

A Heartfelt Plea to Baroness Lampard: The Tragic Loss of Kevin Watkins.

Dear Baroness Lampard,

With a heavy heart, I write to you about my beloved brother, Kevin Watkins.

The pain of his loss, now 15 years past, still feels as raw as the day we lost him in February 2009. He was just 42 years old, a life cut tragically short by a system that failed him when he needed it most.

Kevin was more than just a statistic. He was a soul brimming with kindness, a laugh that could light up a room, and a heart so big it seemed to encompass the world. But beneath his warm exterior lay a deep, unhealed wound - the loss of our brother to suicide in 1989. This tragedy cast a long shadow over Kevin's life, a shadow from which he never fully emerged.

The thought of our parents having to bury their child, of our family gatherings forever missing his presence - it's almost too much to bear. Every birthday, every Christmas, every family milestone is a stark reminder of the empty chair where Kevin should be sitting.

What makes this loss even more unbearable is the knowledge that it could have been prevented. In the weeks leading up to his death, Kevin had been in a mental health facility - a place where he should have been safe, where he

should have received the care he so desperately needed. Instead, he was released without a Care Plan Approach, a critical oversight that still keeps me awake at night.

I can still hear Kevin's words echoing in my mind, his desperate plea to the mental health team: "If you release me, I will take my life." How could these cries for help have fallen on deaf ears? The anguish of knowing that Kevin predicted his own fate, only to have it disregarded, is a torment I wouldn't wish upon anyone.

In the aftermath of Kevin's death, my grief transformed into a relentless pursuit of justice and change. Every letter written, every complaint filed, every sleepless night spent poring over documents - it was all fueled by the hope that no other family would have to endure what we have. But time and again, we've been met with closed doors and hollow promises.

Learning that nearly 2,000 other precious lives have been lost under the care of this trust has shaken me to my core. Each of those 2,000 was someone's Kevin - someone's brother, son, father, friend. The magnitude of this tragedy is almost too much to comprehend.

Baroness Lampard, I implore you - please don't let Kevin's death, and the deaths of so many others, be in vain. When I close my eyes, I can still see

Kevin's smile, hear his laughter. I can feel the warmth of his hugs. But I also see the faces of 2,000 others, lives cut short, families left shattered.

The documents [I have submitted] - the Ombudsman reports, the SUI, the correspondence - they tell a story of systemic failure. But they can't convey the depth of our loss, the endless nights of tears, the birthdays we'll never celebrate, the milestones Kevin will never see.

I beg you, from the depths of my grieving heart, to be the catalyst for real, meaningful change. Let Kevin's story, and the stories of all those we've lost, be the force that reshapes our mental health care system. Too many hearts have been broken, too many lives cut short.

With hope,

Paula Watkins