

'Sally Mays would probably still be alive if she'd been admitted to hospital' – inquest

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By Allison Coggan



INQUEST: The inquest into the death of Sally Mays heard that nurses were 'reckless' and showed 'serious professional neglect'

A WOMAN who took her own life might have been saved if two nurses had agreed to admit her to hospital, an inquest was told.

Mental health nursing expert Malcolm Rae said nurses Paddy McKee and Gemma Pearson were "reckless" and showed "serious professional neglect" after Sally Mays, 22, asked to be admitted during an assessment at Miranda House in Hull.

Mr Rae said: "We felt if she had been admitted late afternoon, she would probably have survived.

"We felt if she had been admitted, she would have been alive."

Sally, who had emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD), was found dead at her west Hull flat on July 25, last year, after she was turned away from Miranda House.

An inquest heard Mr McKee and Ms Pearson, who worked for the trust's crisis team, refused to admit Sally despite recommendations from her community psychiatric team, her psychotherapist and police officers.

Sally's care plan, agreed by her consultant psychiatrist, also stated she should be offered short-term hospital stays when she was at "significant risk" of harm.

Mr Rae investigated Sally's death, along with two other medical experts, and concluded there had been a "predetermined view" by the crisis team to refuse admission.

"We would have expected them to take some leadership and be more sensitive, sympathetic and compassionate," he said.

"We felt they were considering the diagnosis and not her needs at that time."

The inquest heard about "malignant alienation" when a relationship between mental health staff and a patient breaks down and the patient is regarded as "manipulative".

Mr Rae agreed with Bridget Dolan, representing Sally's family, there had been "failures" by the trust to train staff in dealing with personality disorders.

The inquest heard a proper mental health assessment of Sally should have taken between 45 minutes to one hour. However, the assessment conducted by Mr McKee and Ms Pearson had taken 14 to 20 minutes and did not consider "red flags" over her increasing risk of harm.

"It is crucial in the making of such an important decision that you see the bigger picture," Mr Rae said.

He also described a remark by Mr McKee that Sally should be allowed to faint after she tried to strangle herself when she learned she would not be admitted to hospital as "completely inappropriate and insensitive".

He said an "out of area" bed should have been considered if there were no beds at any of the trust's inpatient units and staff should have contacted the on-call psychiatrist because there was a disagreement over hospital admission.

Mr Rae described the crisis team's plan to "await contact" from Sally over the weekend instead of admitting her to hospital was "flawed" and "wholly inappropriate".

Consultant psychiatrist Dr Robert Kehoe said Sally had a serious personality disturbance, adding: "You cannot underestimate the severity of the condition."

However, he pointed out hospital stays had been both "helpful and unhelpful" during Sally's life.

Dr Kehoe said patients still took their lives in psychiatric units, so he was "less certain" than other witnesses that Sally would have been alive if she had been admitted.

He said: "I would have hoped all would have been done to prevent serious self-harm occurring if she had accepted admission that would, on balance, have led to a different outcome that day."

The inquest is expected to conclude on Friday.