

Parole Board Decision Summary

Name: Russell Causley
Decision: Direction for re-release on parole licence

INTRODUCTION

As required by law, Mr Causley's case was referred to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State for Justice to determine whether he could be safely released on parole licence. If not, the panel should consider whether transfer to open conditions could be recommended. This was the first review of Mr Causley's case by the Parole Board following his recall to custody. The panel could only direct release if it was satisfied that it was no longer necessary for the protection of the public that he remained confined in prison.

If the panel did not find that Mr Causley could be released, it should consider his suitability for transfer to open conditions. To do so, the panel must review the extent to which he has made sufficient progress in reducing risk in order to protect the public from harm, given that a prisoner in open prison may be unsupervised in the community and taking temporary releases under licence. The Secretary of State will only accept a recommendation for transfer to open conditions from the Parole Board if the prisoner is assessed to be at low risk of absconding and where a period in open prison is considered essential to inform future decisions about release and to prepare for possible release on licence into the community.

The case was considered at oral hearings on the 12 December 2022 and the 16 December 2022. The hearing on the 12 December 2022, which took place in person at the prison, was the first hearing to be heard in public following a change in the Parole Board rules. The hearing on the 16 December 2022 took place via a video link and was not heard in public so that sensitive matters could be discussed. Mr Causley indicated that he hoped to be released as a result of the Parole Board review. Prior to concluding its review, the panel received and considered further written material.

In reaching its decision, the panel considered the contents of Mr Causley's dossier (which extended beyond 600 pages), prepared by the Secretary of State. At the hearings, the panel took oral evidence from Mr Causley's probation officer based in the community and the official supervising his case in prison. Mr Causley, who was legally represented at the hearing, also gave evidence to the panel. The Secretary of State's representative attended the hearings as an observer but did not ask any questions of the witnesses. Both Mr Causley's legal representative and the Secretary of State's representative produced written representations for the Parole Board's review.

The panel had the benefit of a victim personal statement which clearly conveyed the impact of Mr Causley's crime and the consequences of his offending. The contents were considered carefully by the panel.

SENTENCE DETAILS

On the 2 April 2004, Mr Causley received a mandatory life sentence following conviction for the murder of his wife. He was 60 years old at the time he was sentenced and was aged 79 when his case was reviewed. Mr Causley had initially been convicted of the murder in 1996, at the age of 53, however, in June 2003, while serving a life sentence, a review by the Criminal Case Review Commission led to a second trial being ordered.

Mr Causley first became eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board on the 27 June 2012, following his completion of the punishment term of his sentence, as set by the sentencing court. On the 15 October 2020, following his sixth review by the Parole Board, Mr Causley was released on life licence, by which time the Parole Board's regular reviews meant that he had spent an additional eight years in prison for the protection of the public. In the morning of the 26 November 2021 he had been permitted to leave his designated accommodation, his licence was revoked and he was recalled to custody on the 27 November 2021 when he failed to return to his accommodation for his curfew time.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The panel noted that Mr Causley is a self-confessed liar who has given a series of accounts of the fate of his wife. Although Mr Causley has previously admitted responsibility, he now maintains that he is innocent of the murder of his wife, although he does accept that he disposed of her body. Legislation known as 'Helen's Law' does not apply in this case because Mr Causley is a recalled prisoner. Nevertheless, the panel explored the circumstances of the index offence as a part of its assessment of risk. The panel's assessment of Mr Causley was on the basis that he was properly convicted of the murder of his wife.

The panel explored the circumstances leading to Mr Causley's recall to custody. He had described being assaulted and that this led to him failing to return to his designated accommodation on time. Mr. Causley explained the nature of his injuries which were confirmed by others when the Panel examined the documentary evidence with other witnesses. The panel was mindful of Mr Causley's capacity to lie, deceive and manipulate, and was not entirely convinced by his explanations for his intentions and conduct that day after he left the designated accommodation. Mr Causley did not dispute his recall and, given the circumstances, the panel found the decision to recall him to custody at this time had been appropriate. However, the panel noted that there had been no evidence of violence in this case for many years and the circumstances of the recall itself did not suggest that Mr Causley had presented as being a risk of violence to anyone.

Having considered the index offence, relevant patterns of previous offending and behaviour, together with the other evidence before it, the panel listed as risk factors those influences which made it more likely that Mr Causley would reoffend. At the time of his offending, these risk factors had included his ability to lie and deceive, his way of life, his use of power and control in relationships, his willingness to use violence to achieve his aims, his inability to manage conflict and his ruthless self-centred behaviour.

Evidence was presented at the hearings regarding Mr Causley's progress and custodial conduct during this sentence and since his recall. He had done little in



prison to address his risk factors, however, no behaviour concerns had been reported in custody and he had been employed in trusted roles. The panel reviewed professional reports which identified a low risk of further offending and it was advised by the witnesses that Mr Causley would present a low risk of harm to the public, and that his level of risk could be managed by the proposed release plan.

The panel examined the release plan provided by Mr Causley's probation officer and weighed its proposals against assessed risks. The plan included a requirement to reside in designated accommodation as well as strict limitations on Mr Causley's contacts, movements and activities. The panel concluded this plan was robust enough to manage Mr Causley in the community at this stage.

DECISION

After considering the circumstances of his offending and time on licence, the progress made while in custody and the evidence presented at the hearings, the panel was satisfied that Mr Causley was suitable for release.

His release is subject to the following licence conditions, which must be strictly adhered to:

- To comply with requirements to reside at a designated address, to be of good behaviour, to disclose developing relationships, and to report as required for supervision or other appointments.
- To submit to an enhanced form of supervision or monitoring including signing-in times, GPS tagging and a specified curfew.
- To comply with other identified limitations concerning contacts, activities, residency and an exclusion zone to avoid contact with victims.
- To meet specified restrictions relating to the use of electronic technology.
- To continue to work on addressing defined areas of risk in the community.

