

Hull woman 'at great risk' died just hours after turned away from mental health unit – inquest

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By Allison Coggan



DESPAIR: Sally Mays, 22, suffered mood swings and had a history of self-harming

A young woman was turned away from a mental health unit hours before her death despite fears that she was "at great risk", an inquest heard.

Sally Mays, 22, was thought to have taken more than 50 overdoses, including one two days before her death, using drugs bought on the internet.

Psychotherapist Paul Fisher recommended Sally should be admitted to an inpatient unit to keep her safe after noting a "deep sense of despair" in her voice but she was sent away from Miranda House in Hull.

About two hours later, she was dead.

Mr Fisher told the inquest: "I said if we don't do something, Sally is at great risk.

"When she was thinking that dangerously, she needed to be somewhere that protected her."

The inquest in Hull heard Sally developed an eating disorder while a student at Hymers College and spent three years in inpatient units between the ages of 15 and 18.

Diagnosed with emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD), she was a frequent inpatient at Mill View Court, run by Humber Foundation Trust.

In a written statement, consultant psychiatrist Graham Harkness said Sally had a difficult relationship with her family, could swing from euphoria to hopelessness and had "numerous episodes of self-harm".

He said she gone to Hull Royal Infirmary many times claiming to have taken an overdose but staff were not always convinced.

He said Sally had smashed up her room at Mill View Court, had vandalised a room at Miranda House, had self-harmed in a police cell and had tried to strangle a consultant in an unprovoked attack over the years.

Psychotherapist Mr Fisher worked with Sally for four years and explained the personality disorder meant she "oscillated" between powerful emotions which caused her deep distress.

Mr Fisher said a care plan had been set up, allowing Sally to be admitted as an inpatient when she was in mental health crisis.

Hours before Sally's death, he spoke to key worker Kerry Helyard and he told the inquest they had agreed Sally should be admitted.

Sally's mother Angela made repeated calls to warn staff about her daughter's deteriorating mental health on July 25, last year and a nurse told her: "We are aware of the situation and we are dealing with it."

Mrs Mays last spoke to Sally two hours before her daughter was found dead at her flat in Derringham Court, west Hull, and said: "She appeared to want the call to end and indicated there was nothing else she needed.

"I ended the call with, 'I love you. Bye'."

Histopathologist Dr Ann Campbell ruled Sally had died of a combination of mechanical asphyxia and an overdose.

Mrs Mays said three days before her daughter's death, Sally told her she had been asked to "fake" an overdose to help train a student nurse despite her history and the fact that she had only been released from an inpatient unit 11 days earlier.

Sally's father Andy said he had expressed concern about the ethics of using a mental health patient in a "role play" situation.

Mrs Mays said she asked the trust about the role-playing in the wake of her daughter's death and was told: "Oh, you know about that, do you?"

Mrs Mays also accused the trust of subjecting her and her husband to a "tortuous" ordeal as they attempted to find out details about their daughter's care, forcing them to resort to Freedom of Information requests.

"Every single piece of paper we have requested has gone through a similar convoluted and tortuous process," she said.

The inquest continues.