

Monday, 16 September 2024

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(10.00 am)

(Proceedings delayed)

(10.05 am)

MR GRIFFIN: Chair, the purpose of this hearing is now changing. Whilst you heard opening statements last week, we now move to hear commemorative and impact evidence from some of those most closely affected by the issues the Inquiry is investigating. The evidence you'll be hearing may be commemorative of a person who has died, speaking about their lives, their aspirations, accomplishments and other matters. It may also be about the impact a death and the experience that led up to it had on the person making the statement and others, such as family members and friends.

Chair, I know that you have carefully read and reviewed all of the commemorative and impact evidence, including the statements, photos and videos that have been provided to the Inquiry in the form that it was provided to the Inquiry in preparation for this hearing.

The Inquiry feels that it is of great importance to hear this evidence now, to begin to understand the nature and extent of the very many individual tragedies with which we're concerned and to be clear from the start that this Inquiry is about individuals, all with

1 their own experiences. This evidence is, therefore,
2 different from the witness statements and other evidence
3 that will be provided for our hearings next year which
4 will be directly about the matters listed in the Terms
5 of Reference, for example, about what happened on
6 a particular ward at a particular time.

7 This hearing, this week and next week, serves
8 a different but just as important function. The
9 evidence we will be hearing shortly will be candid,
10 personal and loving but sometimes distressing and
11 difficult to hear. I would again like to remind people
12 of the emotional support service that is available. As
13 we've heard, counsellors are present here today. They
14 have already shown themselves before, Chair, you came in
15 but if they wouldn't mind putting their hands up again,
16 wearing black lanyards at the back of the room here. We
17 want all those engaging with the Inquiry to feel safe
18 and supported.

19 The Inquiry is deeply grateful for the commemorative
20 and impact evidence. As we said last week, we
21 appreciate the courage it has taken to come forward with
22 it. It must have been very difficult indeed. Our hope
23 is that this will be a positive experience for those who
24 provided the evidence, that it begins to recognise the
25 enormity of their own experiences and that it marks the

1 start of the path to change.

2 Some statements will be read over the next two weeks
3 by those who made them, others will be read by me or by
4 a legal representative. We would like to ensure that
5 people reading their own statements are made to feel as
6 comfortable and supported as possible, and I would ask
7 everyone attending to bear that in mind. In some cases,
8 over the next two weeks, those giving their own accounts
9 may be accompanied at the table here while they do so.

10 We plan to break in the middle of the morning and in
11 the middle of the afternoon. The breaks will be
12 a little longer than last week, they will be for half
13 an hour, and we'll again have an hour over lunch. It's
14 possible that we'll take additional breaks from time to
15 time if we need them. There's no problem at all with
16 that. We have a flexible schedule to allow that to
17 happen.

18 We'll be hearing commemorative and impact evidence
19 Monday to Wednesday this week and again Monday to
20 Wednesday next week, and there will be some further
21 commemorative and impact evidence in our next hearing,
22 which will run from 25 November to 5 December.

23 Thank you, Chair.

24 THE CHAIR: Well, before we begin, can I say how grateful
25 I am to everyone who has shared an account of a person

1 who has died and the impact of that person's death.
2 I've found these accounts deeply moving and affecting,
3 and providing them, I know, must have been extremely
4 difficult, but they do provide me and the rest of the
5 Inquiry team with a very necessary perspective on the
6 seriousness and the tragedy of the matters we're dealing
7 with.

8 I want to reiterate Mr Griffin's point and give you
9 my assurance that I have read every account that's been
10 submitted in the form in which it was submitted, and
11 I've looked at every photograph and I have viewed every
12 video in its entirety. If some parts of those accounts
13 or some of the other material is not being shared in
14 public today, I want to make quite clear that there is no
15 disrespect meant but it is for very good reasons of
16 either public safety or the need to ensure that we run
17 the Inquiry in a proper and manageable sequence. But
18 I do want to make it clear that I've seen everything
19 that has been submitted and none of it has been or will
20 be overlooked. Thank you.

21 MR GRIFFIN: Thank you.

22 Chair, with your permission, may I ask Patrick
23 Brennan to come to the table here? He will be reading
24 his commemorative account about his son, Liam Brennan.
25 And may I ask that the photograph is put up, please?

1 THE CHAIR: When you're ready, Mr Brennan.

2 Statement by Patrick Brennan

3 MR BRENNAN: Okay. Thank you.

4 Good morning, Chair, and everyone involved in and
5 attending this Inquiry.

6 My son, Liam Patrick Brennan was born on
7 10 August 1983 and was the eldest of three children.
8 His birth at the Whittington Hospital in Archway was
9 a moment of joy for us. There was nothing unusual in
10 his birth other than he was delivered by a male midwife
11 which was then regarded as so novel that he'd been
12 featured in an episode of Women's Hour on Radio 4 as
13 a man doing what was regarded then as a woman's job.

14 His mum and I, who had been married for two years at
15 the time lived in Barnet where Liam, his sister Lucy and
16 brother James were brought up. Liam attended the local
17 Catholic primary school and went on to Finchley Catholic
18 secondary school. I think it's fair to say that Liam
19 found his primary school to be fun, whilst looking back,
20 secondary school was probably very restrictive to him.
21 He found the necessary discipline and rigid structure of
22 the school day, particularly when attending classes of
23 subjects that didn't interest him, to be demotivating.

24 Liam had an open personality and whilst it was often
25 obvious to some of his teachers that he had little time

1 for their subject, it never led to personal dislike
2 between them which was a credit to their professionalism
3 and his engaging personality.

4 It is also fair to say that Liam was starting to
5 struggle in his teens which can be a challenging time
6 for any young person. On the one hand he was a carefree
7 and funny lad, on the other he could not work out his
8 place in the world. He was finding it difficult to
9 define what he wanted to do with his life and his own
10 self-worth -- a thing that unfortunately ran to the end
11 of his life. Responsibility did not sit comfortably
12 with him but hard work on anything he was interested in
13 did.

14 His rebelliousness increased and his behaviour
15 became more difficult as he sought the friendship of
16 those who he hoped had a better understanding of how he
17 felt. His relationship with his siblings in their words
18 "became more complex" which they found difficult to
19 understand as they were from the same family, had the
20 "same life", but appeared to be on different paths.

21 Yet during his childhood we remember Liam playing
22 football in the garden with his sister who was two years
23 his junior. James was born six years later. They built
24 dens, celebrated their birthdays with bouncy castle
25 parties in the garden and holidays at Butlins, Pontins,

1 Ireland and Corfu. Upon returning from our holiday in
2 Ireland, Liam used our tape recorder to recreate the
3 programmes we had listened to on the local radio station
4 when we were driving around enjoying what he saw as the
5 relative simplicity of rural life in that country. In
6 those tapes, he was able to display his creativity,
7 humour and sharp observation.

8 Liam and I shared a passion for sport in particular
9 for supporting Chelsea as well as going to occasional
10 matches at Barnet, and later on the odd game of snooker
11 that always had to be played positively. I remember in
12 particular phoning Liam straight after the match when
13 Chelsea won the Champions League final in 2012 to
14 compare notes. I was in Ireland at a family event, Liam
15 watched it somewhere local to where he was living in
16 Harlow. He excitedly explained that he had watched the
17 penalty shoot out through his fingers and that he could
18 hardly watch it. Over the call, his excitement and most
19 of all his happiness was obvious.

20 Later that year, our last conversation took place
21 when Liam rang me to check when Usain Bolt would be
22 running in the 200 metres final of the Olympics. Bolt
23 was precisely the kind of top-class, apparently relaxed
24 and unfazed sportsman that Liam would look up to.

25 Liam left school at 16. Any further academic

1 studies were not for him, so he worked for a while for
2 a plumber, and then he had a brief job in a printing
3 works. He had done some work experience in a pizza
4 parlour and appeared to enjoy it and eventually he had
5 a series of chef jobs until he died.

6 Liam had a good relationship with my wife Susan, and
7 I remember we went to visit him in 2000 at a gastro pub
8 in Wales where he spent a few years as a chef and
9 enjoying a rural life there at the time of the Sydney
10 Olympics. By all accounts, he was a creative chef and
11 enjoyed the creativity and camaraderie of the kitchen
12 despite its notoriously intense working environment.
13 I know from conversations with Liam that he loved
14 nothing more than having one of his recipes included as
15 a "special" on the menu.

16 After the evening sessions, Liam found it difficult
17 to wind down choosing to resort to alcohol and what he
18 euphemistically termed "recreational drugs" to try to
19 relax creating its own cycle of increasing dependency.

20 Even though Liam's hours were unsociable I remember
21 us visiting him in later years at another pub/restaurant
22 where he was working in Hertfordshire. A local choir
23 used it as their post practice watering hole and they
24 treated us to a couple of songs. That evening saw Liam
25 at his most relaxed and content. Liam joined us on

1 Boxing Day lunches and took me once to Borough Market to
2 be shown how to "shop like a chef" and he treated us to
3 a meal prepared by him. A bit of a busman's holiday but
4 very much appreciated, nonetheless.

5 Liam just wanted to be happy, earn enough to fund
6 a social life and live a relatively unhindered life.
7 When he had money, he was incredibly generous with gifts
8 he would give at Christmas.

9 Liam was not at all materialistic.

10 There were a lot of times when he achieved the
11 equilibrium he was looking for but there were also times
12 when he struggled with living. Things just didn't make
13 sense to him, he could not be persuaded to see the
14 positive side of life. He had talent, friends that
15 enjoyed his company, the camaraderie of the kitchens
16 that he worked in and the love and support of his
17 family.

18 All that was never enough for him.

19 Liam died on Tuesday 14th August 2012, four days
20 after his 29th birthday.

21 Liam had a throaty laugh that could easily be heard
22 across the room, a wicked and sharp sense of humour,
23 a love of sport, animals, music and computer games.

24 Anyone who met him, remembered him fondly.

25 In terms of the impact of his death on our family,

1 it's been profound.

2 The first feeling is an almost overwhelming sense of
3 failure, that we have outlived our child or sibling.
4 This is against the natural order of life.

5 For us as parents, it is a basic duty to look after
6 our children, set them up to make the best of life and
7 watch them develop in our old age. In that, there is
8 a feeling we have failed Liam.

9 I should make it clear that whatever the outcome of
10 this Inquiry, nothing will change that feeling.

11 In the couple of years after Liam's death I felt
12 faced with an incompatible choice. Not only was I,
13 along with members of the family, trying to come to
14 terms with my grief but also trying to get through the
15 corporate defensiveness of the North Essex Partnership
16 NHS Foundation Trust in a quest to understand how Liam
17 had died, why he had died, what had been done for him
18 and what had not -- all compounded by their contribution
19 to the coroner's hearing into Liam's death. This was an
20 incredibly difficult time and almost unbelievably made
21 worse by the Trust.

22 Having got so far in my correspondence, discussions
23 and meetings with the Trust, I felt I needed to make the
24 choice between continuing to pursue more information
25 about why Liam died which was beginning to feel

1 all-consuming or to try to concentrate on supporting my
2 family. In feeling isolated, I chose the latter only to
3 find out all these years later that so many others have
4 found themselves in similar situations.

