

Sally Mays death: Coroner's damning verdict as NHS Trust accused of causing 'unimaginable suffering'

By [Hull Daily Mail](#) | Posted: October 24, 2015

By Allison Coggan



MISSED: Sally Mays died just hours after she was turned away from a mental health unit.

THE family of a young woman who killed herself after she was turned away from a mental health unit have accused an NHS organisation of causing "unimaginable and unnecessary suffering".

Sally Mays, 22, took her own life after two nurses from Humber NHS Foundation Trust's crisis team refused to admit her to hospital following a 14-minute assessment at Miranda House in Hull.

An eight-day inquest heard Sally, who had emotionally unstable personality disorder, died from an overdose and mechanical asphyxia after Yorkshire Ambulance Service took 99 minutes to reach her west Hull flat.

In his narrative conclusion, coroner Professor Paul Marks ruled the failure to admit Sally to hospital was neglect and said: "For the avoidance of doubt, had Sally been admitted, she would not have died that day."

After the coroner's conclusion, Sally's mum, Angela, said: "We sincerely hope all those staff who contributed to Sally's untimely death will never be able to forget the consequences of their actions."

"The last eight days have been harrowing beyond belief. Sadly, our ongoing trauma pales into insignificance when compared with the unimaginable and unnecessary suffering caused to Sally by the failure of nurses from the crisis team of Humber NHS Foundation Trust."

The inquest in Hull heard Sally asked to be admitted to hospital as her mental health deteriorated in the last few days of her life. Three nurses from her community team and her psychotherapist recommended a short stay in hospital in line with her care plan.

However, nurses Paddy McKee and Gemma Pearson refused to admit her after carrying out what Professor Marks described as a "lamentable" assessment.

Instead, they called police when Sally started banging her head off a wall and tried to strangle herself in her distress.

However, police officers knew Sally needed to be in hospital to keep her safe and had a "stand-up fight" with the two nurses outside Miranda House to persuade them to change their minds. But they were forced to take Sally home when the nurses refused to reconsider.

Professor Marks said PCs Neil Counter and Dennis Daughton had acted with "thorough professionalism in the face of an illogical, quixotic and unconscionable" decision.

The coroner said Humber NHS Foundation Trust had "not covered itself in glory" over its dealings with Sally's family and its disclosure of documents.

However, he said it was not "a deliberate attempt to obfuscate failings" and was due to errors rather than "deliberate conspiracy".

The coroner is now using his powers to contact the Chief Coroner over "serious concerns" about how Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) prioritises emergency psychiatric calls.

Mrs Mays said YAS "sealed Sally's fate" by allowing a "catastrophic delay" of 99 minutes.

She said: "We hope YAS will learn from this totally unacceptable delay and ensure their systems and procedures are changed to prevent any possibility of a future recurrence."

She also said Sally's family hoped Humber Foundation Trust would take "robust steps" to ensure what happened to Sally could never happen to anyone else.

Mrs Mays said: "Sally always said that once you have a mental health condition you are regarded as a second-class citizen and treated as such.

"However, there is no greater prejudice than that demonstrated towards patients with a diagnosis of emotionally unstable personality disorder by the very professionals charged with their care and treatment."

'We let Sally down'

TERESA Cope, chief operating officer at Humber NHS Foundation Trust, said: "I would like to offer unreserved apology to Mr and Mrs Mays and Ben for the failure to admit Sally to hospital on the

afternoon of July 25.

“The trust fully acknowledges on the afternoon of July 25, Sally was not adequately assessed by our staff and was not treated with the level of dignity, respect and compassion we expect of our staff.

“We let Sally down and we let her family down.

“We also let down the other trust colleagues who had worked with Sally over a number of years to build effective therapeutic relationships with Sally and support her with mental health issues.

“We also did not support our partner agencies who we should have been working closely and collaborating with.