# Manslaughter case of Baby Callum brings decades-old tragedy to light



In a deeply tragic narrative spanning over two decades, Joanne Sharkey, a 55-year-old woman from Croxteth, has pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of her newborn son, known posthumously as Baby Callum, whose body was discovered 25 years ago in Warrington’s woodland. The shocking case, marked by secrecy and delayed justice, has rekindled harrowing memories within the local community.

On March 14, 1998, the remains of Baby Callum were unearthed wrapped in plastic bags near Gulliver’s World, a local amusement park. Eyewitness accounts from that time paint a picture of distress, as a retired man walking his dog noticed a suspicious bin bag and opted not to interfere. Subsequently, a different dog walker took the initiative to investigate, leading to the heart-wrenching discovery of the deceased infant. A post-mortem examination determined that Callum had been full term but had suffered considerable bruising and choking.

Sharkey, who was employed as a housing benefits officer, kept the birth a secret; she had experienced significant challenges in her earlier role as a mother following the birth of her first child, Matthew, in July 1996, and had reportedly been grappling with post-natal depression. Prosecutor Jonas Hankin KC informed the court that Sharkey had concealed her second pregnancy from everyone, including her husband, during a time when she was also managing a full-time job.

After a prolonged period of investigation, which included widespread public appeals and house-to-house inquiries, the case of Baby Callum turned cold. It was only during a periodic review by Cheshire Police in 2023 that significant progress was made. Sharkey’s son Matthew was arrested for an unrelated offence, leading to Sharkey’s identification as the mother of Baby Callum after his DNA was added to the national database. Following her arrest in July 2023, Sharkey candidly admitted to the police, "I f\*\*\*ing did it," signalling the beginning of her confessions.

In court, Sharkey explained her circumstances and the context of her actions, stating that the birth itself occurred in the bathroom of their home while her husband was absent. Describing her panic, she confessed to suffocating her newborn to prevent him from crying. "I just had to make him quiet," she said. Following the tragic incident, Sharkey transported the infant’s body and left it in a remote area, grappling with a sense of guilt that lingered for years.

Her attorney, Nina Grahame KC, highlighted Sharkey's remorse and referred to the mental health struggles she faced at the time, arguing that her post-natal depression significantly impaired her ability to exercise rational judgment. While the prosecution initially brought forward murder charges, these were eventually dropped after the Crown deemed that her condition warranted a manslaughter charge based on diminished responsibility.

Sharkey was due to hear her sentence on March 3, 2024, but the court proceedings were postponed due to time constraints, with a new date now expected in early April. Meanwhile, she has been released on conditional bail, leaving the community reflecting on the tragic and complex nature of this case, where a young mother, under the burden of mental health issues, made life-altering choices with devastating consequences.

The local public and the authorities have been left to grapple with the psychological implications of Sharkey’s actions and the enduring impact of this grievous case on a community still resonating with the echoes of past tragedy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cheshire.police.uk/news/cheshire/news/articles/2025/3/mother-pleads-guilty-to-manslaughter-of-her-baby-almost-30-years-ago/> - This article confirms Joanne Sharkey's guilty plea to manslaughter and details the circumstances surrounding Baby Callum's death, including the discovery of the body in Warrington and the use of DNA analysis to identify Sharkey as the mother.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/joanne-sharkey-baby-manslaughter-court-warrington-b2719398.html> - This report provides additional details about Joanne Sharkey's concealment of her pregnancy, her employment at the time, and her struggles with post-natal depression, which were factors in her actions.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source is mentioned as the original article detailing the tragic case of Joanne Sharkey and Baby Callum, though it does not directly provide corroborating evidence from an external source.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/baby-callum-joanne-sharkey-manslaughter-warrington-b2719398.html> - Unfortunately, this specific URL is not available in the search results, but it would likely corroborate the details of the case as reported by other news outlets.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-62441441> - This URL is not available in the search results, but BBC News often covers such cases and would likely provide additional details or insights into the investigation and trial.
* <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/joanne-sharkey-baby-callum-manslaughter-27393237> - This URL is not available in the search results, but the Liverpool Echo would likely cover local aspects of the case, including community reactions and legal proceedings.