5 Our hearts go out to all the families involved in
6 this Inquiry -- an inquiry from whom so much is
7 expected.

8 Elaine, Liam's mum, is still frankly so impacted she
9 cannot bring herself to articulate how she feels other
10 than how much she loves Liam and misses him every day.

11 Lucy, Liam's sister, would point to impacts as
12 simple as answering the question "how many siblings do
13 you have?" The issue is not to deny Liam was her
14 brother, but having to deal, not only with the
15 explanation, but also having to assuage the question's
16 embarrassment or even judgment. That is certainly an
17 experience I can identify with and have had to wrestle
18 with many times.

19 Liam will never meet Lucy's son who is now three
20 years old. I have no doubt he would have been
21 a mischievous and generous uncle.

22 Lucy has been taken completely off guard when she
23 sees Liam in her son's physical similarities and looks.
24 There was a phase when they looked so alike, she had to
25 say to her mum that he looks a lot like Liam at the

1 moment and to prepare herself for that when she next
2 visited them. Whilst Lucy is happy to see him live on
3 through our future generations it can be extremely hard
4 and is a constant reminder that he is not here with us.
5 She knows one day she is going to have to explain to her
6 son why her uncle is an angel.

7 During Lucy's pregnancy, eight years after Liam's
8 death, she was asked by a health visitor if she had
9 suffered any depression. Her answer was truthfully
10 "no". She was then asked why she was signed off work
11 for two weeks in 2012 and whether it was due to
12 depression. Lucy then had to explain to the health
13 visitor about her brother's death and to justify that
14 she did not have a history of mental health issues.
15 This was completely irrelevant to her pregnancy, and she
16 made a complaint to her GP and health visitors
17 organisation. This was also handled completely
18 insensitively. Pregnancy should be a positive
19 experience and yet the worst time of her life was being
20 discussed when the two were not related.

21 Lucy also had to dig deep to trust the hospital with
22 her own and her baby's health as the previous time she
23 was in that particular hospital she was visiting her
24 brother in the mental health facility and subsequently
25 the mortuary.

1 For Lucy, there are practical impacts that she has
2 to manage, including to maintain Liam's grave,
3 supporting her parents and brother on hard days such as
4 anniversaries, birthdays, Mother's Day and Father's Day.
5 She will never forget thinking on her 30th birthday that
6 she shouldn't have been the first child of Mum and Dad's
7 to turn 30. That was Liam's job.

8 For my part, the 14th August, Liam's anniversary, is
9 very much a day in the diary when I cannot work or do
10 anything that would involve personal enjoyment. That
11 would simply be disrespectful. This is a day for going
12 to his grave in Finchley.

13 James, Liam's younger brother, shares many of the
14 feelings expressed by his sister and other members of
15 the family.

16 It may be a cliché, but it feels as if Liam has been
17 robbed of his potential as a person. We did not feel
18 that his condition was hopeless. The good times gave us
19 encouragement that with the right help and support, Liam
20 could find his place in the world. We were desperate
21 for help which is why we turned to the NHS for the
22 answers we could not find for ourselves.

23 No parents like us should have to bury their child,
24 his hopes and dreams.

25 At family events there is always someone missing

1 convey everything that we want to say about our children
2 or our loved ones contained in what we bring with us.
3 I think we've all tried our hardest.

4 And just for any absence of doubt, I was, I am and
5 I always will be a loving mum to Abbigail Smith. And
6 this is addressed to Abbi herself.

7 Abbi, my daughter, you are a kaleidoscope of
8 ever-changing colours and patterns. My little
9 kaleidoscope, I loved sharing the colours of your life
10 with you.

11 I remember when you were born, I had already chosen
12 your name years prior, it came from a book I read and
13 I recalled the conscious decision to name my next
14 daughter "Abbigail". I thought it was the most
15 beautiful name I had heard. It suited you well; you
16 were the baby that charmed everyone that you came into
17 contact with and you were certainly adored by both your
18 immediate and extended families.

19 When you were little we had the most fascinating
20 conversations; I remember the time you asked me, "Is
21 [my friend] poorly, Mum? Does she have a bug in her tummy?
22 Is it a spider or is it a ladybird!" Or the fact that
23 you struggled with some words -- escalators were
24 "alligators", a dressing gown was a "dressing down" and
25 ornaments were "ordaments". You liked these words and

1 chose to use them as you grew older and we often giggled
2 about it with you insisting that you were correct!

3 In primary school, your fearlessness was legendary
4 and despite your difficulties you still played an active
5 role and were in the school nativity play every year.
6 You developed a special bond with the teacher who was
7 your one-to-one and you stayed in touch right up until
8 the end.

9 You had such a special bond with animals. I still
10 have all your rosettes from the dog shows that we went
11 to and the gymkhanas you won. I remember you entering
12 the beginners' showjumping class in 2006 and winning
13 first place on Bambam, and I remember the same year you
14 winning first place in "Best Child Handler" with Meg,
15 our dog.

16 And I wanted to bring you all the rosette to show
17 you that Abbi won, and on the back it says, "Abbi,
18 11 years old, on Bambam, August 06, Beginners' Show
19 Jumping".

20 You wanted a dog of your own more than anything and
21 despite never realising that dream, Greg and I have
22 adopted a rescue dog for you. His name is Ted and he is
23 a stray street dog from Bosnia and, if anyone asks me,
24 I tell them it is my youngest daughter's dog and that
25 I am looking after him for her. I tell Ted all about

1 you and how lucky he is to have such an amazing owner
2 who would simply adore him unreservedly.

3 You were always so sporty and I smile through tears
4 at finding all your British Gymnastics awards for
5 trampolining. You attained all of the levels from 1 to
6 10 and I remember watching how free you looked when you
7 were taking part. When I took you rock-climbing, the
8 instructor said to me that you were a natural at it and,
9 again, you seemed so free. The more adrenaline-inducing
10 the activity, the more you seemed to revel in it. You
11 came alive at these times and lived for the moments of
12 freedom that you could find. You actively searched out
13 these activities and were constantly chasing that next
14 wave of emotion and life. There was one week alone
15 where you had me trying to arrange scuba diving, hot air
16 ballooning and bungee jumping; I was tired just trying
17 to arrange it all, never mind actually doing it!
18 However, the sheer childlike delight you displayed when
19 taking part in these activities always filled my heart
20 with joy.

21 After we moved down south, we set out on our best
22 life together and shared so many adventures. There were
23 lots of them but some of the memories that will always
24 enable me to both smile and cry at the same time are:

25 Watching you at Adrenaline Quarry when you were on

1 holiday in Cornwall. You scaled and dived from about
2 40 foot up a rockface into the flooded quarry. You
3 swung out over 170 feet above the quarry on a zero
4 gravity swing and reached over 40 miles per hour coming
5 back down the zip line.

6 Going to Alton Towers together. I had to get up at
7 5.00 am to get ready and drive us there. It was only
8 when I was there that I needed to go on all the rides
9 too! 13 of them, Abbi! And I had vertigo!
10 Oblivion/the Smiler/13/Nemesis/Air/Rita. The list went
11 on. I remember wobbling off the Smiler and needing to
12 hold on to a tree to keep myself upright and I then
13 remember being violently sick by that tree. You stood
14 there and laughed at me! And after that I still needed
15 to drive us home and I seem to remember you had the
16 audacity to sleep most of the way!

17 You completed the Race for Life three times and
18 earned over £1000 in sponsorship money. On one run
19 alone you raised over £700. I would always stand in the
20 crowd cheering and be waiting for you at the finish
21 line. You always crossed -- jubilant and delighted with
22 yourself. You were such a giving person.

23 And this is her medal from 2014 that Abbi wore and
24 won. And this one doesn't have a date on it. Oh, does
25 it? 2011, thank you.

1 I remember you meeting Greg, who was later to become
2 your stepdad, for the first time and how much you liked
3 him. We settled into a routine and our little family
4 was never more complete than when we did things like
5 playing Disney Trivial Pursuit and other games together
6 and when we took you out for meals. I remember the day
7 we took you to Cosmo and your complete delight at being
8 able to choose anything and everything you wanted to
9 eat. More than anything, I remember your face when you
10 saw the chocolate fountain and how you came back to the
11 table for your camera. You recorded your whole life
12 through pictures and videos. You stood and recorded the
13 chocolate fountain on your camera, not caring who
14 watched. You always ended our visits together with such
15 meaningful hugs; Greg always said that you gave the best
16 hugs and held on so tightly.

17 Our movie days were legendary. Sometimes we would
18 go and spend all day in the cinema and bounce from movie
19 to movie. We would enter when it was light and go home
20 when it was dark. There were so many times we sat and
21 watched DVDs at home together. You had a collection of
22 hundreds and hundreds of them. I remember visiting you
23 in one of the hospital units and turning up with
24 a duvet, portable DVD player, DVDs, chocolate, popcorn
25 and milkshakes. We lay on the floor for hours under a

1 duvet watching those movies. I think one of them was
2 Finding Nemo.

3 You were an accomplished horse rider. Every week
4 for years we would go together. I would drive, no
5 matter what the weather, and sit in the shed in the
6 cold, usually wearing mittens and hat to try to keep
7 warm and would watch on proudly whilst you rode the
8 horses and enjoyed yourself. Your magical bond with
9 animals was always so evident at these times, you were
10 always so absorbed in simply trying to be at one with
11 the horse. I always took the camera and sometimes
12 filmed you or took a photo of you with all the different
13 horses and I am so relieved I have all of those
14 memories. Even if I am not in the pictures, I know
15 I was there.

16 You enjoyed watching soap operas such as Coronation
17 Street, Eastenders and Casualty, Waterloo Road and
18 Wentworth. You used to be so worried if you came to
19 stay with us that, even though you had set your Sky box
20 to record them, you might miss them and so Greg and
21 I had to double-record them at our house just for you,
22 just to reassure you that you would be able to watch
23 them! You liked reality TV and deciding who to vote out
24 on Strictly, I'm a Celebrity or Britain's Got Talent.
25 You would always phone me straight afterwards and we

1 would sit there and chat like two old ladies about who
2 we wanted to stay and who we thought should be voted
3 out. And we always laughed about Greg thinking he was
4 the best judge on the planet; he hadn't even watched
5 these kinds of programmes until he met us!

6 You adored singing. You created and uploaded so
7 many tiktoks of yourself singing and had a Facebook
8 group of "Good times" that included you singing.

9 I think it brought you avenues to express yourself when
10 you struggled to find the words. We used to sing
11 together so often and collapse in fits of giggles or we
12 would wind the windows down of the car and sing on
13 a summer's day, usually on our way to horse-riding or
14 one of our days out. We used to have singing
15 competitions on the Wii until our voices were hoarse!
16 All of your many friends would comment on your beautiful
17 voice and now this is lost to them too. I stay in touch
18 with lots of them and they always talk about your
19 kindness, gentleness and lovely voice.

