

Commemorative Statement – Pippa Whiteward

Written by her sister Lydia Fraser-Ward, August 2024

Pippa Whiteward, born Philippa Fraser-Ward, in January 1980, was an intelligent, funny and beautiful young woman, who died tragically young aged only 36 years old, after taking her own life in October 2016. When she died, she left behind her loving husband ^[personal/sen] and two young children, ^[personal/sen] then aged 5 years old, and ^[personal/sensitive] only 4 months; her death also affected her much larger family, including her mother ^[personal/sensitive] three sisters, brother and numerous other extended family members and countless friends, who all miss her greatly. She was a much-loved member of her community in South Woodham Ferrers near Chelmsford in Essex, where she was an active volunteer and local Parish Councillor. Her suicide came as a great shock to all who knew her, and even now, 8 years on, many still feel the pain and sadness of her loss.

Pippa spent most of her life in Essex. She was born in Basildon Hospital and grew up first in Wickford, then in Southend, before finally moving to South Hanningfield in Rettendon where she spent most of her youth. She attended St Hilda's School in Chalkwell as a young girl with her sister Lydia, only 18 months younger than her, and when they moved to Rettendon in 1987 they attended Elm Green Primary School together in Danbury before moving on to Brentwood School for their secondary education. Even though Pippa excelled in her academic studies and actually received a Bursary to attend Brentwood, she dropped out of school just before her GCSE exams due to stress. She took a year out of formal education before returning to take A-Levels at SEEVIC College in Benfleet where, once again, she demonstrated excellent academic skills. She secured a place at Birmingham University in Medieval Studies but quickly realised it wasn't for her and chose to return to Essex. She would later go on to attain many GCSEs as an adult as well as complete teacher training qualifications at Anglia Ruskin University. During her twenties she volunteered in Indonesia teaching working with deaf children as part of the VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas) programme and spent several months travelling in Australia and New Zealand before returning to the UK to work as a teaching assistant in private school in West London. In 2006, she moved to Reading to live with her boyfriend ^[personal/sen] before they finally settled in South Woodham Ferrers, got married and started a family. After the birth of their first son in July 2011, Pippa continued to play an important role in her community, working at nearby Marsh Farm caring for the animals and running educational activities for school children, as well as volunteering with local conservation and wildlife projects and being a regular member of the local SWATS group (South Woodham Amateur Theatre Society), performing regularly at local venues and theatres. She was also elected to South Woodham Parish Council where she acted as Treasurer, as she was passionate about supporting local residents and delivering projects which would benefit the neighbourhood as a whole.

During the Christmas holidays of 2015, Pippa and ^[her husband] announced to her family the fantastic news that they were expecting their second child, and the pregnancy progressed normally with no medical complications. However, Pippa went into labour early at 34 weeks and gave birth to ^[her baby son] at Broomfield Hospital in June 2016. Due to the premature birth, ^[her baby] required colour therapy treatment leading to an extended stay in hospital, where Pippa began to display a certain degree of anxiety and was not her usual, jovial self. Lack of sleep due to frequent noise on the ward exacerbated this stress and shortly after returning home with their new baby, Pippa began behaving strangely, as if responding to voices and people who weren't there. She demonstrated signs of Puerperal (Post-Partum) Psychosis and within a few days of being at home, her husband ^[personal/sen] had to call the emergency services. After being sectioned on 23rd June and short, traumatic stay in Broomfield Hospital A&E department ^[personal/sensitive] she was transferred to a Mother & Baby Unit (MBU) hundreds of miles away ^[details to be considered during the substantive stages of the Inquiry's investigations], as no other beds could be found closer to home. Her treatment continued for several months, which showed peaks and troughs in her recovery, including breaks at home and a transfer to another MBU

[details to be considered during]

120 miles away, once again due to a lack of beds at the MBU closer to her home. Finally, she secured a bed at an MBU at her local Broomfield Hospital in Essex in October 2016, where she

[details to be considered during]

was due to be transferred on Monday 31st October. MBU decided to discharge her three days prior to this to spend the weekend at home, even though she had a failed suicide attempt by strangulation only two days prior on the ward. She also contracted a vomiting and diarrhoea bug whilst on the ward, which had led to her being quarantined in isolation that week and she had begged clinicians to let her go home as she greatly missed her family.

After returning home to be with her husband, mother and children on the Friday, they all quickly succumbed to the same contagious bug that she carried and all the family members were extremely ill throughout the night. In the early hours of Saturday morning on 29th October whilst her family attempted to sleep and recover from their illness, Pippa quietly absconded from the house and [headed towards a train station. A friend who was walking their dog nearby approached her and attempted to intervene but she took her own life]

Pippa's death was a tragedy, which is still felt by her family and friends today. Had she received more localised, continued and appropriate care, there's a good chance she would still be alive today and it is important that the Lampard Inquiry highlights and investigates how such critical mistakes were made during her care, so that they cannot be repeated with any other patients in the future.