

Sally Mays death: 'Nurses told there was no bed for woman suffering mental breakdown'

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By Allison Coggan



INQUEST: Sally Mays died in July last year.

NURSES were told there were no beds for a young woman suffering an "acute" mental health crisis hours before her death, an inquest heard.

Community mental health nurse Andrew Laughton called charge nurse Paddy McKee at Humber Foundation Trust's crisis team for an assessment of Sally Mays.

He said: "Paddy informed me there was no chance as they did not have anyone available to send. I said we felt Sally was in acute crisis and needed to be in hospital. Paddy's response to that was: 'There are no beds'."

Sally, 22, was found dead from an overdose and mechanical asphyxia at her west Hull flat on Friday, July 25, last year after she was refused admission to the Miranda House mental health unit.

Sally, who had an emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD), was seen by the crisis team three times in the days leading up to her death, including twice on the day she died.

However, despite it being in her care plan that short-term admission should be offered to her when she was at "significant" risk, she was not admitted to hospital.

Community psychiatric nurse Kerry Helyard, Sally's key worker for four years, said she had requested an admission of "two or three days" to help Sally during contact with the crisis team on July 24.

About five hours before Sally's death, Ms Helyard contacted the crisis team again and was told no beds were available and the team was called out to assess Sally at Miranda House a short time later.

Ms Helyard later discovered Sally had not been admitted to the unit but felt she could not take further action because senior staff had taken the decision.

"I felt, because the crisis team manager was there, that wouldn't have been overturned in any event," she said.

Three days before her death, Sally told her mother Angela that Ms Helyard had asked her to fake an overdose to help train student nurse Leonie Naylor in what has been referred to throughout the inquest as a "role-playing" exercise.

However, Ms Helyard insisted no "role-play" had taken place and that she had only asked Ms Naylor to call Sally to check on her.

She said: "I never asked Sally to pretend to have taken an overdose. That did not happen."

Earlier, the inquest heard specialist nurse Paula Smith and a colleague from the crisis team had been called to Hull Royal Infirmary to assess Sally in the early hours of July 25 after the young woman had taken another overdose.

She said Sally had immediately requested a hospital admission and stopped co-operating when they told her there were no beds at Mill View Court, meaning no assessment could be carried out.

Ms Smith said she did not carry out a further assessment, despite receiving a call from police later that morning that Sally had spoken of her intention and a plan to kill herself.

The inquest resumes on Monday.