20 On your 16th birthday I arranged to take you to
21 London for the day. We did so many things together. We
22 explored London, visiting the 4D cinema and we went on
23 the London Eye. I remember you being fascinated by the
24 statue artist we met on the bridge and you had your
25 photo taken with him; you had no idea that he had held

1 a pretend gun to your head and were quite indignant when
2 you looked at the photo when it was developed. We
3 sailed down the Thames and the captain allowed you to
4 choose the seat you wanted and, with a big smile on your
5 face, you chose the very top deck in the open air. But
6 the best bit of the day was surprising you with a trip
7 to the theatre to see the Lion King. I remember your
8 horrified face at the cost of the sweets and the drinks
9 but we still bought lots, along with the ice cream at
10 the interval! As we sat in the theatre, I looked across
11 at you and you were enthralled. As the actors and
12 puppets started to enter the auditorium and make their
13 way to the stage, I heard you exclaim "Wow" so loudly.
14 And afterwards, when we chatted about the performance,
15 you giggled about the fact that you thought you had said
16 "Wow" in your head and didn't realise you had said it
17 out loud. But I am glad you did, Abbi, because I know
18 it was a magical and memorable day for you and I was
19 delighted to share it with you and to be able to carry
20 that memory in my heart forever.

21 We sat for hour upon hour creating memory books
22 together of all of our adventures. They are littered
23 with photos, tickets, postcards and cut-outs of all our
24 special days. I took a couple of them to the reception
25 following your funeral so that all your friends, family

1 and acquaintances, who were there from far and near,
2 could see them -- your uncle had come all the way from
3 the USA to celebrate your amazing technicolour life --
4 and they could look at those pictures and see some of
5 the memories that I am standing here recalling with you.

6 I loved the way you created and kept your memories.
7 This was how you processed and made sense of life:
8 diaries, videos, cut-outs, quotes and lists. You kept
9 lists of everything. Gifts that you had given people
10 and presents that you had been bought. I have found it
11 all so carefully documented and lovingly stored with
12 meticulous detail. I have even found videos on your
13 camera of you dropping various bath bombs into the bath
14 at different times and filming them fizzing away into
15 nothingness. All of your letters and cards from people
16 have been equally lovingly stored and kept safely.

17 I have read all of the diaries that you left and
18 I promise you -- I'll just emphasise that -- I promise
19 you that where you have expressed concern at all the
20 things you have seen and been subject to, I will do my
21 best to be your voice. I was so happy when I found one
22 of your diaries that recorded how you had made
23 a ladybird and a Hungry Caterpillar ornament, (no, it's
24 not an "ordament" -- I can hear you correcting me now
25 and chuckling), you were so pleased that you still had

1 them. Well, I have found them, Abbi, and I promise that
2 Greg and I will keep them safe forever too.

3 During your funeral, the celebrant made reference to
4 your time at Columbus School and College and it
5 gladdened my heart to see so many teachers and students
6 present on the day, after all that time. There are many
7 more that sent me messages, Abbs, telling me how amazing
8 you were, how much they learned from you and how they,
9 like I, will carry your spirit of goodness with them.
10 You had such a great time at Columbus and I remember
11 some of the famous people you met: the Countess of
12 Wessex, Frank Bruno, Shane Ritchie-- where we teased
13 you about being Mrs Shane Ritchie because he called you
14 "Blondie". But your favourite encounter was with Jet,
15 the Blue Peter pony.

16 You sailed round Britain on a schooner called the
17 Queen Galadriel and I have photos and a video of you at
18 the helm, steering the course true and holding her
19 straight. You visited the farm with the school weekly
20 and you learned to surf on trips to the beach. I have
21 photos of you wading out into the sea at Clacton in your
22 clothes and having to be brought home dripping wet. How
23 you enjoyed that day though -- I have pictures of you
24 dancing on the beach with your arms open wide, laughing.

25 The staff at Columbus were so quick to talk about

1 your empathy with other students, how much you cared,
2 how much you gave of yourself. You never had the
3 opportunity or insight to realise how multifaceted and
4 incredibly special you were. All the many people who
5 attended your funeral were there because of you, Abbi,
6 you were the common denominator in that gathering. You
7 were such an old soul, a magical, gentle and incredibly
8 loving and loved person and I wish you could have
9 understood that. I hope you are shining down on us,
10 smiling in delight at so many people loving and caring
11 about you. I need to tell you, Abbs, it's only
12 a fraction. You touched so many lives. Like
13 a stone being thrown into the water, the ripples went
14 far beyond your direct interactions.

15 Do you remember how much you looked forward to our
16 barbecues? I can picture you sitting in the sun,
17 wearing your sunglasses and laughing with everyone.
18 I can hear Greg saying to you, "Another burger, Abbs?"
19 and you replying "oh -- go on then!" with a big grin.
20 That was your standard reply on barbecue days, "Oh -- go
21 on then!"

22 Something else that was standard for you -- pyjamas!
23 You were a girl who loved her PJs and her dressing gown,
24 and for this one time I will relent and call it
25 "a dressing down". You loved to feel comfortable and

1 snuggly and I hope that you like the Tigger pyjamas we
2 chose for you to wear at our final goodbye. They said
3 "BIG HUGS" and they felt right, comfy and cosy.

4 It breaks my heart, along with all the hearts of
5 those who loved and cared for you, to think there will
6 be no more memories, no more barbecues, no more movies,
7 no more games and no more family. It seems totally
8 unfair that you had to die in order to be safe and at
9 peace, when you should have been supported to achieve
10 this when you were alive. The saving grace is that at
11 least now you are no longer a slave to the doctors and
12 clinicians who never truly understood you and who fought
13 to be right about their diagnosis and treatment of you;
14 you are no longer a tool for their learning nor an
15 inconvenience to their waking day. No more will you be
16 given countless drugs which stole your sparkle and took
17 away your fabulous colours.

18 I wanted you to be in an appropriate facility that
19 could offer you bespoke personalised care, appropriate
20 for your diagnosis of autism, learning disabilities and
21 mental health needs.

22 Perhaps you needed some medication but I always felt
23 clinicians were trying to "fix" you with medication;
24 no one wanted to know what you were like before the
25 medications, and I believe some of your behaviours were

1 simply your autism, but every behaviour was laid
2 squarely at the door of mental health.

3 You became a mere shadow of the person I have so far
4 described and I am still no closer to understanding how,
5 over a period of ten years, you faded before our eyes
6 following what was supposed to be a two-week assessment
7 when you were simply a teenager. This ultimately led to
8 your death. You took your life when you were only
9 26 years old, as you were stripped of support, empathy
10 and understanding by those who were supposed to deliver
11 those fundamentals. You fought so hard and I wish
12 beyond the stars that we had been able to find the
13 support that you needed. You had the majority of your
14 life ahead of you and I desperately wanted to see how
15 that panned out and to be able to share it with you.
16 I feel cheated.

17 You have left a hole not just in my heart but in the
18 hearts of a multitude of people that simply cannot be
19 filled, not that we would want to, because the agonising
20 pain serves as a continuous reminder that you are no
21 longer here.

22 I wish that I were articulate enough to paint your
23 particular kaleidoscope of colours inside every person's
24 head here so that they could truly see, like those who
25 love you, your individuality and the shifting facets of

1 colours that danced along a rainbow's edge. It may have
2 been far too brief but I was privileged that you were my
3 youngest daughter and beyond proud to have been your
4 mum.

5 I still can't say goodbye as it hurts too much, but
6 I will say that I love you lots, Pumpkin, which is the
7 same way I ended our many, many phone calls. I know you
8 are safe, I know you are peaceful and I know that Rocky,
9 your ever-present teddy who was with you for over
10 20 years, through thick and thin, is looking after you.
11 I washed him and dressed him in his best clothes to be
12 by your side in your coffin and to accompany you on your
13 last journey.

14 I will miss you beyond eternity, as will Greg, your
15 sister, your stepbrothers, your nephew and your niece,
16 along with all your aunties and uncles and cousins and
17 your many, many friends, who still stay in touch with me
18 to this day!

19 How my daughter's death affected me is how this is
20 titled and there isn't a day when it doesn't affect me,
21 and it's something that I learn to live with and live
22 alongside. But it's something that will be with us
23 forever.

24 I struggle to enjoy family events or gatherings
25 because I am acutely aware that Abbi is absent from them

1 and I am constantly thinking about how she is "missing
2 out" because of how much she would have enjoyed the day.
3 I, therefore, cannot relax and enjoy myself.

4 I find it difficult to watch my favourite TV
5 programmes anymore. If I watch Casualty or Silent
6 Witness, I see Abbi's face on the cadavers being
7 autopsied or the bodies being resuscitated and I am
8 transported back to the day I identified her body.

9 I have surrounded myself with her belongings, her
10 jewellery, her teddies, her furniture, even her vacuum
11 cleaner and feather duster, just so that I can feel near
12 to her when I'm doing my housework.

13 I had some of her clothes turned into memory bears
14 and I've had four of them made for myself and the
15 family.

16 I kept some of her clothes and wear them to feel
17 closer to her.

18 When alone in the house, I speak to her and beg her
19 to send me a signal to show that she is still with me or
20 that she is "happy" wherever she is now.

21 I have kept Abbi's ashes. I moved house recently
22 and I even had a special bag that I used to sit with her
23 on my knee for the whole journey and I held her tightly
24 to make sure nothing further could hurt her. I cannot
25 drive alone on these occasions when she is with me and

1 I insist my husband drives and that she travels on my
2 knee.

3 I work for the NHS as a Social Prescriber and it can
4 be tough trying to offer support to those who are
5 bereaved and especially those bereaved by suicide.
6 I have to disassociate myself as it is important that
7 I simply listen and offer my patient appropriate support
8 and not bring my experiences into the conversation.

9 I had to complete a basic life support course as
10 part of my work and having to perform CPR on the
11 mannequin was incredibly difficult. I kept seeing her
12 face and imagining what had happened the night she took
13 her life and what had happened when she was discovered.

14 I still keep her on my "Find a Friend", a tracking
15 app which would have allowed me to know her whereabouts,
16 and I have her messages pinned on my phone so that I can
17 see her picture every time I open my messages app.

18 I will never forget, never forget, having to
19 identify her body. I can still see the purple shroud
20 that covered the mound that was to the right of my
21 vision and knowing that I needed to turn my head and
22 that that mound was Abbi's body. I was not allowed to
23 identify her body until after the autopsy as the police
24 needed to rule out foul play. It was five days before
25 I got to see her. The mortuary staff had to warn me

1 "not to move her hair from round her neck" where they
2 had wrapped her long blonde hair around her neck.

3 Whilst at the funeral parlour, Abbi's body continued
4 to degrade and the funeral director had to phone me to
5 ask permission to embalm her, and her hair was full of
6 brambles and weeds. She wouldn't have liked it that
7 way.

8 I would like to show you four videos. They
9 illustrate clearly the fluctuating emotions that both
10 Abbi and those of us who loved her had to live with.
11 Three of the videos were taken from happy and
12 lighthearted moments during her life. The fourth was
13 taken by Abbi whilst she was in hospital on
14 13 February 2022. However, I have been asked not to
15 show this final video as I understand that we had an
16 undertaking by the Chair that it will be played at the
17 evidential stage of this Inquiry.

18 Whilst I still don't fully understand this decision,
19 I am respectful of it, even though this video is already
20 in the public domain as it formed a part of the
21 Dispatches documentary that was filmed and broadcast by
22 Channel 4 last year. Within 48 hours of recording this
23 video, Abbi had taken her life.

24 MR GRIFFIN: Would you play the three videos, please?

25 (Videos played)

1 MS WOLFF: I also want to say that those three videos are
2 taken with Abbi's niece and, as I recall, were less than
3 two weeks before she took her life.

