

Press release: 'Mate Crime' duo jailed for longer after Solicitor General intervenes in their case

Two Sheffield men who seriously assaulted and imprisoned a vulnerable victim have had their sentences increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, appealed them for being too low.

Matthew Ward, aged 22 at the time and Marcus Cullumbine, then aged 20, befriended the 40-year-old vulnerable victim first and took increasing advantage of him. In 2017 they moved in with him, and gradually asserted their control. One of the offences involved Ward punching the victim in the face after alleging he owed him money for disposing of a box of latex gloves. In a later incident, the victim was kept in a cupboard for five hours while Ward's friends visited the home. The victim feared being assaulted again if he didn't comply by staying in the cupboard.

The most serious of the attacks on the victim started when he was locked in the cupboard again – this time the offenders put bolts on the outside of the cupboard to stop him getting out. He was later punched in the face, kicked in the head, attacked with a Stanley knife and burnt with various weapons. The victim was then locked in the cupboard overnight. He managed to escape the next day after claiming he had to collect a prescription and not doing so would raise suspicions. The offenders let him leave to go to the chemist but threatened to hurt his brother if he reported the attacks. The chemist called the emergency services who found that the victim had serious wounds including broken ribs and extensive burns.

Ward was originally sentenced to 16 years, Cullumbine to 11 years. Today, after the Solicitor General's action, the Court of Appeal increased Ward's sentence to 19 years, and Cullumbine's to 13 and a half years.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has increased the sentences today. The offenders exploited the victim's vulnerability and subjected him to a series of brutal assaults while imprisoning him in his own home. I hope that their sentences send a clear message to anyone despicable enough to consider abusing a vulnerable member of their community – you will not escape justice.