

Parole Board Decision Summary

Name: Paul Seddon

Decision: No direction for release on parole licence and no recommendation for transfer to open prison

INTRODUCTION

As required by law Mr Seddon'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.

The panel could only direct release if it was satisfied that it was no longer necessary for the protection of the public that Mr Seddon remained confined in prison.

If the panel did not find that Mr Seddon 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 an oral hearing on 5 July 2023. The hearing had been adjourned on two occasions because of the need to investigate security concerns. The hearing was conducted by video-links with all participants. Mr Seddon indicated through his legal representative that he hoped to be transferred to open conditions as a result of the Parole Board review.

In reaching its decision, the panel considered the contents of Mr Seddon's dossier, prepared by the Secretary of State. At the hearing, the panel took oral evidence from Mr Seddon's probation officer based in the community, the official supervising his case in prison, a psychologist employed by the prison service, a psychologist commissioned by Mr Seddon's legal representative and a representative from security operations at the establishment. Mr Seddon, who was legally represented at the hearing, also gave evidence to the panel.

The panel had the benefit of a victim personal statement which clearly conveyed the impact of Mr Seddon's crimes and the consequences of his offending. The contents were given careful consideration by the panel members.

SENTENCE DETAILS

On 17 November 1998 Mr Seddon received a mandatory life sentence with a tariff of 23 years', 8 months' and 15 days following conviction for murder and attempted murder. He was 27 years old at the time he was sentenced and was aged 52 when his case was reviewed.



Mr Seddon first became eligible to be considered for release on 1 August 2022. This was his second review by the Parole Board.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Having considered the index offences, relevant patterns of previous offending and the other evidence before it, the panel listed as risk factors those influences which made it more likely that Mr Seddon would reoffend.

At the time of his offending, these risk factors had included a willingness to resort to violence and the use of weapons to resolve conflict, using illegal drugs, not being able to solve life's problems well enough and acting on the spur of the moment. Mr Seddon did not understand the harm that his actions caused to the victims, thinking it was acceptable to commit crime, being influenced by anti-social friends, not sticking to the rules and not being able to control extreme emotions.

Evidence was presented at the hearing regarding Mr Seddon's progress and custodial conduct during this sentence. He had undertaken accredited programmes to address decision making, the tendency to use violence and victim awareness. He had also completed other work which focussed on drugs misuse.

The panel heard how well Mr Seddon had demonstrated limited application of relevant skills and learning while in custody. Witnesses could not support release or transfer to open conditions.

In this case, protective factors which would reduce the risk of reoffending were considered to be having the support of his family and having a good chance of getting a job.

The panel examined the release plan provided by Mr Seddon'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 Seddon's contacts, movements, and activities. The panel concluded this plan was not robust enough to manage Mr Seddon in the community at this stage because of concerns around his lack of honesty with professionals, security concerns, drugs misuse and concerns regarding whether or not he is in a relationship.

DECISION

After considering the circumstances of his offending, the progress made while in custody and the evidence presented at the hearing, the panel was not satisfied that release at this point would be safe for the protection of the public.

Nor did the panel recommend to the Secretary of State that Mr Seddon should be transferred to open prison.

Given that key areas remained likely to be addressed, the panel considered that Mr Seddon was appropriately located in custody where outstanding levels of risk could be addressed. He was assessed not to meet the criteria for recommending transfer to open prison at this stage.

He will be eligible for another parole review in due course.