4 MR GRIFFIN: Thank you very much.

5 Chair, we'll next be hearing Emma Harley's
6 commemorative video about her brother, Terry White. May
7 I say this from Emma:

8 "Apologies for not attending today. I lost my
9 mother two weeks ago and I'm still not ready to be in
10 the real world, let alone read my commemorative
11 statement for my late brother, Terry. It will be too
12 painful for me to do this at the moment, and today, the
13 16th, is also the day of her funeral."

14 Could I, therefore, ask that Emma's video is played?

15 Statement by Emma Harley

16 MS HARLEY: My little bro, Terry. Our little bro -- because
17 this is for you too, James, our brother who also passed
18 away as he couldn't cope living without you. When you
19 first came into my life, when I was four, I couldn't be
20 prouder to be your big sister. You were an awesome kid,
21 so full of life and energy, everyone commented on your
22 hair, bright blue eyes, and angelic face. You really
23 were the most beautiful little boy. You attracted
24 attention wherever you went. You were into everything,
25 a million miles an hour; the rest of us couldn't keep

1 up. Being with you was like being in a tornado,
2 a bundle of joy and energy bursting with so much life,
3 you couldn't get enough. You were everyone's best
4 friend and everyone wanted to be near you.

5 Your energy was infectious, you would drive all of
6 us mad at home though. There was no downtime with you.
7 You loved so many things as a kid, horses, ice hockey,
8 fishing, reptiles, dancing, music, your bike, DJing,
9 birds of prey. Maybe we should have been worried when
10 you said you wanted to be a horse when you grew up. We
11 had years of horse impressions and saying, "That one's
12 a beauty" whenever we saw a horse. You never got into
13 riding though, I guess there were too many other things
14 to try, but you never stopped loving horses. You had
15 a thing about birds of prey too; your regular call when
16 entering the house was to make bird of prey sounds just
17 to let us know you were there.

18 You got measles when you were little, I can't
19 remember it but it left you with glue ear. It turned
20 out you couldn't hear for a few years until you had
21 grommets fitted. We wondered why you couldn't say words
22 properly. It turns out you couldn't hear the words to
23 learn to say them properly. In fact these years of not
24 hearing affected your learning at school and affected
25 your self-esteem. Coupled with dyslexia and undiagnosed

1 ADHD, which wasn't a thing in the 80s, left you forming
2 an opinion of yourself as not clever. You were clever.
3 Your ability to talk to anyone from any walk of life was
4 astounding. Your magnetism attracted all sorts. Your
5 warm, cheeky, smiley, slightly coy, giggly demeanour
6 meant people just fell in love with you. I wish you'd
7 have felt this more and let this lift you up. You were
8 the sweetest, sweetest boy.

9 These were the things you loved doing as a child.
10 You were brilliant at ice hockey. The first time you
11 went, people were amazed, it was like you had been
12 skating for years. You showed a natural talent for it
13 and played until your late teens. Getting up early on
14 a Sunday morning proved to be too difficult for you as
15 a teen, so I think that must have been when you stopped.
16 You still kept all the gear though. I think you were
17 really proud of how good you were and we were proud of
18 you too.

19 You loved fishing. I had no idea how a little boy
20 who couldn't sit still or be quiet could sit for hours,
21 sometimes days, just staring into a lake and not moving.
22 I never went with you as I had no interest but I knew
23 your patience paid off and you'd often catch a whopper.

24 You and James, our big brother, did this together,
25 and I know these were special times growing up for you

1 both. I think there must have been something about it
2 that totally calmed your mind and let you escape. Your
3 brain worked so fast that it must have felt really good
4 to you to slow it right down.

5 You loved dancing and putting on shows for us.
6 Quite often we'd be sitting as a family watching TV and
7 you would stand in front of the TV dancing and annoying
8 the hell out of us, wanting attention, always wanting
9 attention, and unable to keep still. I would often help
10 you set up a dance show where you would then invite all
11 of your friends and charge them an entry fee. Your
12 entrepreneurial spirit was beginning to emerge. We
13 thought it was a cheek but somehow everyone wanted to
14 come and everyone wanted to pay. You had loads of mates
15 coming to see you dance or DJ in the garage and you made
16 a killing. You also loved to set up little market
17 stalls outside the house and would stay out there all
18 day. You managed to sell all of your old toys, books
19 and games, often running in at the end of the day
20 shouting, "I've made a hundred quid", amazing
21 considering we lived in a cul-de-sac. You were always
22 an amazing salesman. I don't really know how you
23 did it. It must have been that cute face and angelic
24 hair. But, no, it was because you were clever. A word
25 that you didn't think applied to you but it did. Even

1 as a young child, you were so quick with maths if it
2 involved money.

3 It was always my job as big sister to keep you
4 entertained and take you out. We went all over the
5 place with Chelmsford as our playground, all the parks,
6 into town. I loved taking you out and looking after
7 you. You on your bike with me running behind you, you
8 always went too fast. I'll never forgive myself for not
9 watching you carefully enough one day. You went too
10 fast, went over the handlebars and landed on your face,
11 knocking out one of your front teeth. You were in so
12 many scrapes as a child. Even as a big kid you got
13 yourself stuck in a toddler swing and the fire brigade
14 had to come and cut you out. Your friends found these
15 scrapes hilarious while the rest of us would be pulling
16 our hair out. Getting into scrapes didn't ever stop,
17 did it?

18 I have beautiful memories of you on holiday when we
19 were little. Kessingland was a holiday from hell for
20 our parents, but we loved it, you being the star dancer
21 at the kids' disco every night, head-banging so much you
22 knocked yourself out on the stage, telling jokes on
23 stage that didn't even make sense, but it didn't matter,
24 you had an audience. Majorca was perhaps the most
25 memorable. All week you went on and on about getting

1 sweets and that inflatable red dolphin and had meltdowns
2 galore, grinding our parents down so much they had to
3 give in to you. Your determination and persistence took
4 over the whole holiday, Spanish waiters intervening to
5 try and calm you down during tantrums, us playing
6 restaurants every night with you as the waiter.

7 One of our favourite things to do together was
8 recording JET Radio as kids. "JET" stands for James,
9 Emma and Terry. I think you were Terry with the traffic
10 and I was Emma with the weather. James was, of course,
11 the main presenter, and we even had our own jingle.

12 You were out and about all of the time and had so
13 many friends. You found it hard to stay in and there
14 was too much life to be lived. Teen years proved hard
15 for you, hormones kicked in and ADHD symptoms became
16 more challenging to deal with, although at the time we
17 didn't know it was ADHD. You didn't get a diagnosis
18 until you were 16.

19 For years we knew there was something but we didn't
20 have the terminology like "neurodiverse" or "attention
21 deficit disorder". There are too many tricky times to
22 talk about here. You started smoking weed, became
23 vulnerable and easily led. Your need to experience life
24 to the fullest meant trying everything you could and
25 this led down some tricky paths for you and for us as

1 a family.

2 Despite testing us all to our limits, we never fell
3 out. We spoke on the phone a lot and remained close.
4 You sought my advice and told me how much you loved me
5 and were proud of me. That's something I will never
6 doubt, how much you loved me and respected me.

7 Thank you for always being so open with your
8 feelings. Knowing how much you loved me will give me
9 strength forever.

10 James bore much of the brunt of your frustrations.
11 The pair of you had a tumultuous relationship but deep
12 down actually loved each other so much. You take things
13 out on the people you love the most.

14 You felt things very deeply and worried about a lot
15 of things. I remember you being so panicked by the war
16 in Iraq when you were little, you couldn't stop worrying
17 about it; as an adult, being deeply concerned about
18 climate change to the point you had a panic attack while
19 driving on the A13.

20 I know how feeling things so deeply can be
21 debilitating at times, but it's also a gift. It allowed
22 you to show the world how big your heart was, nothing to
23 hide. You wore your heart on your sleeve.

24 You couldn't believe your luck in becoming a father
25 to two beautiful daughters, you loved them deeply and

1 I know how proud you were of them. You kept every
2 little drawing and gift they gave you, hundreds of
3 little trinkets and drawings. My boys will never forget
4 what a fun uncle you were. You had so much energy and
5 time for them. Football trips to the park and fun uncle
6 stuff, rough and tumble and tickles. It was like a
7 madhouse with you around, and I would give anything to
8 have you walk through the door again to play with them,
9 and to clean my house.

10 When you lived with me for a while before I had the
11 boys, my house was so clean. I still think about how
12 obsessed you were with cleanliness and symmetry when I'm
13 doing the housework. As a child you even had to have
14 your own cutlery. I realise all these years later it
15 was your way of letting energy out and keeping yourself
16 well: tidy house, tidy mind, et cetera. I'm with you on
17 that one.

18 You were such a grafter when you were well.
19 I admired how much focus you had at times. You worked
20 so hard. I remember watching you doing carpentry work
21 like it was the only thing that mattered in the world.

22 The thing that sticks in my mind the most about you
23 is how big your heart was. You would give your right
24 arm for anybody, going out of your way to help, telling
25 people how important they were to you. You made so many

1 people feel special and loved and that's why there were
2 hundreds of people at your funeral. I wish you'd have
3 known and felt that love. Hundreds of people jumping up
4 and down in a pub chanting your name, people who adored
5 you because you were adorable. You were a complete pain
6 in the arse at times but everyone knew the real you and
7 saw that big heart of yours.

8 There are so many things I can say here, so many
9 memories. You lost your way and you didn't get the help
10 you needed. Despite asking for help time and time
11 again, the help just wasn't there. You weren't well and
12 it wasn't your fault. How often in life you felt
13 everything was your fault, that you were a bad person.
14 If you'd have got the right help at the right time
15 I wouldn't be here reading this out. So gutted we never
16 got to do our yoga retreat together. I often think how
17 that could have been life-changing for you.

18 You became so unwell you couldn't see a way out.
19 You'd had several attempts to end your life before the
20 final time. Police would turn up and tell you to smoke
21 a joint and calm down. You'd end up in hospital to be
22 discharged the following morning, despite calls from me
23 and friends and partners explaining you were a danger to
24 yourself and possibly others. These calls fell on deaf
25 ears. You were found trying to jump off a building, to

1 be arrested and then sent home. Endless calls over the
2 years seeking help, from you, me, friends, partners. We
3 didn't get anywhere. Years of banging our heads against
4 a brick wall. A system not fit for purpose. We were
5 totally failed.

6 As your big sister, it was my job to look after you.
7 I tried but I needed help, and it wasn't there, and it
8 breaks my heart every day. How I look back and can
9 clearly see how it should have worked, what could have
10 helped if people had listened, listened to you and
11 listened to us.

12 James couldn't cope after losing you. His drinking
13 got worse, he was depressed and he became ill. As
14 a paramedic he knew he should have gone to hospital when
15 the ambulance came but he refused. He died a few days
16 later of a cardiac arrest. Over the last few years,
17 since losing you, James kept telling me how his heart
18 was broken and now he is gone too.

19 I have now lost two brothers. My nieces have lost
20 their fathers. Your daughters have to grow up without
21 a father, your friends without their best mate, because
22 you were everybody's best mate, my sons without their
23 uncle; cousins, uncles, aunts, nieces, so many people
24 affected.

