

**Commemorative and Impact Statement of Sacha Gregory, in respect of her late mother, Denise Gregory.**

My Mum, Denise Gregory, died on 25 October 2004, aged 40, whilst an inpatient at the Linden Centre. My Mum died by hanging herself. I was 15 years old.

My Mum grew up with my Nan, auntie and uncle. She was born in Ipswich on 25th January 1964. I do not know much about her childhood or early life. These are questions I would like to ask her but I will never have the opportunity.

I grew up with my younger sister and half-brother in Ipswich. It was a difficult childhood. I remember [that my Mum suffered a number of serious traumatic incidents, and so did I, that affected her deeply, and she had her hands full with three children.

My Mum, brother, sister and I moved to Chelmsford in August 2003 from Ipswich into a safe place. I remember the day we moved to Chelmsford vividly, it was my 14th birthday. I do not think my mother had given much thought of the move to Chelmsford, I believe she thought it was temporary until she received a call in October 2003 to be told that our house in Ipswich was no longer our home, it had been given away. I saw a real decline in my Mum's mental health from here; she became really depressed and withdrawn.

As a four we stayed at the shelter for several months before we were housed in a 40ft block of flats in Meadgate, Chelmsford. I remember not wanting to be at home, I think this was a combination of being a teenager and because of how ill and not herself that my Mum was.

Now that I am thinking about it, there were a few instances where my Mum showed unusual behaviour whilst we were at Meadgate; I was at the front door waiting for her to answer and let me in, but I could see her on the sofa through the door, just sitting there, ignoring me.

Another time, I opened my curtains, and saw my Mum sitting on the edge of the roof just staring down as if she wasn't even there. I will never forget being so scared that I didn't even make a noise because I thought if I did it would have made her jump, as she didn't know I was there at all. I just wanted to scream "Mum", but I knew that if I did she would have fallen. I think I knew at both these points that she was completely gone.

Before she became ill, my Mum took pride in her appearance, she used to tell us 'not to shave as the hair would grow back thicker' but to pluck your hairs instead; she went from someone who was very intricate, to not looking after herself at all. She used to have very loving ways. I have memories of being sat on her lap. She then had no fight in her, and she had just given up.

I never saw my Mum attempt to end her life, however, my brother and sister did. They found my Mum after she had jumped out of the window of our flat. She fractured her pelvis and needed skin grafts. I don't think I will ever be able to comprehend why the staff at the women's shelter housed a mother of three children, into a 40ft block of flats, when she was a flight risk. They were all so lovely at the centre, but what risk assessment did they do? I do not know what support, if any, she was given for her mental health before her suicide attempt.

My Mum was in hospital for a little while whilst she recovered, and was then transferred to the Linden Centre, where her journey got worse. My Mum did not have confidence or fight left in her, she had given up.

My brother and sister moved back to Ipswich. My sister moved in with a family friend, and my brother went to live with my step-dad. I was placed in a children's home in Chelmsford. I would visit my Mum on my own whilst she was in the Linden Centre, she had no life in her, she once just sat there and said "Sacha, can you put your hands around my neck and kill me." I was 14 years old. The nurses at the Linden Centre would reassure me that my Mum would be ok.

My Mum absconded whilst at the Linden Centre, and was gone for hours; she had made her way to the train tracks. That was one time I was really scared.

On 25th October 2005, my Nan received a call from the Hospital and was told that my Mum had passed away. I was hysterical. The Linden Centre allowed me, at the age of 15, to see my Mum after she had hung herself. When I arrived at the hospital she was still on some kind of life support, they told me she has gone, but not fully gone. I remember her almost looking like a zombie. Her eyes weren't open but she was bloodshot all over her body. I laid my head on her stomach and felt her pulsating, and three memories of us flashed before my eyes. I couldn't believe that was even my Mum. If I close my eyes, I can see my Mum.

I truly believe that you never forget the footprints that you follow as a child. I continued to live in the children's home, until I was placed into a foster home at the age of 16. I got my flat at the age of 17 ½ on good merit, and I still live in this flat today, at the age of 35.

I feel as though I shouldn't be here giving this account as my Mum should be here, I should still have my Mum. Had my Mum not been failed, I believe that my life would be a different one. As an adult that's what I think, it is really sad that I never had the option to do anything with her. I never got to experience a mother-daughter relationship.

I recently found a news article, dated 2006, and I am relieved that I never saw this as a teenager. The information is untrue, my mother's date of death is wrong, and it states her as being a drug addict. When she moved from Ipswich she was not on drugs, she had done the rehab for a better life. This article insinuates that my mother's tragedy would have happened anyway.

My birthday is a big trigger point for me, this was the day we moved to Chelmsford, it is not only a big reminder of what I had, but also what I have lost, and what I should have.

It feels as if I have woken up in my thirties and I am now remembering all that I have been through. I am now reliving, through this Inquiry, all those years between the day my mother died until now. This Inquiry is bringing all of the suppressed trauma to the surface. New memories have been unlocked including my fears. It is only since I started therapy that I have been able to talk. Therapy has given me a wider outlook on my life and future. Therapy has made me realise that due to the failings that occurred in my mum's life, I now fear having my own kids. The reason being that I now have no faith in the mental health services and so I would not want to risk my kids having to access mental health services and have to go through what I have been through. My mum is gone, but I am still trying to live my life. It is only through my own strength that I am here today.

I am really proud of myself, I may seem outgoing, but I am a prisoner to myself. I am unable to hold down a job, I am a qualified personal trainer but I struggle with how I can relate to what people are going through, I take it home and it becomes a constant memory of what I have been through.

I am learning so much about myself, but at the age of thirty-five, I should be more. The person I am when I wake up is not the same person by the time I get to the kitchen. I have been diagnosed with anxiety and ADHD, and am currently on anti-depressants.

I am going through a healing process right now. A breakdown in my relationship triggered me going to counselling. I have been going to therapy once a week for the last 14 months, and I talk a lot about my childhood and my Mum. I did not realise how blasé I describe my life, it is only until recently that became aware of what I have been through, and how awful and different it really is. I feel as though I am now strong enough to deal with the trauma and to take part in this Inquiry.

When I was invited to give this commemorative account, I wrote down four points on how my Mum's death affected me:

1. It broke up my family, my past relationships, and my relationships in life and work
2. The attachments that I have with people
3. My own mental health has been damaged
4. The 'what ifs' in my life, the things I could have done with my life that I will never know about. Missing what you do not know.

Due to my mum's death, I was an angry teenager. I feel that now I am a broken adult. I am a shell of a person that I could be. This Inquiry is not just for me, it is for what they did and are still doing to other families.

Me and Mum

