

R v Louise Cameron

Teesside Crown Court: 18 June 2026

Mrs Justice Heather Williams

Disposal

On 8 June 2026, I considered the evidence provided by two Consultant Forensic Psychiatrists and I determined that you, Louise Cameron, were unfit to be tried. The jury were then asked to decide whether you had committed the act with which you were charged, namely causing the death of your son, Rhys Anthony Cameron. On 12 June 2026, the jury found that you had committed this act.

You have not been convicted of any offence and the usual sentencing options do not apply. The focus is upon your wellbeing and the protection of the public, rather than on punishment. The disposal options available to me are identified in section 5(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964.

The scale of this tragedy and the devastating impact it has had upon Rhys Cameron's family members is impossible to fully convey in words.

Rhys Cameron was born on 31 January 2017 and at the time of his death he was eight years old. Rhys was autistic. He had issues with his mobility and learning difficulties. The jury heard that Rhys was a happy boy who liked music, dancing, pizza and chips and his teddies. Rhys lived with you, Louise Cameron, and his two older siblings. The evidence indicates it was a happy family home; you were attentive to your children's needs, you loved them and they loved you.

The statement from Jenna Wright, Rhys Cameron's paternal aunt, read in Court today emphasises the joy that Rhys brought to those who knew him and how his death has left his family members with a very deep wound that can never heal. Rhys has been deprived of the opportunity of growing up and the experiences that lay ahead of him and his family has lost the opportunity of sharing these with him.

Louise Cameron, the evidence suggests that in the weeks before Rhys Cameron's death there was a deterioration in your mental health and, in particular, you developed

persecutory delusions involving a paedophile ring targeting you and your children. Family members were concerned about your mental state.

On the afternoon of Saturday 13 September 2025, you took your children for a meal at a local public house. That evening, your daughter saw that on at least five occasions you gave Rhys drinks from a plastic beaker. Although Rhys complained he did not like the taste of the drinks, you encouraged him to drink them. Later that evening, you and Rhys went to bed in the upstairs bedroom that you shared. The beaker Rhys drank from was subsequently recovered from the windowsill of this bedroom. It was forensically examined and the liquid inside was found to contain a high concentration of methadone. Methadone was a drug that had been prescribed to you. When police later searched the premises, 25 empty bottles of methadone were found in bags in the kitchen and the front garden.

On Sunday 14 September 2025, Rhys remained in bed all day. You also spent most of the day in the bedroom. Your older children thought you were unwell.

On Monday 15 September 2025, at approximately 9.55 hours, your sister and your mother arrived at your address. They entered the bedroom and tried to rouse you as you were still in bed and appeared drowsy. To their profound shock, they then realised that Rhys was also lying in the bed and he was not moving. He was cold to the touch and had white foam around his mouth. Your sister made a frantic 999 call requesting an ambulance.

Police and paramedics quickly arrived at the scene. It was obvious that Rhys had been dead for some time and so the decision was made not to try to resuscitate him.

The police recovered suicide notes at the address in which you indicated you intended to take your own life and that you had given a methadone overdose to Rhys.

You were arrested and initially taken by police officers to hospital for assessment and then into police custody. You said to the officers, "I wanted us to die together, I didn't want to leave him behind" and "I was only trying to commit suicide for me and Rhys."

A post-mortem examination concluded that Rhys Cameron had died from the combined effects of methadone and morphine, A fatal concentration of methadone was detected in his blood, and morphine was noted in a lesser concentration. These drugs acted as

respiratory depressants, meaning that Rhys would have lapsed into a coma and then stopped breathing.

Louise Cameron, you were born on 14 February 1985, and you are currently 41 years of age. You have no relevant previous convictions.

You were initially remanded in prison, but on 26 November 2025 you were transferred to Roseberry Park Hospital, a secure psychiatric hospital, where you have been detained under sections 48 and 49 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and where you currently remain.

I have considered reports prepared by Dr Caroline Bradley, a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist instructed by your legal team. Her reports are dated 5 November 2025, 24 January 2026, 3 June 2026, and 15 June 2026. Dr Bradley interviewed you on several occasions and she considered your up-to-date medical records. I heard oral evidence from Dr Bradley today. I also have the benefit of reports dated 30 November 2025, 4 June 2026, and 12 June 2026 from Dr James Stoddart, a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist instructed by the prosecution. Dr Stoddart interviewed you and he has also spoken with Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist Dr Lois Carey, the clinician who is currently responsible for your treatment. Both Dr Bradley and Dr Stoddart are approved under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983.

As the jury's finding relates to an offence for which the sentence is fixed by law, section 5(3) of the 1964 Act states that where the Court has the power to make a hospital order, the court shall make a hospital order with a restriction order.

I have the power to make a hospital order in this case. The criteria are set out in section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

I am satisfied on the evidence of Dr Bradley and Dr Stoddart that you are suffering from a mental disorder. Dr Bradley says your presentation is dominated by psychotic symptoms, including extensive persecutory delusions, persistent auditory hallucinations, command hallucinations, and abnormal affect. Your delusions appear to revolve around a belief that there is a widespread conspiracy to have you and your family harmed or killed. You have minimal insight into your condition. You also have mood symptoms, including suicidal thoughts, but the psychotic symptoms predominate. Dr Bradley considers your

mental illness is most likely to be Schizophrenia, although a reasonable alternative diagnosis would be Schizoaffective Disorder. Both are long-term mental illnesses. They are mental disorders within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983. You also had an earlier psychotic episode in 2014. Dr Bradley considers you have suffered with a low-grade chronic psychosis for many years. I understand that Dr Stoddart agrees with Dr Bradley's diagnosis.

I am also satisfied that your mental illness is of a nature and of a degree which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment. You have been at Roseberry Park Hospital for nearly seven months. During this time, you have received anti-psychotic medication and other treatment. However, your condition is chronic and treatment resistant. Dr Bradley considers you remain floridly psychotic and that your current condition is severe. Detention in hospital is in the interests of your health, as it is clear you would deteriorate further outside of a secure hospital environment. Detention in hospital is also in the interests of your safety, as you are currently at high risk of suicide. Furthermore, your detention is in the interests of the protection of others, as your current delusional condition has led you to assault patients and staff at the hospital. Medical treatment continues to be available for you at Roseberry Park Hospital.

Louise Cameron, having regard to all the circumstances, particularly your current condition and the very serious act which you were found to have done and the options available to me, I am satisfied that a hospital order is the most suitable way of dealing with you. As I have explained, it is in your interests and the interests of others. Both Dr Bradley and Dr Stoddart recommend the imposition of a hospital order with a restriction order. I make an order that you are admitted to and detained at Roseberry Park Hospital.

In the circumstances, I am required by law to also make a restriction order. In any event, I am satisfied that it is necessary to do so. This is because the act you did – causing the death of your son – is so serious and because in your current condition you pose a high risk of assaulting others, as you have done whilst in hospital. It is not possible to say how long the risk of serious harm to the public will remain. I therefore order that you will be subject to the special restrictions set out in section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983 without limit of time.

Louise Cameron, if in the opinion of the clinician responsible for your treatment you become fit to plead and stand trial, the Secretary of State for Justice may remit the matter to the Crown Court under section 5A (4) of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964.

I thank the legal teams for the considerable assistance they have provided during these proceedings and the police for their thorough investigation. I thank the jury for their conscientious consideration of the case and the Court staff who ensured the hearing ran smoothly.

My concluding thoughts are with Rhys Cameron's family. I recognise the profound scale of your grief and the enormity of what you have been through. I know you will never forget Rhys and that he will always be missed.