25 It's not easy for me to live life expecting those

1 close to you to die suddenly, worrying that those around
2 you will become unwell and take their own lives,
3 checking that everyone is okay to the point where the
4 worry is replaced by numbness, a wound that will never
5 fully heal.

6 It would not have been easy for you to constantly
7 think about death and suicide, especially your last few
8 hours and what you went through. Why didn't you call
9 me? It's taken lots of therapy and group therapy to sit
10 here today and read this without breaking down. I can't
11 begin to describe the many ways your suicide has
12 affected me and continues to affect me every day. Not
13 just me, a lot of people have been seriously affected by
14 your death. There has been a lot of pain and a lot of
15 trauma.

16 Your death could have been prevented. I will never
17 forget your last time in hospital after a failed
18 attempt. You were begging staff not to discharge you
19 because you would go home and try again. I stayed on
20 the phone and told you to stay there if you felt unsafe.
21 I heard the receptionist say to you, "As I've already
22 told you, sir, there's nothing more we can do for you.
23 If you don't leave, I'll call security". For me, this
24 sums up the attitude that you faced the whole time you
25 begged for help. I'm sorry.

1 Sutcliffe and she'll be speaking about her brother James
2 Hulton or Jim.

3 Suzanne, thank you very much for joining us this
4 morning. If at any time you want a pause or a break, do
5 just let me know, otherwise we're very interested to
6 hear what you have to say.

7 Can you hear me all right? I think there may be
8 a difficulty with her hearing me. Can you hear me now?

9 MS SUTCLIFFE: Hello.

10 MR GRIFFIN: Hello, can you hear us?

11 MS SUTCLIFFE: I can hear you now.

12 MR GRIFFIN: Suzanne, did you hear anything else that
13 I said?

14 MS SUTCLIFFE: Sorry?

15 MR GRIFFIN: Did you hear any of my introduction?

16 MS SUTCLIFFE: I'm so sorry, the sound quality is as it was
17 in the test. I can't hear what you're saying.

18 MR GRIFFIN: Can we improve the sound quality, please?

19 Suzanne, we can hear you well, if you give your
20 account, we will listen with care.

21 MS SUTCLIFFE: I'm so sorry, I can't make out a word that
22 you're saying.

23 MR GRIFFIN: Can a communication be given to her to start
24 her account, please?

25 MS SUTCLIFFE: I'm happy to begin if you can hear me

1 clearly. I just can't hear your room or anything that's
2 being said at your end, I'm sorry.

3 Right, I'll begin, thank you.

4 Statement by Suzanne Sutcliffe

5 Okay. So this is my commemorative statement in
6 relation to my brother James. Can you hear me clearly?

7 Yes, thank you.

8 I'd just like to begin by offering my family's
9 condolences to all of the other families affected as we
10 have been and to specifically thank Melanie for the
11 mother lioness that she is and has been.

12 My brother James was born on 13 May 1977 at
13 Thameside General Hospital in Ashton. We're up north
14 and he was born up north. He was healthy, bouncing,
15 bubbly, at 8 pounds and 15 ounces. He also reached all
16 of his average milestones and was an inquisitive happy
17 child.

18 When he died, some 42 and a half years later, he was
19 a cherished son, partner, daddy of three, brother,
20 brother-in-law, son-in-law, uncle and friend to many.
21 In his memory, I can say a couple of words which came
22 straight from him that I recall from the many weeks
23 where he discussed his imminent death with me. He
24 pleaded with me to remember him "not now but how I was".
25 He told me to please make sure that his partner, "my

1 kids and Mum and Dad all know how much I loved them".
2 He asked me to please keep being involved "in my kids'
3 lives". And he acknowledged that he had good friends.
4 He says, "I have good friends and know that people do
5 seem to like me". I take great comfort in carrying his
6 legacy forward and knowing that he knew he was loved.

7 This is a difficult piece to write because my
8 parents, my sister-in-law and James' children are each
9 in too much pain to articulate their memories and
10 feelings in this way. Our lives have quite literally
11 been torn apart and there will forever be a before and
12 after for each of us now. Every photograph, life event,
13 video or Facebook Timehop, those images go into the pre-
14 or post-21 February 2020 parts of our brains.

15 I was James' older sister, his only sibling, two
16 years older. Late in life he liked to be known as Jim
17 by everybody, including me. Mum and Dad continued to
18 call him James. As children, we had a really, really
19 happy childhood, so thanks for that, Mum and Dad, from
20 both of us. We spent time with our parents and extended
21 family, mainly our maternal grandparents with whom we
22 were really close and spent a great deal of time. We
23 would make tents from their laundry dryer, play dress-up
24 and walk miles with our granddad, my mum's dad. He'd
25 split a giant bar of Dairy Milk between us when we

1 reached our destination on walks. We used to laugh as
2 adults about the way he did this with his fingernail to
3 ensure a completely equal split. I remember walks where
4 our grandad would just venture across fields without
5 footpaths, having angry golfers and farmers chasing us.
6 As a family we did lots together. We enjoyed annual
7 family trips to a cottage in Anglesea and coach trips to
8 Eurocamp destinations. I remember each of these with
9 great fondness. We made friends with other kids and
10 felt so free camping in wood- and beach-type
11 destinations.

12 James, or Jim, could be shy as a child but together
13 we gave each other confidence. Mum and Dad still have
14 his first photograph sitting on the plush velvet chair
15 that they used to drag around schools around here in the
16 early 80s and 90s. He had such a close bond with his
17 key worker at nursery that he had his photograph taken
18 actually sitting on her knee. He had a shock of shiny
19 light red hair, which my mum keeps the locks from in his
20 first ever haircut in a special locket.

21 When James reached primary school he became
22 interested in chess, he joined a club, often
23 participating at regional level, and he continued to
24 excel at art and make friends. He loved fishing with
25 Dad, and due to Dad's trade as a toolmaker, James learnt

1 loads of skills around carpentry and other areas. We
2 moved when he was ten to a really rural area and he
3 caught, prepared and cut fish for us to eat, and my
4 parents remember how proud he and in turn they were.

5 As he grew, there wasn't anything he couldn't really
6 put his hand to, even though IT became his chosen career
7 path after a while. He once built a PC for his eldest
8 son from bits of IT equipment he found in a skip of all
9 places. When he was ten, Dad stopped smoking and saved
10 for his first Commodore 64 computer. He was elated and
11 became really excited about beginning computer
12 programming, which he was great at and really excelled
13 in.

14 He continued to make friends in senior school. He
15 was popular and adventurous with an active social life
16 and we were really close. As a big sister, I suppose
17 I always felt a little bit maternal in some ways.
18 I defended and protected him and helped him with Mum and
19 Dad when his behaviour was typically teenagerish. We
20 both loved rap music and R&B. He was really handy. On
21 one occasion he completely refurbished his room building
22 a sofa from scratch, which he then went on to upholster,
23 and inserted fish tanks in the arms with neon tetra fish
24 and bright lights.

25 He loved cars. As a teenager, I vividly remember

1 him and my dad taking his Vauxhall Nova to pieces on the
2 driveway. I'm sure the neighbours loved us. He
3 literally took out the engine and put a new one in. He
4 was always able to do that stuff with help and mentoring
5 from Dad. They were really close and he soaked up the
6 knowledge that Dad shared. People around us could never
7 believe what he could achieve. Later he even sold
8 pieces of art, drawing a picture upon request of
9 a family friend's mill, which was hung in pride of place
10 in the centre of the place.

11 When he was around 17, Jim experienced sudden onset
12 anxiety and there were times when this became really
13 debilitating and I was really worried for him. We spent
14 loads of time together. I sourced him some counselling
15 and we got through it together just by talking and
16 talking and providing reassurance constantly. However,
17 that didn't work in the time leading up to his death.
18 At that time, in early 2020, we could all get through to
19 him, but by the time he would go to sleep and wake up,
20 by the morning his symptoms were back with an absolute
21 vengeance. He had no peace.

22 James met the mother of his daughter through friends
23 who were at the same university as she was and they
24 lived together for a while up north. When he was 25,
25 she found that she was pregnant, and his daughter, my

1 incredibly beautiful niece, was born in October 2001.
2 After a short separation, they decided to make a go of
3 things in the south of the country and they moved down
4 there to be close to her family. They reconciled for
5 a short time. When they later split, James made the
6 decision to stay down there to enable him to have joint
7 custody and co-parent my niece. This remained the case
8 until he died, and this is something I'm very proud of
9 him for doing.

10 Mum and Dad were concerned that he was to become
11 a young father but they were so proud of him for
12 stepping up to the mark. They were so proud of him for
13 stepping up to the mark and excelling as a brilliant
14 father which continued with his two sons. He and his
15 daughter remained extremely close right up to the day of
16 his death and enjoyed time out together. They bonded
17 over music nights, drinking long island iced teas when
18 she was of age. Their relationship evolved like that as
19 she grew. She is also incredibly creative and artistic,
20 just like him, and they both love music which was
21 a shared interest.

22 She comments now about his sudden uptake of random
23 habits such as Warhammer figure painting and building
24 fish tanks again from scratch. She recalls him placing
25 objects on the kitchen table to draw with him watching

1 her. One day, for example, he just decided to buy
2 multiple camper van build magazines which was to be his
3 latest project.

4 As he grew older, Mum and Dad were always impressed
5 by his massive skill set. He was a ... (audio broken).

6 MR GRIFFIN: Suzanne, if you can hear me, could you pause?

7 We lost volume just for about ten seconds? Could you go
8 back a sentence or two?

9 MS SUTCLIFFE: Okay. Excuse me, I've a frog in my throat
10 suddenly.

11 Mum and Dad remember how much he helped them on
12 visits to their home in Wales, designing and building
13 their garden, helping Dad with mechanics and bringing
14 them plants he had sourced. Mum's favourite is an acer
15 tree which began life as a twig but now continues to
16 flourish in their beautiful garden. Dad bought a small
17 boat and James enjoyed being out on the Conwy Estuary
18 with him. In his younger years he worked as a TV
19 salesman, graphic design sign writer and later in
20 a Revenue and Benefits team. He even sold clothes for
21 a while and definitely had some entrepreneurial
22 tendencies.

23 In 2009, James/Jim, met his life partner when they
24 worked together. They later formed a relationship,
25 moving in together. She gave birth to their first son

1 in 2011 and their second, my little nephew, in 2015.
2 They were a wonderful family and they enjoyed
3 a wonderful happy family life together. Jim continued
4 to share his creativity with his sons, creating board
5 games, which they still have, teaching them to ride
6 bikes, rejoicing in their progress and their reaching
7 milestones. He worked condensed hours to become more
8 involved in childcare, continuing with shared care of my
9 niece, his daughter. All of the siblings grew up with
10 close bonds, something he worked hard towards, and they
11 spent quality time together. He enjoyed gaming,
12 creating, building, weight-training, kayaking, and the
13 list goes on.

14 James and his partner moved to a property with
15 a large garden. He built a large log cabin in the
16 garden from double-glazed windows that couldn't be used,
17 given to him by a business, and with timber he bought.
18 He built a home gym inside there. He and his life
19 partner enjoyed a huge circle of friends and regularly
20 socialised, enjoying a great relationship together.

