

## Details of secret conversation to be disclosed at new Sally Mays inquest

A pre-inquest hearing was held on Monday to decide the scope of the inquest

By James Campbell Reporter 05:00, 22 FEB 2022



**Sally Mays killed herself after she was turned away by Humber NHS Foundation Trust's crisis team. Sally as a teenager (Image: Angela Mays)**

A senior coroner has been urged to investigate in detail a conversation between a consultant psychiatrist and a psychiatric nurse shortly after tragic Sally Mays was turned away from a mental health unit.

Sally, 22, who had mental health issues, died at home in Hull in 2014 shortly after she was turned away from Miranda House in Hull.

Her parents Angela and Andy have fought for the last eight years for improvements to be made and lessons to be learnt from Sally's death.

Sally took her own life in July 2014 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 despite being a suicide risk.

An eight-day inquest in 2015 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 December the High Court in London has ordered a new inquest into her death after a conversation between consultant psychiatrist Dr Opoku Fofie and community psychiatric nurse Laura Elliot was never disclosed.



**Sally Mays killed herself after she was turned away by Humber NHS Foundation Trust's crisis team. (Image: Angela Mays)**

No statement by Dr Opoku was submitted at the original inquest and he was not called as a witness.

On Monday the inquest was reopened and adjourned by Hull's senior coroner Professor Paul Marks during a pre-inquest hearing.

Prof Marks indicated the inquest will last three days and could take place in June.

During the hearing, Bridget Dolan QC, on behalf of Sally's parents, urged the coroner to ensure all emails, investigation transcripts and other information is collected.

She raised concerns about how the accounts of Dr Fofie and Ms Elliot have changed as time has gone on.

She said: "The accounts of Dr Fofie and Ms Elliot have changed over time and I hope the coroner studies this closely.

“We need to obtain the accounts given when this first came to light. It is important to understand how and why these accounts have changed and determine what actually happened.

“We need to see the emails exchanged between Ms Elliot and her supervisor at the time and not just the account she gives now.”

Ms Dolan told the High Court in December that the conversation between one of Ms Mays' Dr Opoku and Ms Elliot on the day she died was "knowingly withheld" from the original inquest in October 2015.

She said the discussion revealed "a clear opportunity" to reverse the decision not to admit Sally.

Prof Marks agreed that a full picture was needed.

He told the hearing he planned to submit the evidence heard at the original inquest as a document which means there will be no need to call all the witnesses again.

The focus will be on hearing from those witnesses involved in the hidden conversation. It was also revealed at the inquest that a police investigation into possible corporate manslaughter and other offences resulted in no charges.

The GMC also decided not to carry out a hearing into the conduct of nurses Paddy McKee and Gemma Pearson

However, McKee was struck off by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) last month following a Fitness to Practice hearing.



### **Disgraced mental health nurse Paddy McKee**

McKee was employed in the crisis service of the Humber NHS Foundation Trust at the time he dealt with Sally.

After a 12-day hearing, all 30 charges against McKee were proved along with six aggravating factors while all mitigation was dismissed.

The report by the NMC condemned the actions of McKee stating “he treated her in a way that lacked basic kindness and compassion”.

The NMC found his actions to refuse Sally admission contributed to her death.



Sally's mum Angela Mays previously revealed what she wants from the new inquest.

She said: "The first thing I want is respect for my daughter and ensure the full facts are presented into her death.

"Secondly, we want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We want to know the information the trust withheld which only came to light the week after the inquest finished.

"It was devastating when we found there was further evidence available. We have only been able to piece together what we know by fighting for six years."

The inquest in Hull in 2015 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.



**Sally Mays killed herself after she was turned away by Humber NHS Foundation Trust's crisis team. Sally dressed for her prom (Image: Angela Mays)**

However, nurses McKee and 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.

Prof Paul Marks said the decision not to admit Ms Mays constituted "neglect" which bore "a direct causal relationship to her death later that evening".

He said that she had been admitted following an initial assessment she "would have survived and not died when she did".

A further missed opportunity to save her life came from the 69-minute delay to an ambulance arriving at Sally's flat after her 999 call was not categorised appropriately, the coroner said.

Following the inquest in 2015, coroner Prof 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.”

In December Lady Justice Simler, sitting with Mrs Justice May and Judge Thomas Teague QC - the chief coroner for England and Wales - said it was "necessary and desirable in the interests of justice" to quash the inquest and order a fresh one.

In her ruling, the judge concluded that "fresh" and "relevant" evidence was now available and that a new inquest was "likely to lead to additional findings of fact being made".