

Sentence increased for Northampton man who killed another man in pub attack

News story

Michael Taiwo had his sentence increased at the Court of Appeal following intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP.



A man who killed Glenn Davies, 25, has had his sentence increased following intervention by the Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP.

Michael Taiwo, 23, and Mr Davies were both part of a group of colleagues having drinks in a Northampton pub on 24 August 2019.

An argument broke out between Mr Davies and another colleague, with Mr Davies becoming angry and punching him. Taiwo joined in, punching Mr Davies to the head and kicking him in the face. The door staff intervened in the scuffle and ejected Taiwo from the pub, along with the other colleague involved in the fight with Mr Davies.

After walking away, Taiwo returned and looked for another way back into the pub. He ran towards Mr Davies and delivered a powerful punch to the back of the head. Mr Davies collapsed around 21 seconds later. Despite being told to wait for the police to arrive, Taiwo ran away. Mr Davies later died from the brain injury he sustained when he was punched.

Police officers arrested Taiwo on 28 August 2019 at an address in Northampton, despite him attempting to escape over the garden fence.

Taiwo was sentenced to 4 years and 10 months' imprisonment on 17 March 2020 at the Northampton Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Attorney General, on 7 July the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to 7 years and 2 months' imprisonment.

After the hearing the Attorney General said:

Taiwo's dangerous and reckless actions cost the victim his life and

caused significant grief for his family. I am pleased the Court of Appeal has increased the sentence today and I hope this gives some comfort to the victim's family.

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[Student finance through the pandemic](#)

Despite the pandemic, the Student Loans Company is committed to paying students and universities on time this year.

Not the most ambitious of corporate objectives, I'll be the first to admit. But when we entered lockdown on 23 March it was not a given that we could turn this supertanker around (so to speak) before the third term tuition fee payment of £4.9 billion was due on 6 May.

For me, the early days of the pandemic were in part spent providing assurance that, of course, SLC would be maintaining our core payment and application services.

I understand why there were doubters. For many historical reasons, SLC'S reputation is not one of an organisation that can weather every crisis effectively. But when I started as CEO just over a year and half ago, I found an organisation that was robust beyond its reputation. I think our response to Covid has demonstrated our inherent competence.

Loaning from home

The last four months have not been without challenge. To start with, less than a third of our 3,500 staff were equipped to work from home, so the initial challenge was to provision secure home-working capability at scale and in haste.

We pay around £20 billion to students, universities, and colleges annually. To continue this, we needed to be sure our staff could work securely from home.

We also needed to continue to process applications as they came in, preventing a backlog. Lockdown came just four weeks after we launched our 2020-21 full-time undergraduate application service for England and Wales. We receive and process more than two million student finance applications every year and any backlog, even early in the application cycle, has the potential to snowball as we get closer to term start.

With making payments and processing applications our priorities, we took the

decision to close our customer contact channels for two weeks during our home-working rollout. I know that this was a considerable annoyance for students, prospective students, and their sponsors (usually parents) – and it wasn't a decision we made lightly. But we needed to prioritise the right functions for the longer-term continuity of our service and stability to students and the sector.

Next year – online, and on time

Lockdown has made our multi-year transformation programme more difficult to deliver, but we've not forgotten our plans to improve the customer experience. Key among these is the new digital evidence upload service, which went live in May. This means that unless we are required to see the originals, customers can now upload evidence instead of posting us paper copies. And this month we will launch our new Online Repayment services. By providing repayments with 24/7 access to up-to date balance information, we will make it easier for them to manage their accounts and avoid over-repaying as they reach the final stages of their loan.

Like the rest of the sector, we've been carefully watching application volumes and trying to understand student/applicant behaviour. For SLC, the risk is that a late surge in student finance applications creates a processing backlog just before term start. This would not be a good situation for us, students, or universities.

Application volumes for all customer groups were considerably behind last year throughout March and April. For new students, volumes began to normalise in early May and at the time of writing, applications for new students are now ahead of last year. But for returning students it was a different story – applications remained considerably behind last year throughout May and into June. My own opinion is that returning students may have been waiting for their universities to confirm teaching arrangements before starting to commit to returning to study. Numbers started to increase at the same time as universities shared more detail (and as we reminded students through every possible channel that they needed to apply early to get their funding before term start!). In mid-to-late June, returning student applications began to increase significantly and are now tantalisingly close to the same point last year.

Four weeks on saw over 90 per cent of our staff working from home, and customer contact channels were back up and running. However, some of our core functions simply can't be done at home – most notably opening, scanning, and returning customers' original identity evidence, which we are required to verify as part of eligibility checks. So we now have around 10 per cent of our staff working at our offices in Darlington, Glasgow, and Llandudno Junction, meaning we've need to ensure these workplaces and processes are Covid-secure.

As lockdown begins to lift we've successfully launched the remainder of our applications services, including full-time undergraduate applications for Northern Ireland; Advanced Learner Loans; and postgraduate and part-time

applications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

And we've accelerated our plans to improve customer experience. To ensure we could continue to speak to our customers while we set up our call-handling staff to operate effectively from home, we increased resources for our social media teams. SLC has been providing full customer service over our social media channels since December 2017, but we've increased by 73 per cent the number of customers served over social media in lockdown compared to the same period last year.

The future

SLC hasn't lost sight of the broader context of HE policy, or the need to respond to Ministerial imperatives. We worked with Ministers and the sector to achieve a reliable solution for reprofiling tuition fee payments for 2020/21, and we stand ready to work with our four shareholder governments on any further changes to student finance that might follow as part of a skills-led recovery.