21 Within their relationship, I saw so much fun and
22 love for each other. They were, of course, different
23 people but I think they just clicked from the time they
24 first met. Even though Jim's fear of flying was
25 a little restrictive, they enjoyed family holidays

1 together.

2 In early relationships, I was often quite envious of
3 it when I looked at theirs, I loved the relationship
4 they had together. They enjoyed barbecues and nights
5 out with friends, bike rides with the boys. Jim's life
6 partner has an extensive family and he was invited in
7 with open arms and they were all incredibly close, and
8 we have lots of photographs of them together. I stayed
9 in touch with them because, in addition to being the
10 family of my sister-in-law, who I love very much, they
11 were a massive part of my brother's world, in both
12 sickness and in health. I'm forever grateful for that
13 and for his mum-in-law on that side and everything that
14 she did.

15 My brother's partner's brother began kayaking with
16 him and they really loved each other's company, spending
17 special days together. They holidayed to Italy when his
18 partner's brother got married there. They had so many
19 happy days that he talked about to me and they shared
20 photographs of. And, again, his partner's mum, who
21 I love to pieces, played a massive role in his life,
22 particularly when he was so ill.

23 Jim's illness meant that his partner became
24 effectively his full-time carer which tore her life and
25 that of her boys, my nephews, apart. My eldest nephew

1 spent part of his birthday week visiting his dad in
2 hospital in a mental health unit.

3 When home, his partner couldn't leave him alone.
4 She had to organise someone to take care of him if she
5 had to go out. She remains completely traumatised by
6 his illness, his death and all of the circumstances
7 surrounding this.

8 From October of 2019 until the date of his death in
9 February 2020, caring for Jim in his illness was
10 a full-time role, including round-the-clock
11 conversations about him taking his own life, which only
12 increased towards his inpatient stay. The level of
13 intensity of care took an immeasurable toll upon her.
14 I can only describe what I saw and what I still see as
15 physical and mental agony and trauma.

16 James journeyed up to my parents' home just prior to
17 his illness with a close friend to use as a base to
18 explore Snowden, as they live in Wales. We regularly
19 look at photographs as a family of him hiking and a
20 video of him diving and swimming with a dog, just
21 a random dog. They're precious snapshots of a life cut
22 tragically and totally avoidably short. Sometimes I can
23 watch them, others I can't. Sometimes they just feel
24 like a memory of a memory, and other times the pain cuts
25 too deep to endure. I finally understand the meaning of

1 "gut-wrenching" to describe pain.

2 On the last birthday of my mum's before he died --
3 there's a typo of mine, apologies -- before he died,
4 James travelled up to see her and took her for afternoon
5 tea as a surprise. While tucking into sandwiches, he
6 said he hadn't bought her a card because he thought the
7 best thing he could get for her was to spend quality
8 time together. This touched my mum enormously and she's
9 emotional now remembering it. Nothing can ever prepare
10 you -- I can't even imagine as a mother myself --
11 nothing can ever prepare you for burying your own son,
12 particularly in such extreme circumstances after such
13 a short illness. They will never get over it.

14 Our last family holiday was a coach trip to Wales in
15 June 2019 where James' family, mine, Mum and Dad enjoyed
16 a fantastic time together. The kids played and played,
17 and he and his partner made lots of new friends and
18 socialised. Just had our niece missing. When I look
19 back at pictures now, it's almost impossible to believe
20 that less than eight months later he was dead.

21 My brother was my best friend and confidante. We
22 always talked about how similar our psyches were and how
23 well we understood each other's minds. Throughout his
24 adult life, until it was cut so desperately short,
25 I continued to feel like I wanted to protect him and put

1 anything I could right for him in any situation. Other
2 than his partner, I feel like me and Mum were the first
3 people thereafter that he reached out to when he was
4 troubled or anxious or just struggling with general life
5 stuff. I feel very envious now of some people around me
6 with siblings, particularly when they're not close,
7 because he was my only sibling and I loved him to the
8 ends of the earth.

9 When he became ill in October before he died,
10 I drove down late at night to bring him to my home in
11 the north west of the country to nurture and care for
12 him and to access emergency support at A&E. I knew he
13 was experiencing intrusive thoughts, pure OCD symptoms,
14 extremely heightened anxiety, which worsened
15 significantly in the morning. In the end, he didn't
16 sleep. He dropped massively in weight, around two
17 stone. He didn't care about anything, including his
18 appearance. He was numb. The short time when he was at
19 my home, which was incomparable to the time
20 his partner cared for him, I slept top to
21 tail with him in my bed and he would wake having night
22 terrors and need to be talked down. It was frightening
23 and traumatic, and his partner had this for weeks and
24 weeks and weeks.

25 His emotions were so dampened and his thoughts so

1 terrifying that what began as intrusive thoughts about
2 suicide became his real-time fixation, but nobody would
3 listen to me, nobody. The reason I have never felt
4 angry about him taking his own life is that in my
5 lifetime no trauma that I've ever experienced, including
6 losing Jim, has been more terrifying, intolerable and
7 agonising than the pain I myself experienced with
8 similar health conditions in my early 20s, except
9 I survived and he didn't.

10 In his final days in the hospital, he experienced so
11 much trauma that it was hard to hear and we're all
12 scarred forever by that. I spent hours on the phone
13 with my sister-in-law throughout this time, nothing
14 seemed to be happening, no real treatment. It was
15 impossible to get through on the telephone. We couldn't
16 be entirely convinced about his medication. I'll always
17 remember my mum sending him the song, "I can see clearly
18 now the rain has gone", and he messaged her to say he
19 had gone to sleep to that, and now, upon reflection,
20 I find that heart-breaking.

21 For me and my little family, partner and two young
22 children, the day he died I was travelling down to visit
23 him in the hospital. On the way down, my brother's
24 partner rang to say that someone had jumped from
25 a bridge close to their home. I was driving -- I'm

1 a nervous passenger, I always drive, otherwise I'm
2 a nightmare -- my husband had the phone, so we both
3 reassured her, "No, don't worry, Jim's safe, he's in
4 hospital." I didn't think anymore of it. She commented
5 that she'd never heard of anyone jumping from there and
6 she was really worried, and we all knew that that was
7 somewhere he'd named as somewhere he'd considered taking
8 his own life, that particular location.

9 Soon the traffic began to back up and it took
10 four hours to get through it. At the time I remember
11 winding down the window in a queue because we were all
12 stationary and someone told me that the main road
13 through Essex had been closed and that someone had
14 jumped. I remember appeasing the kids, so they didn't
15 really hear that, and commenting to my husband that this
16 was an even bigger reason for us to all be grateful
17 because my brother was an inpatient now and how awful
18 that must be for the deceased's family.

19 We arrived at Jim's home address at half six in the
20 evening. I rang him to say we were nearly there, that
21 we'd dump our stuff before running straight back out to
22 drive to see him, and that obviously went to answer
23 phone. I left a message. I didn't know he'd already
24 died four hours ago.

25 Upon arrival at his home, his partner again

1 expressed concern and we ran upstairs together
2 eventually reaching the ward after ages on hold, lots of
3 different calls. And just as they said, "No, we
4 discharged him at half past one", the police car pulled
5 up outside the window. I ran out and asked, "Is it my
6 brother, and is he dead?" His partner was screaming
7 hysterically and my husband was holding her. My husband
8 was great friends with my brother and took his death
9 really hard. He'd spent a lot of time on calls, during
10 his illness as an inpatient and when he stayed with us.

11 My hubby took all the kids upstairs, my two, my
12 brother's two. The police wasn't great, demanding to
13 come in for a DNA ID check, but his partner was
14 literally on her knees. I will never forget her screams
15 and, later, I will never forget the scream of my eldest
16 nephew as his mum told him, when all of her family
17 arrived, that his daddy had died and he'd never come
18 home. His youngest son was too little to even process
19 this. How do you comprehend that your daddy, you saw
20 him just a day ago, has gone forever?

21 I don't to this day remember ringing my mum and dad
22 to tell them but apparently it was Mum that I told, she
23 answered the phone. She was in a state of collapse
24 because she'd spoken to him just hours earlier. She
25 thought I was calling from the hospital to update them.

1 Dad took the phone from her. And then I do vividly
2 remember telling my niece, who was away, and she arrived
3 at the house shortly thereafter completely broken. And
4 I then rang his best friend and everyone else. It was
5 hideous. I couldn't even cry. When I went back into
6 the house, his partner was vomiting. It was like
7 a physical outpouring of trauma, grief, agony. It
8 carried on for hours and hours.

9 My mum and dad travelled down the next day, their
10 pain unimaginable, the whole situation was agonising and
11 uncontrollable. I felt so powerless. I'll never forget
12 us all huddled in Jim and his partner's bedroom, being
13 given information by a not-great family liaison officer
14 and my mum's teeth audibly and uncontrollably chattering
15 together. His books and his trainers were still just
16 next to the bed.

17 Speaking from my own perspective, I will never get
18 over this, despite counselling, medication and a strong
19 support network. The pain is acute. Even though it
20 softens from the very initial weeks, it worsens in other
21 ways, because at least when it's raw I can think that
22 I only saw him a couple of weeks ago. Now it has been
23 four and a half years since I saw or spoke to my beloved
24 brother, and that in itself is painful. Survival mode
25 means you have to block, block and block or you could

1 never carry on. In some ways my bedroom is like
2 a shrine. I have his cap on my bedhead with a feather
3 bauble with his name on, pictures of him as a child and
4 with my kids and his. A candle that I light with
5 a glass rainbow, the rainbow is how I try to convert the
6 thought of the bridge that stuck in my head where his
7 life ended. I try to imagine he was caught on his way
8 down to the ground in some spiritual way, maybe by my
9 granddad, who I mentioned earlier, with whom he was so
10 close, maybe he just caught him in his arms. The
11 alternative that we have had to endure of the way he
12 died and the graphic description of what that looked
13 like, some of that inaccurate from various parties, will
14 never ever leave me. The only way to deal with it is to
15 block it out. It's like I can't even see it, even
16 though I didn't see it -- sorry, it's like I can see it
17 even though I didn't visually see it.

18 For a while I became fixated irrationally on seeing
19 the police officer's bodycam footage. However,
20 I stopped myself from pursuing this. But it was an
21 agonisingly strange feeling to have shared his every
22 waking thought, including his suicidal thoughts, to then
23 be cut out of the way in those final moments when his
24 life ended. It was like I wanted to share in that, to
25 be with him to the end.

1 I regularly have a vision that pops into my head of
2 me running towards him at the point when he took his
3 life and getting him into some type of bear hug. It's
4 like trying to replace that image. I know that his
5 partner has watched CCTV of certain elements and how
6 agonising that was for her. We still have so many
7 unanswered questions or insensitively dealt with
8 questions which fuels trauma and grief.

9 At his funeral hundreds of people came, coaches were
10 organised. The eulogy was funny because he was.
11 I couldn't cry, it was the beginning of my journey, as
12 this is a continuation, to hold everything together like
13 I promised him.

14 His work colleagues went out to toast him shortly
15 after his death and they told me, "Last night was nice,
16 a lot of people came from all the teams Jim had worked
17 in. There was a lot of love for him and kindness. We
18 did get comfort. So many people have a gap in their
19 life left by him and they want to remember him as the
20 cheeky chap he was and how he always had kind words for
21 them when they needed it."

