

Lisa Morris: Commemorative Statement in respect of her son Benjamin Alfred Morris

Date of Birth: 30 September 1988

Date of Death: 28 December 2008

Ben was just 20 years old and a voluntary inpatient at the Lindon Centre in Chelmsford when he died.

Just a few months before Ben was admitted into the Lindon Centre he had finally diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and possible Temple Lobe Epilepsy. *"ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by executive dysfunction occasioning symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity and emotional dysregulation that are excessive and pervasive"*.

Looking back now, I can see that Ben had so many of the symptoms of ADHD which include:-

- : being unable to sit still, especially in quiet and calm surroundings
- : acting without thinking
- : little or no sense of danger (Ben had none)
- : being unable to wait their turn
- : having difficulty organising tasks
- : being unable to stick to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming
- : appearing to be unable to listen to or carry out instructions

As is known, the symptoms can cause significant problems in life such as underachievement at school, poor social interaction with other children and adults, and problems with discipline. As is stated on an NHS Website *"living with ADHD can be difficult, as the symptoms can make everyday activities more of a challenge. It is important to get the support you need to understand and cope with your own child's condition. The impulsive, fearless and chaotic behaviours typically of ADHD can make everyday activities exhausting and stressful"*.

Despite having all of these symptoms and more from a very young age Ben was never assessed and so this diagnosis was missed. Ben saw so many Doctors and Specialists but unfortunately he was turned away on every occasion with diagnoses of *"bad behaviour"* and *"a bit of a chip on his shoulder"*. I was told he needs *"a bit of anger management"*. I recall that during one of the appointments I attended with Ben when he was crying out for help, he was asked about his financial situation. When Ben explained that he was struggling financially because he was finding it hard to manage/cope with his symptoms and get a job, he was told

that if he was looking for a diagnosis just so he could claim benefits then that wasn't going to happen. I saw how crushed Ben was by this response. He was trying to get help with his condition not with getting benefits.

Ben was admitted into the Lindon Centre on the 8th December 2008. As a family we were initially relieved as we believed that finally Ben would now get a proper diagnosis and the help and treatment that he needed so desperately and had waited so long for. Sadly this wasn't to be. Ben's physical and mental health deteriorated rapidly, he lost a lot of weight and always seemed heavily medicated. He died 20 days later whilst under the care of North Essex Partnership Trust known now as Essex Partnership University NHS Trust (EPUT).

On the 29th December around 9:00am the doorbell rang. Two Police officers were standing at my door, their demeanour was quite cold and felt hostile. They asked me to confirm my name and when I did, they asked if they could come in. Once they were in the Lounge they told me that my son Ben had been found dead in his room at around 9pm the night before. They delivered this news in a very cold and pragmatic matter. They did not offer any condolences or say anything that might be construed as kind or sympathetic. They said that was all they could tell me, and that I would be hearing from the Coroner's office. My legs gave way and my then now ex-partner caught me. The two Police officers just left.

It felt like something had physically hit me and so hard that I thought I had died too. The instant pain, shock and disbelief was so intense. Then the question HOW??? Was screaming in my head. How could this be when staff had told me just half an hour, the time that he had been found that they were watching him closely whilst he was waiting for the doctor to come, as he had been asking to be discharged?

I cannot begin to describe the severity of the pain on hearing that my beautiful boy just 20 year old had been found dead in his room, when he was in hospital which I thought was the safest place he could possibly be. It felt like I had woken up in a different world and that I could never ever go back to my old one. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, and I even felt as though I could not breathe properly. I was physically sick everyday sometimes several times a day for around 4 years after Ben's death. Even now, although the pain is somewhat dulled, remembering the circumstances surrounding his premature death is a daily torture that I don't think I will ever be free from. I still suffer from horrific nightmares to this day.

Ben was the most beautiful, healthy and happy baby. He had hair like silk, the biggest brown eyes and eyelashes like feathers. He was so full of life and so full of fun. His smile along with

he's beautiful white teeth would make my heart flip. He had so many plans for his life. He wanted to be a personal trainer and loved boxing as he said it helped him cope with how he was feeling. Ben truly was one in a million and my life will never be the same without him in it. I am so proud of Ben, he never gave up, he never gave in and he never sat around feeling sorry for himself he was determined with or without help to beat this. Every day I wonder how Ben's life would be if he was still here today. I'm sure it would have been so different for him if only he had been properly diagnosed and given the right care and treatment.

Ben leaves a beautiful daughter who was just 2 and a half when he died. He was an amazing dad and he loved her with all his heart. They had a very special bond always laughing and dancing together. Like any dad he wanted to give her the world and the best life he possibly could. Ben had so much to live for and so much to look forward to his death was premature, unnecessary and preventable.

I would like to share this poem because it describes so well what it was like to live in Ben's world.

Take My Hand by Andrea Chesterman-Smith

Take my hand and come with me
I want to teach you about ADHD
I need you to know, I want to explain,
I have a very different brain
Sights, Sounds and Thoughts collide
What to do first? I can't decide
Please understand I'm not to blame
I just can't process things the same

Take my hand and walk with me
Let me show you about ADHD
I try to behave, I want to be good
but I sometimes forget to do as I should
walk with me and wear my shoes
you'll see it's not the way I'd choose
I do know what I'm supposed to do
but my brain is slow getting the message through

Take my hand and talk with me
I want to tell you about ADHD
I rarely think before I talk
I often run when I should walk
It's hard to get my school work done
My thoughts are outside having fun
I never know just where to start
I think with my feelings and see with my heart

Take my hand and stand by me
I need you to know about ADHD
It's hard to explain but I want you to know
I can't help letting my feelings show
Sometimes I'm angry, jealous or sad
I feel overwhelmed, frustrated and mad
I can't concentrate and lose all my stuff
I try really hard but it's never enough

Take my hand and learn with me
We need to know more about ADHD
I worry a lot about getting things wrong
Everything I do takes twice as long
Every day is exhausting for me
Looking through the fog of ADHD
I'm often so misunderstood
I would change in a heartbeat if I could

Take my hand and listen to me
I want to share a secret about ADHD
I want you to know there is more to me
I'm not defined by it you see
I'm sensitive kind and lots of fun
I'm blamed for things I haven't done
I'm the loyalist friend you'll ever know
I just need a chance to let it show

Take my hand and look at me

Just forget about the ADHD
I have real feeling just like you
The love in my heart is just as true
I may have a brain that can never rest
but please understand I'm doing my best
I want you to know, I need you to see
I'm more than the label, I am still me.