriate way of dealing with your case is the imposition of a Hospital Order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983, together with the additional imposition of a restriction order under section 41 that Act. Your disorder is of a nature which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment. Section 37 and section 41 orders are also the recommendation of the psychiatrists who have considered disposal. In coming to my conclusions I first considered, in accordance with the cases drawn to my attention, a so-called *hybrid* order but ultimately concluded for the reasons I will give that this would not be appropriate.
27. On the evidence before me, I am satisfied that there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission of further offences if your psychosis is not appropriately treated. The reduction in the risk to the public posed by you is dependent upon your response to psychological and psychiatric treatment. It is not known at this stage how complete that response will be or how complete your recovery will be. As identified by Professor Blackwood, you may require treatment with clozapine, the anti-psychotic indicated for treatment resistant illnesses, and best suited to reducing both violence and suicidality in the disorder. There is no evidence before me to suggest that, save for your mental condition, you would be a danger to the public. Your risk to others is driven by your psychotic illness, and such risk is best managed by forensic psychiatric specialists in the years ahead. If you are detained in this way you will remain in a secure hospital for a number of years, or in fact indefinitely, if there is no response to treatment approaches and no reduction in the risk you pose to others.
28. Accordingly, taking into account all the circumstances of your case, including the nature of the offence to which you pleaded guilty and your serious and continuing mental illness, and having considered all the other available ways in which I might deal with you, the most suitable method of dealing with your case is by making an order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983. As I have said, in coming to this conclusion I have considered but rejected the potential alternative of a section 45A disposal. I do not consider the facts justify a penal element. Mental illness was the driver of this offence and your degree of retained responsibility was low. The illness was not brought on by anything you did.
29. I have considered the comparative release regimes, should you ever be released into the community. In my judgment, a hybrid sentence is not desirable or appropriate in the present case. My preferred disposal will enable you to be treated. It will also provide the best protection of others and be potentially life-long. The regime for deciding upon release is stringent. The nature of supervision after eventual release from a section 41 restriction order involves ongoing expert psychiatric input and a rapid recall to hospital is available if your medical condition deteriorates and you relapse. I therefore make an order you will be detained, at Ravenswood House Hospital. I have been notified that appropriate treatment and a bed are available at Ravenswood.
30. For the reasons I have given, the sentence I impose on you is that you be detained in hospital without limitation of time pursuant to Section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and I make a Restriction Order pursuant to Section 41 of that Act.