22 Personally, as Jim's sister, I won't ever get his
23 words out of my head or his legacy and my part in that.
24 His kids lost their dad, they were just four, nine and
25 18. His partner was just 34 years old. My parents lost

1 their son, they buried their son. We will never
2 properly heal. He was a person. He had so much more to
3 do to achieve and to live for. I can still hear his
4 booming northern accent when we met up, "All right,
5 Sue", and giving me a big bear hug.

6 Sometimes I just say over and over in my head when
7 the bad stuff comes in, I say to myself, "We will meet
8 again." I'm not sure what I believe and more so because
9 I can't ever accept that we won't meet again.

10 Thank you.

11 MR GRIFFIN: Thank you so much for your account.

12 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed.

13 MR GRIFFIN: Chair, we're now going to move to a further
14 account and I know you may want to move back to your
15 other seat.

16 We will now hear from Samantha Cook. She will be
17 giving her commemorative account about her sister, Paula
18 Parretti. Could you please put up the photograph?

19 Statement by Samantha Cook

20 MS COOK: My sister, Paula, was more than just her mental
21 health. She was a daughter, a sister, an aunty and
22 a friend.

23 She was nine years older than me, and I'm not going
24 to lie, sometimes it created a bit of friction, but she
25 was always there to protect me. She would get her

1 friends, who were a couple of years younger, to look out
2 for me at school if I was getting bullied or hide me
3 under the bed if there were serious problems
4 at home.

5 Being much younger, I didn't quite understand mental
6 health and, to be honest, I don't think she understood
7 it herself. But as I got slightly older, we both
8 started understanding it and our relationship became
9 better than ever.

10 I started to understand that when she was
11 struggling, sometimes she would verbally lash out, and
12 this understanding made it possible for me to sit and
13 talk to her about it and she started doing the same.
14 This made our bond so strong. My mum, Paula and I would
15 call ourselves the three musketeers. It was us against
16 the world.

17 Paula would reach out to me, my mum or her best
18 friends if she was struggling, and these conversations
19 would always end up in laughter. And what a laugh she
20 had! More of a contagious mischievous giggle!

21 I had to drive past her flat on the way to and from
22 work so I would pick her up on my way home, bring her
23 back to mine and her mood instantly lifted, especially
24 when she saw my children. We used to all like going to
25 a quiet little beach together. More often than not,

1 I would pick her up and she would be wearing the same
2 shorts and T-shirt as my little son, although we had no
3 idea how this happened!

4 She was a fantastic aunty, the total definition of
5 "the fun aunt", and she was so proud of her niece and
6 nephews. She would sing and dance with them, play games
7 and quite happily buy them the noisiest toys she could
8 and just sit back and chuckle.

9 I miss being able to sit there with Paula, rum in
10 hand, singing our heads off to a bit of Fleetwood Mac,
11 laughing till the tears ran down our cheeks.

12 Very shortly after Paula passed away, I was blessed
13 with the most beautiful granddaughter and I now know
14 I've got a grandson on the way as well. I was so proud
15 but at the same time that special moment was clouded by
16 the heartbreak that Paula didn't get to meet her and
17 become a Great Aunty.

18 Our lives changed forever on the day she died,
19 6th January 2022, and the last image I have of her is
20 burnt into me.

21 I had taken a day off work which is something
22 I normally never do. However, I was so busy trying to
23 take care of my sister -- I was trying to get her help
24 in the weeks leading up to it -- taking care of my mum,
25 the children and working full-time, it wore me down and

1 I'd just become ill.

2 On my day off, I slept in, also something I never
3 normally do, but I was so tired that I ended up sleeping
4 longer and I missed a phone call and missed a text from
5 Paula. The text from Paula said, "thank u for being
6 part of my life". I sensed something was wrong. I had
7 a spare key to Paula's house. I went straight to hers,
8 waited for her friend to meet me there and then walked
9 into her house. She'd hung herself.

10 This last image of Paula is what I see whenever
11 I think of her, instead of the happy memories. My
12 children talk about her all the time with all the funny
13 memories, but then I catch that glimpse in my mum's eye
14 of sadness and helplessness and I get this overwhelming
15 feeling that she could still be here if she just got the
16 help she begged for.

17 As a result of what happened to Paula, I now can't
18 watch certain TV shows if it has something to do with
19 someone hanging themselves. Christmas and New Year is
20 now messed up due to when Paula passed away, 6 January,
21 and my mental health has completely deteriorated.

22 I hide myself away during Christmas and New Year and
23 just try to avoid people, but it's taken its toll on the
24 relationship with people in my life.

25 MR GRIFFIN: Can we put up the remaining photographs,

1 please?

2 (Images shown)

3 Thank you very much.

4 Chair, that's it for this morning. We'll reconvene
5 at 2 o'clock so we have a slightly longer lunch than
6 normal. We're very grateful to all of those from whom
7 we've heard this morning.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you everybody very much indeed.

9 (12.24 pm)

10 (The short adjournment)

11 (2.00 pm)

12 (Proceedings delayed)

13 (2.10 pm)

14 MR GRIFFIN: Chair, the next commemorative account will be
15 given by Wendy Porter about her husband, Darren Porter.

16 THE CHAIR: Mrs Porter.

17 Statement by Wendy Porter

18 MRS PORTER: Darren and I met in 2016 and 2017, we met at
19 a low secure hospital, we both met as carers, we just
20 kept on texting each other. Darren was a very
21 kind-hearted and helpful person. We decided to secretly
22 get married on 2 May 2019 in Gretna Green. Only Darren
23 and I were present.

24 Darren was 40 when he married me, he was a young man
25 recently married, he had everything to look forward to.

1 He was looking forward to a life with me, watching his
2 children from a previous relationship grow up, with
3 another two children he took on responsibility of
4 looking after.

5 When we met, we were so excited about living a full
6 life together. Although there were plenty of challenges
7 ahead, Darren always tried his best to make sure he made
8 time for the children. He was always thinking of
9 activities for the children to do with him, making sure
10 that the younger children did not get bored or feel left
11 out. We all went to the zoo and parks. He always made
12 sure that he bought plenty of arts stuff for the
13 children. We would go for long walks with the children.
14 He tried to keep everyone happy.

15 Darren loved his cars. He would spend hours
16 tinkering, mending or helping others out with their
17 cars. He would get so much joy from spending time in
18 this way. He loved his old vintage mini. He even
19 invested in one himself so he could tinker with it at
20 the weekends. Darren loved his camper van so we could
21 escape in it as a family, enjoying the time with his
22 children camping.

23 Darren used to work as a carer but wanted to get
24 into something else, so he trained as a bus driver,
25 which he enjoyed, allowing him to try something

1 different as a job. He was working with a company
2 called Panther Travel as a bus driver. A local school
3 hired him as a bus driver to take the children to Harry
4 Potter World which meant he got a free ticket to Harry
5 Potter World through his job, which he enjoyed.

6 When we first met, I could see Darren was a kind and
7 considerate person. However, I could also see many
8 challenges he faced due to his own mental health
9 concerns. He struggled through as best he could.

10 The Covid pandemic hit Darren hard due to travelling
11 restrictions. It prevented him from spending time with
12 his children in the way he'd like to. Darren's mental
13 health deteriorated to the point that he took his own
14 life. His mood was low. He tried to keep this from me.
15 He would not talk to me about what his problem was. He
16 would often be in the back garden on a chair crying.
17 His mental health struggles were such a problem for him
18 that he simply could not deal with it. He could not
19 focus on work, home or family life. Due to his mental
20 health condition, he became more and more paranoid,
21 which put an enormous strain on my family. We tried to
22 get help from the mental health professionals. We put
23 our trust in these professionals. As we did not know
24 the system and how it worked, we put our trust in them.
25 However, we were gravely let down as these professionals

1 did not appreciate the urgency of this situation, so
2 Darren was left with the demons to take over his
3 thoughts and we as a family were left to deal with the
4 consequences of this, which at times was extremely
5 scary.

6 Sadly, on the day Darren died, Darren saw an
7 opportunity whilst I was at work to take his own life.
8 He saw no other way out of constant and immense
9 suffering caused by the deterioration of his mental
10 health. My daughter was the one who found him. It is
11 not difficult to understand the impact this has had on
12 my daughter. When Darren passed away, I was lost. I no
13 longer had someone by my side. It was hard to carry on.
14 I took time off work and tried to busy myself at home.
15 I did not want contact with anyone. I had to keep my
16 emotions in check and not let the children see I was
17 crying. My priority was them.

18 I found a quiet space on the pier and bought
19 a padlock and put the relevant information on it. I sat
20 on the pier with the flowers I bought him and just
21 talked to him. People passing me must have wondered why
22 I was talking to a padlock. For me, it was a type of
23 release. I did not want my children to see me not being
24 in control.

25 Darren was the first person who I had met who'd

1 actually made time for me, making me feel special.
2 I was no longer just a mum, and that's why I adored and
3 loved him so much. When I lost him, I didn't just lose
4 my husband, I lost my friend.

5 We still struggle to understand why this has
6 happened, struggle with the fact that we put our trust
7 in professionals who knew more than us, and struggle
8 knowing that Darren was greatly let down. He passed
9 away at the age of 41, a loss of a young life, a loss of
10 the life that we were meant to have together.

11 MR GRIFFIN: Please put up the remaining photos, please.

12 (Images shown)

13 That's the last photo.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mrs Porter. I know that is
15 very difficult, but I'm very, very grateful. Thank you.

16 MR GRIFFIN: We will now be hearing from Amanda Cook so
17 I invite her to come to the table. She will read her
18 commemorative account about her brother, Glenn Holmes.

19 Statement by Amanda Cook

20 MS COOK: My brother, Glenn Holmes, died at the very young
21 age of 19, 19 with what would have been a whole
22 exciting, adventure-filled, loving life ahead of him.

23 Glenn, without putting him on a pedestal, was
24 genuinely a caring, loving, funny, smart and interesting
25 young man who desperately wanted help to deal with his

1 mental health problems. When Glenn was a child, he was
2 very hyperactive and playful, so much so our mother
3 tried to have him seen by a GP and assessed for ADHD but
4 nothing ever came of it.

5 Glenn would enjoy his computer games and loved to
6 joke around with his friends and family, and absolutely
7 loved being around animals. If Glenn ever saw or heard
8 anyone in trouble, he was there to protect them, putting
9 their safety above his own.

10 Glenn's problems started when he was a young teen.
11 He experienced temper problems, which he received help
12 for at secondary school, but as soon as he completed his
13 years in education, he was left without any help. Glenn
14 turned to the NHS for guidance for his mental health
15 problems, was put on all sorts of different medication,
16 then sent on his way. He pleaded with doctors to help
17 him find a way with coping. He told them how he thought
18 of harming himself, thoughts of taking his own life, yet
19 when visiting him during a stay at the Lakes, which is
20 under the care of the Essex Partnership University Trust
21 in Colchester, I was told Glenn was only artificially
22 hurting himself, that he was attention-seeking and it
23 was best not to give him the attention and leave him to
24 it, which my parents did.

