

# Guildford man has manslaughter sentence increased

A Guildford man who killed a stranger in a one-punch attack has had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, referred it for being too low.

In the early hours of 12 October 2019, Barney Coyle, was outside a kebab shop in Surrey after a night out. Coyle, aged 23 at the time, had been kicked out of the shop after acting aggressively and throwing punches at a customer.

At the same time, Jamie Smith, 24, was nearby and waiting to get a pre-booked minicab home after an evening out with friends. But when his cab arrived, Coyle, who he had never met before, jumped into the car.

Jamie Smith explained to the driver that it was actually his booking and asked the offender to leave. But Coyle got out of the car and punched Jamie Smith forcefully in the head from behind.

The victim had no opportunity to defend himself and was immediately knocked unconscious, falling backwards and hitting his head on the ground. He was taken to hospital but had suffered a fatal brain injury and subsequently died.

Coyle left the scene but was arrested later that day.

On 6 January 2020 Coyle was sentenced to 7 years and 6 months' imprisonment for manslaughter at Guildford Crown Court.

Today, following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General under the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme, the sentence has been increased to 9 years and 9 months' imprisonment.

After the hearing the Solicitor General said:

"The offender launched a cowardly, callous attack on a defenceless victim which cost the victim his life. Taking into account the severity of this attack, increasing the length of the sentence was necessary for justice to be done. I am pleased the Court of Appeal agreed and I hope this brings some comfort to the victim's family."