

Carer jailed for longer

A Bradford man has had his sentence increased following an intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP.

Barry Riley, 63, abused his position of trust to steal over £100,000 from Ann Skelton, a disabled woman who had granted him Power of Attorney over her finances.

Riley would travel weekly from Bradford to stay with Ann Skelton at her home in Bristol. Between 2015 and 2018 he exploited his position for his own financial gain.

On 10 March 2018, Riley attempted to murder Ann Skelton by smothering her with a pillow, but he stopped before killing her.

The police were alerted. Riley claimed that Ann Skelton had asked him to help her end her life, but she made it clear that he had in fact attacked her. Ann Skelton died in May 2018, though not as a result of any injury or harm caused by the attempt on her life. Following her death, her family and the police discovered the extent of Riley's fraudulent activity.

Prior to these offences, Riley had 24 previous convictions for 73 offences. At the time of his arrest he was also found to have small amounts of cannabis and cocaine.

Riley plead guilty to attempted murder; he initially attempted to plead on the basis he was asked by Ann Skelton to help end her life, however the basis of his plea was rejected. Riley was convicted of fraud after a trial and pleaded guilty to offences of possession of class A and B drugs.

On 25 February 2021, Riley was sentenced to 11 years and 8 months' imprisonment at Bristol Crown Court.

Following the Court's decision, the Solicitor General referred Riley's sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme. On 11 May 2021, the Court ruled that the sentence was unduly lenient and increased it to 15 years' imprisonment.

After the hearing at the Court of Appeal the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

Riley stole from a vulnerable woman who considered him a friend. To escape detection, he then sought to take her life. Sadly, Ann Skelton never lived to see justice delivered, but I hope today's decision by the Court of Appeal will bring some comfort to her family.