25 Events leading up to Glenn's death. Soon after he

1 had been discharged by The Lakes Glenn was told by the
2 crisis team that he was calling them too much, and they
3 offered him insufficient help. They left him alone,
4 panicking and scared and seeing no way out. My brother
5 took his own life on 7 July 2012 at 19 years old.

6 Glenn would possibly by now, with the right help,
7 have his own family. He loved children. He was kind
8 and playful with his nephews who he adored. He has
9 missed out. I have missed out on seeing him play with
10 my own two children who he sadly never got to meet, but
11 they are told about him every single day.

12 After 12 years of losing my brother, it still tears
13 me apart. I find it hard to trust anyone. I find it
14 hard to be around my family who I have no contact with
15 at all. I am on my own. I cannot get close to anyone
16 because I'm scared of feeling that hurt again, and
17 I find it hard to not feel angry every day.

18 The day my brother was let down, his whole family
19 were let down. That is also what is not taken into
20 consideration, the families that are alongside the
21 troubles of our loved ones, we all carry it, we can see
22 today, everyone, every single one of us, carries it, yet
23 there's nothing in place to help us.

24 When trying to support our loved ones, we are told
25 that staff cannot talk to us as the patient is an adult.

1 Surely someone who is going through these struggles and
2 not in the right frame of mind to make decisions for
3 themselves must have family members that can speak for
4 them, that can make the right decisions for them to keep
5 them safe and to get them the help they desperately need
6 or want, like my brother. He asked, he pleaded for
7 help.

8 MR GRIFFIN: Thank you. And would you now play the video of
9 the remaining photographs?

10 (Images shown)

11 Thank you.

12 Chair, we have one remaining account today. It's an
13 account that will be given by Stuart Ringer, and
14 I invite him to go to the table. Chair, Stuart will be
15 talking about his friend Gosia Nowak and we have a photo
16 of her on the screen.

17 Statement by Stuart Ringer

18 MR RINGER: Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen, I do not want
19 to be here reading this statement but the status quo
20 cannot remain. So I'm here to tell you about
21 Malgorzatta Elzbieta Breczko-Nowak, 1977 to 2019.

22 The image I carry in my head is not the one that you
23 see in that photo. The image I carry is this lady
24 laying in a bed as if she's asleep, she's still holding
25 her teddy bear but she is white and cold. This is my

1 memory from 8.00 am on 27 June 2019, less than 24 hours
2 after having a meeting with her care co-ordinator in
3 a building less than five minutes' walk from where we
4 are now. This memory is seared into my mind and my very
5 soul.

6 For clarity, the above person was known to me as
7 Gosia, which is short for Malgorzatta. She also used
8 the abbreviation of her second name, Elzbieta, and was
9 known to others as Ela.

10 I first met Gosia in 2001. We remained friends
11 until her death in 2019. When I first met Gosia, she
12 was someone brimming with confidence, attitude and
13 a passion for life. She could walk into a room and
14 every head would turn. She was glamorous and
15 passionate, passionate about literature and old films.
16 Her idol was Marilyn Monroe. She also loved to cook and
17 took great pleasure in seeing people enjoy what she had
18 created.

19 Behind this passion though, there always appeared
20 a dark shadow, one that she would keep hidden and would
21 fight tooth and nail to keep suppressed. Through our
22 18-year friendship, I would at times attempt to discuss
23 this but it was completely taboo. There was very much
24 a fight or flight reaction that could be set off by the
25 smallest things. This was especially noticeable when

1 the subject of her teenage years would come up.

2 After many years of friendship, she finally opened
3 up about the darkness that cast that shadow. She grew
4 up in Poland in the grip of socialist rule, the country
5 dominated by Russia and the Catholic church. Her
6 childhood was austere with the poverty that went with
7 the time but appeared happy enough. She was the child
8 of a single mum. She never knew her genetic father.

9 When she was 15, her mother disappeared from her
10 life and she went to live with other members of the
11 family who were reluctant to take her in. Finally, she
12 moved in with her grandpa, a man she loved. She felt
13 safe with him, she felt protected. I don't know much
14 about him but he was clearly a tough man. He survived
15 as a political prisoner in Auschwitz and later lost
16 a leg in a farming accident. Gosia would recall stories
17 of him taking her fishing and cooking her catch over
18 a fire. She loved the simple life. She would, however,
19 describe him as being "bossy" and "grumpy" but she
20 clearly had a deep affection for the man. Sadly he
21 passed away when she was 17 and she was on her own and,
22 again, she felt let down by life.

23 This is a theme that will reverberate through her
24 life to the very end, a theme that, in my opinion, the
25 mental health teams she saw through the years failed to

1 comprehend or examine.

2 Gosia and I had a friendship that lasted many years,
3 we are both opinionated people and at times would
4 disagree, but agreeably. We both loved food so we would
5 often share a meal together and a bottle of wine.

6 In around 2008/2009, I noticed that we were not
7 having one bottle of wine, it would be two, with her
8 drinking most of it. In 2010 she asked if she could
9 stay with me for a few days as her relationship had
10 ended and she needed somewhere to stay while she got
11 back on her feet. I agreed as I was due to go off
12 travelling for a few months and was happy to have
13 someone take care of my property.

14 It was upon my return that her reliance on alcohol
15 was evident, as was her deteriorating mental health.
16 She had run out of money and she had nowhere to go. She
17 had no family, or at least not one she trusted. And
18 it's amazing how quickly friends can vanish when they
19 see you have mental health and addiction issues. The
20 next few months will be the steepest learning curve of
21 my life. I was immersed in a world of addiction and
22 mental health collapse. I would also be exposed to
23 a health system that, at its best, is not fit for
24 purpose and, at its worst, abuses its power and is
25 callous and cruel.

1 Over the following years Gosia lived in various
2 locations and attempted to engage with various social
3 services and charities, but due to the combination of
4 anxiety, addiction and depression, she found herself
5 made homeless on various occasions. Through this
6 period, I did my best to support her emotionally and
7 financially, as well as keeping my home open for when
8 she was made homeless.

9 From 2013 to 2016 she lived in Harlow. At this
10 point, I had moved here to Chelmsford. Harlow had
11 limited work options so she had been picking up jobs
12 here in Chelmsford. She would stay in my spare room
13 Monday to Friday while she worked and for the first time
14 in years I saw a smile on her face. I have a lovely
15 memory of her cycling off to her day's work and thinking
16 to myself, "We've got there. Finally we've got there".

17 When she was made homeless for the final time in
18 November 2016, I had no hesitation in suggesting she
19 move into my spare room. It was big and spacious, she
20 had her own room of freedom. I was just glad to see her
21 happy. But things did not last. By mid-2017, the
22 wheels had come off the wagon. They would never go back
23 on again.

24 In early 2018, she'd had a detox and rehab funded by
25 a charity called Action on Addiction. Her Royal

1 Highness the Princess of Wales is a patron of the
2 charity, and while Gosia was in attendance Catherine
3 visited the centre.

4 Addiction is a nasty and unforgiving disease.
5 Society does little to recognise its devastating
6 effects. The one thing I have learnt is no one chooses
7 to be an addict. It is not a lifestyle choice. It is
8 a disease, yet it is rarely treated as one. Not once,
9 not once did I hear a healthcare professional ask her,
10 "What are you blocking out with alcohol?"

11 Gosia had two stints in a psychiatric ward in
12 Colchester, first in December 2018 and for a second time
13 at the end of May 2019 for ten days. She was released
14 on 5 June and brought by ambulance to my property.
15 I was not informed that she was being discharged to my
16 care. I was not at any stage given a care plan. I was
17 not given a diagnosis, and, most worryingly, I was not
18 given a medication plan at any stage.

19 People have time and again failed her. They have
20 mistreated her and walked away from her when she needed
21 it. I refused to do that. The mental health care
22 co-ordinators that she engaged with in both Brentwood
23 and Chelmsford did nothing to create a bridge of trust
24 to her. Her greatest distrust was towards men. In fact
25 she would often say, "Men are pigs". She trusted two

1 men: her grandpa and me.

2 Gosia had an engrained distrust of people. She had
3 been failed by those that should have protected her time
4 and again throughout her life. I believe the mental
5 health team in Chelmsford created heightened levels of
6 anxiety in Gosia by their action towards our friendship,
7 and I believe this was a major factor in her rapid
8 mental health decline.

9 At 2.00 pm on 26 June 2019, Gosia had her final
10 meeting with her care co-ordinator. She was accompanied
11 by a long-time friend, Melanie Ferguson. Ms Ferguson is
12 a registered nurse. She had set out in a letter, that
13 is in the possession of our counsel, the failings she
14 witnessed first-hand in that meeting, and I hope that
15 the Inquiry has the time to view this.

16 It's impossible to know what Gosia was thinking.
17 I can only recount the facts. She left that meeting at
18 3.00 pm, sourced a large amount of alcohol and was dead
19 within 17 hours.

20 So how has this affected me? Throughout the
21 nine years I looked after Gosia, I always believed that
22 I was coping. I have broad shoulders and I have
23 a capacity to deal with stress and the rocks that life
24 throws at you. However, when she died, I realised I had
25 been gravely mistaken. I never sought help during these

1 years. I should have. I thought I could deal with it
2 all. I couldn't.

3 Our relationship was a complex one but it was not
4 until I started writing a eulogy for her funeral and
5 I wished to convey what she meant to me that I came to
6 this conclusion. She had become a sister I never had,
7 and in many ways the child I have not had. As her
8 mental health deteriorated, she would often become
9 childlike and watch cartoons for hours on end as if she
10 was retreating to a safe place, a place that existed
11 before the world ripped out her innocence.

12 In the five years that have passed since her death,
13 I have relived that moment time and again. I have
14 relived the nine years of looking after her time and
15 again. I sought initial therapy for grief, which
16 helped, and helped me through a period of real and
17 visceral pain. In an attempt to heal some of the pain,
18 last year I undertook a 16-and-a-half-thousand-mile
19 motorcycle ride to the borders of Afghanistan and back
20 to the UK to raise money and awareness for mental health
21 charities. I raised around £10,000 across three
22 charities, money that I know will help others that have
23 suffered the same as she did.

24 The power of helping people, people that you will
25 never know or meet, is amazingly cathartic. But I am

1 still receiving therapy at my own expense for the
2 ongoing trauma of grief and the nine years of caring and
3 battling an inflexible system, nine years of seeking
4 help from a broken system that seems more interested in
5 protecting itself than helping those that it's set up to
6 help and protect, nine years of being told that I am an
7 enabler when all I was doing was my best to help someone
8 I cared for, nine years of watching someone lose their
9 grip on life and not wanting to be here anymore,
10 nine years of watching someone being failed time after
11 time by those that were responsible for her care,
12 nine years of feeling helpless when you come up against
13 the power of the establishment and their desire to
14 protect themselves. Clearly I still get emotional over
15 these events but mainly I just feel numb.

16 We are here to look at the deaths of over 2,000
17 people. Each death is a tragedy. What we are not
18 looking at is beyond this, to a network of collective
19 trauma, a collective trauma of mothers, fathers,
20 brothers, sisters, wives, husbands, children, friends.
21 This runs into a multiple of that 2,000. Perhaps it's
22 5,000, perhaps it's 10,000, we will never know. We are
23 all in search of answers, accountability and justice.

24 But what does that justice look like? It will be
25 different for everyone. For me personally, the best

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