

**Commemorative & Impact Statement Melanie Leahy in respect of her deceased partner:**

**Mr Colin Harold Flatt DOB 30/01/1940 DOD 07/09/2021**



COLIN HAROLD FLATT

As I stand up here and say that name, I'm worried. I'm worried that you'll hear the name of an older man and assume he died because he was old. That eventually death comes to us all. You'd be right. But the way he died, what contributed to his death is why we are here today.

His death was not suspicious as I lived the experience with him and saw exactly what went so drastically wrong. I watched as the killing machine went into action and was powerless, despite my knowledge of the system to stop it.

Having experienced a multitude of failings in my sons care which led to his death, my fears and anxieties at Colin's admission to hospital multiplied and the end result proves they were totally founded.

Colin was a lot older than me. But despite his age he was a very fit man. He was self caring. He cycled daily. He maintained our home and large garden meticulously.

He was my partner for close to 20 years.

Colin could have been your partner, your brother, your father, your cousin, your grandfather, your great grandfather, your great great grandfather. He held all of those titles in his life, it is just by a roll of the dice that he was not. If he had been, I'm certain you would have loved him as much as I did.

He was widowed, I was divorced. I was working in a marina on the East coast.

Colin had a yacht in the marina. It sounds like something from a budget rom-com film I know, but we fell in love and in time brought our first house together.

My son, Matthew (another one of the deaths being investigated in this Inquiry) ,

Colin and I all moved in together.

Colin had been born in Blythborough in Suffolk, in one of the cottages next to the church. He wasn't there very long as his father was moved to London with his job. His dad was a firefighter during the war. Whilst all the other children were moving out of London, Colin was moving in, so his Dad could help serve our country.

Colin had been a footballer, a professional footballer. To this day, there are football blogs online that mention his name, despite that part of his career

ending almost 50 years ago. He played in the finals at Wembley, played for various teams and was bit of a legend both at Barnet and Leyton orient.

Colin and I went into business together. He helped me start a business that did advertising, he gave me the confidence to do that. He was a successful businessman in his own right running his own freight forwarding company.

Colin was a fantastic yachtsman, he won so many cups and trophies. He sailed regularly and went as far afield as Spain and Portugal, covering thousands of miles at sea during his lifetime.

In our early days together he suffered with asthma, and he used to joke around, he'd sing 'All I need is the air that I breathe and to love you' – he had a wicked sense of humour, and it kept me and many others that knew Colin smiling through the darkest times.

He had lots of party tricks; one was standing on his head. I recall very clearly on a cruise, he was in the middle of the dance floor, performing, making others laugh, whilst no one else could dance as the sea was so rocky.

He did like a moan though... and he found a community for that. They were called 'The argumentative society' – it wasn't a real society of course, it was a group of men who went to play golf, moan and finish the day with a pint.

But whilst he liked a moan, he never said a bad word about anyone. He just wouldn't. Even in private. He would champion people. He loved going to the pub, just so he could talk to people. People like you. The beer was a bonus. He'd show off some magic tricks he had learnt, he was one of those people that you were happy to see walk through the door, because you knew you were in safe hands. You knew that he would make you laugh and that you would learn something from a conversation with him.

Colin loved animals, together we got our dog Jed, he's 14 ½ now and he is the only real part of our life together that I have left.

In 2012, when my son Matthew died in the care of Essex Mental Health services, Colin was by my side. I'm not sure I would be standing here today if it were not for Colin, my friends and my family keeping me afloat.

So how and why a man in his eighties ended up flanked by security guards, naked, laying in urine soaked sheets at the bottom of a hospital bed that had been raised at a 45-degree angle, whilst suffering from a severe infection and haematoma, is what has led to me being here today.

In early 2021, as the world was coping with a “new normal” due to Covid and the restrictions we lived with infiltrated our lives, I noticed a difference in Colin. He would become a little confused in the early evenings, not uncommon as we get older, but it was concerning.

A family member had recently gone into hospital with a heart attack and in A&E he was told his heart rate was critically low. He was told if his heartrate was under 40, it was an emergency. I ordered a home heartrate monitor for my brother, but I ordered two by accident. We decided to use the second one.

Colin checked his heartrate.... it was 38 bpm. He had been feeling tired, so he went down to the local GP surgery who advised we call 111.

Paramedics came. Colin was taken to Broomfield hospital, Chelmsford and as he was put into the ambulance. I had this sickening feeling that he was never coming home. But I could never have predicted why.

I was not allowed to see him for the first two days of admission due to Covid restrictions but when eventually allowed to visit him, I found him in the main hospital entrance flanked by four security guards. His arms were covered in bruises, of which I have photos. The medication and treatment afforded turned him into a shell of his former self. He was dead within 19 weeks.

Helpless I watched the man I loved deteriorate rapidly in front of me.

I'm not trying to make you feel uncomfortable..but if you are..imagine how I feel

I cannot go into the appalling details of the so-called care that he was provided with here as I understand that this is not the appropriate forum. These details I will share later down the line.

I would just like to share that Colins care came under three main umbrellas.

Namely, Mid-Essex Hospital Trust, Essex Partnership University Trust and North East London Foundation Trust. Two of these trusts are main to this inquiry.

Colin had been chemically coshed, deprived of his liberty, abused, bruised and ultimately.....Colin died whilst in the care of the state.

I still wait for the inquest into his death, (three years so far), with a feeling of dread and de ja vu. I am bracing myself for the nightmare I know it will be.

I am scared, but I, along with every other family here today and in this Inquiry, need what went wrong brought out into the open, to stop the same happening again.

After his death, Colin lay in the mortuary for ten plus months whilst police investigations were on going and when I was eventually allowed to lay him to rest I did not get all of him. Samples of him remain with Essex Police. I hope to get those parts of him back in due course, because I loved all of him, not just parts of him.



I've been asked by the inquiry to write a summary....The impact of my partners death... on me... I ask you to use your imagination.

I lost my son to a brutal system in 2012.....a system that was meant to keep him safe. And years later I have now lost my partner to that very same system.

A man who I shared one third of my life on this earth. Almost 20 years together.

My world has changed forever.

After my son died I couldn't stay in our family home as it held too many memories. Colin and I moved from a place we had both loved and lived in for 12 years.

We set up a new home together in a different area of Essex.

Having lost Colin I tried my hardest to stay in this new home, but again so many memories kept surfacing and the fear and anguish took over. I shut down. I became numb. I started to experience pains in my chest and panic attacks. I was diagnosed with angina. I suffered extreme exhaustion and still to this day struggle to get a good nights sleep. Some days the memories still knock the wind out of me.

Friends moved in with me whilst they too had bereavements and we found a way of surviving together, for many months. Everyone says you are so strong

Mel. Youve got this. But honestly I'm not sure how I have survived.

Family and friends have been so so supportive with my losses and I'm forever grateful to each and every one of them.

The reality is this is my pain to shoulder. My loss. It's such a sad, lonely and difficult journey. I live each day wondering how I will get through it and then I remember that my boys would want me to. I miss them both so much more than words can say.

Everyday is confirmation that neither are going to return.

As I explained earlier in this testimony I wish for the truth to come out.

I know exactly what went wrong in my late partners care and it needs to be brought out into the open to stop it happening to others.

Thank you.

Rest in Peace Colin.

Rest in peace Matthew.