



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**R V BARRON**

1. Sarah Barron, as you know this case concerns the tragic death of your baby who has been named Noah by his father, Mr Phillip Taylor.
2. On 4 December 2020, you gave birth to Noah in the toilet at your flat in Weston Super Mare where you lived with Mr Taylor. He was out at the time.
3. Noah was born at or near full term. He was alive, and he gurgled and then cried. Your immediate reaction was to take him and throw him into the next door neighbours' garden, which your flat overlooked. His body was found there on 12 December 2020 with umbilical cord and placenta attached. He had sustained very severe injuries. The forensic pathologist who examined him has concluded that he died from blunt impact head injuries which were consistent with a 15 foot fall to the ground, although the possibility of the injuries being inflicted before this cannot be excluded. The evidence suggests that Noah lived for at least half an hour after the trauma which caused his death.
4. You were charged with murder. But two consultant forensic psychiatrists – Dr Victoria Thom and Dr John Sandford - have concluded, in reports dated 12 February and 31 March 2023 respectively, that you had a recognised psychiatric disorder at the time. You were in an extreme state of denial about the pregnancy, to such an extent that you were virtually oblivious to it. You were therefore very shocked when you went into labour. Your mind was disturbed by an

acute stress reaction and a dissociative disorder, and this is what caused you to act as you did. Their view is therefore that this was a case of infanticide rather than murder. Dr Sandford says that it is a classic case of its kind.

5. The views of the psychiatrists are supported by the evidence. Dr Indoe, a consultant forensic psychologist, has also found that you have a full-scale IQ which is around the bottom 4<sup>th</sup> percentile for adults, a reading age of 10-12 and other deficits in your verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning and processing speed. The doctors agree that you were and are vulnerable.
6. You were working in a care home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Your relationship with Mr Taylor only started at the end of 2019 and he is significantly older than you. There were tensions in the relationship which were aggravated by the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. In the course of these proceedings, you have reported behaviour patterns amounting to controlling and coercive behaviour on the part of Mr Taylor. He denies this although he accepts that he thought that you had been unfaithful to him and that this had caused difficulties. As we have heard, he says that he bears you no ill will and wants you to get the help that you need. He was also considerate towards you in the context of Noah's funeral.
7. You were unable to admit to Mr Taylor or to yourself that you were pregnant, and you genuinely convinced yourself that you were not. You did not tell him or anyone else about the pregnancy, whether family, friends or colleagues. Nobody knew. You told your GP that you were not pregnant, you did not seek any ante-natal support and you made no

other preparations for the birth. When you came to give birth, matters came to a head. You were in a state of extreme shock and you panicked.

8. When Mr Taylor got back to the flat you told him that you had had a miscarriage. He was unaware of what you had done, the blood from the birth was cleared up and you carried on as if a miscarriage was all that had happened. You went back to work.
9. You took no steps to conceal Noah's body and, when you questioned under caution by the police in December 2020, you told them what had happened to him. You were released on bail.
10. On 9 May 2023 you pleaded guilty to infanticide contrary to section 1 of the Infanticide Act 1938. This was the first opportunity after the psychiatric position had been clarified and all parties had been consulted. Your plea was accepted by the Prosecution. That means that the Prosecution accept, as I do, that although you were criminally responsible for the death of your baby, at the time the balance of your mind was disturbed as a result of your not having fully recovered from the effects of giving birth.
11. The offence of infanticide is a form of manslaughter which recognises that the criminal responsibility of a mother in these circumstances is often greatly diminished. Although the offence is specified under Schedule 18 of the Sentencing Act 2020, and carries a sentence of up to life imprisonment, the law recognises that what is required in this type of case is very often compassion, support and rehabilitation rather than punishment and retribution. The consistent practice of the courts is therefore to impose non-custodial penalties. It is only where there are features of a case which fall outside the established pattern that a

custodial sentence should be imposed. The Prosecution do not suggest that this is such a case, and nor do I consider that it is.

12. You were aged 32 at the time of the offence and are now aged 34. You have no previous reprimands, cautions or convictions and I accept that what you did was out of character.

13. Your relationship with Mr Taylor ended some time ago and you have moved away from Weston Super Mare. You no longer have a job. You live in supported accommodation and you are socially isolated. You suffer from agoraphobia, low self-confidence and self-esteem and significant levels of anxiety. You take medication for depression. You do not leave your accommodation very often and you have been subject to an electronically monitored curfew since 5 October 2022 which requires you to be at home from 7pm to 7am.

14. I accept that you are sorry for what you did.

15. In your case, a custodial sentence is not required for public protection. You present no danger to the public in general. The risk which you may pose is if you were to fall pregnant again, particularly if the pregnancy is unwanted. However, you are not currently in a relationship and that risk is best addressed in the context of a community order.

16. None of what I have said is to suggest your offence was not serious. It was very serious. It resulted in the ultimate harm to a new born baby. Noah's life and his suffering should not be forgotten. But the mitigation in this case, as in most cases of its type, is powerful and, in my view, a community order will be sufficient punishment.

- 17.I therefore sentence you to a community order for 3 years.
- 18.I attach to the order a rehabilitation activity requirement for 40 days.
- 19.You must take advantage of the opportunities provided by this sentence.  
That will help you to lead a fuller and more productive life.
- 20.If you fail to cooperate with the probation service and to comply with the rehabilitation activity requirement then you will be in breach of the order which I have made. That would mean that you were brought back before the court and may be given further requirements or resentenced or fined or imprisoned for this offence.
- 21.You will automatically be barred from engaging in regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults, and the Disclosure and Barring Service will include you in the barred lists.
- 22.The statutory surcharge also applies in this case.

Mr Justice Linden

Bristol Crown Court

14 July 2023