There remain ample risks and challenges that might yet trip us up. We're carefully considering how an increase in deferrals, transfers or withdrawals around term start would impact our operational capacity. We're also anticipating a significant increase in current-year income assessment applications as people come off furlough and have a better understanding of their financial position.

So we remain cautious about what will undoubtedly be a challenging new academic year for us. But it does feel like SLC now has the stable foundation to deliver even in the face of a significant national emergency. We are ready to be the provider of trusted, transparent, flexible and accessible student finance services that the sector and the nation deserve.

Ministry of Defence confirms the death of Fusilier Sam Brownridge

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce the death of a soldier from The First Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Fusilier Sam Brownridge died of a non-battle injury while deployed on Operation Cabrit in Estonia on Saturday 04 July 2020.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this tragic time.

[New Eurostar treaties open up direct travel from Amsterdam to London](#)

Direct high-speed train services from Amsterdam to London will be possible later this year, after new agreements were signed today (7 July).

For these services to operate, existing agreements between the UK, France and Belgium signed in 1993 have been modified to include the Netherlands. Representatives from all four countries signed the treaties at a ceremony in Brussels.

The Home Office-led treaty concerning Frontier Control arrangements extends the existing model of “juxtaposed border checks” to the Netherlands; whereby passengers are checked, prior to departure, successively by border officials from the departure and arrival countries.

This means UK Border Force officials will be stationed in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and able to carry out checks before boarding, as they already do in France and Belgium. It also allows for further cooperation between the police forces of the 4 countries involved in the fight against cross-border crime.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This important treaty shows that while we have left the European Union, our links with Europe are stronger than ever.

It will enable vital security and immigration checks to be carried out in the Netherlands, protecting the UK’s border and providing faster and more efficient journeys for passengers.

Alongside this, The Department for Transport-led quadripartite Security Arrangement will give responsibility for security to the government of the country in which the service is operating from. The Dutch authorities will become responsible for the security of Dutch stations operating UK bound services, and for train security, such as the screening of passengers.

These new arrangements will enable direct services between the Netherlands and the UK to start operating later this year, without the need to change trains at Brussels for immigration and security checks – making it easier for passengers to carry on their journey.

Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps said:

As we begin to emerge from one of the greatest international challenges of our time, we're working hard to support the recovery of international transport and tourism sectors.

Investment in modern, convenient and more environmentally friendly high speed rail links between major European cities will help drive this recovery so these sectors can flourish once again.

The signing of these treaties today will enable the launch of direct return services from the Netherlands to London, which is fantastic news for both the UK and our European neighbours.

Stientje van Veldhoven, Dutch State Secretary for Infrastructure, said:

Due to coronavirus these are challenging times, but we also have to plan for the near future. The new direct train service enables us to travel from Amsterdam to London in just over four hours. It's fast and convenient, and without the hassle of disembarking in Brussels for border and security checks.

A Eurostar train roughly has twice as many seats as an average airplane on the Amsterdam-London route and CO2 emissions are significantly lower. The train service to London therefore is a sustainable and competitive alternative to flying.

All 4 states have been working closely with Eurostar to provide support and guidance on security procedures and the necessary infrastructure arrangements at the 2 stations. The new agreements form an important step in further facilitating efficient rail traffic between close neighbouring countries.

Priti Patel to tackle violence and abuse against shopworkers

The Home Secretary has today (Tuesday 7 July) set out plans to crack down on abuse and violence against shopworkers.

The steps, which are detailed in the [Home Office's response to a call for evidence](#) on the issue, are designed to improve support for victims and ensure

perpetrators face justice.

They include working with the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) on a best practice guide to support staff in reporting these crimes, strengthening and making full use of existing laws, and improving data sharing between businesses and the police.

In addition, the Crime and Policing Minister will write to PCCs and Chief Constables underscoring the importance of working closely with local businesses to tackle this issue and emphasising that the theft of goods valued up to £200 from a shop should be prosecuted as a criminal offence.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

As the daughter of shopkeepers, I know what a vital role they play within our communities and just how tirelessly they have worked during the coronavirus pandemic.

I will not tolerate violence and abuse against any shopworker and it's right that those who commit these crimes must be caught and punished.

Kit Malthouse, Minister of State for Crime and Policing said:

Shopworkers are the beating hearts of our communities and violence or abuse against them is utterly unacceptable.

Through the NRCSG, we are developing solutions which address concerns highlighted by the retail sector.

We are determined to drive down these crimes and crucially, ensure that shopworkers are fully supported in reporting incidents to the police.

The government is taking action to tackle violent crime of all types, including by recruiting 20,000 new police officers over the next 3 years.

The call for evidence was open for 12 weeks. Organisations and individuals were asked to contribute to the government's understanding of the problem.

Responses were sought from retailers, trade associations and unions, as well as those working in the retail industry. Nearly 3,500 individuals, businesses and other organisations engaged in the process.

The majority of respondents believed abuse toward shop staff has increased and a significant number said they did not report incidents to the police.

The government response sets out a programme of work designed to address the drivers of violence and assaults against shopworkers and provide effective

support to victims in reporting such crimes.

In terms of sentencing, laws announced in the Queen's Speech contain proposals for tougher community penalties, tackling the underlying drivers of offending such as mental health or drug and alcohol addiction.

The Sentencing Council is reviewing its guidelines for courts on assault and published interim guidance in April 2020 clarifying that it should be treated as an aggravating factor when assault involves threats around Covid-19 (eg spitting or coughing). It is already an aggravating factor for an offence to be committed against anyone providing a service to the public.

More widely, the government is taking steps to improve support for all victims of crime, including a future consultation on a Victims' Law.