

## **Savanah Ridpath's commemorative statement of Georgina Sefton.**

I am reading this statement in remembrance of my mother, Georgina Sefton, whose life was tragically cut short while she was seeking help for her mental health issues. Though I never had the opportunity to know her, her absence has left a profound impact on my life. She is more than just a number in a statistic—she was a person with goals, dreams, struggles, and a desire for healing.

You asked me to provide a commemorative account about my mum, but I can't do that. I wish I could give you stories of happy times where she took me to the park and pushed me on the swings. Or where we had fun Christmas traditions like opening gifts on Christmas Eve or having hot coco by the fire. Or her proudly standing by my side at my graduation, walking me down the aisle, holding her grandchildren. But that sadly is not my reality.

Instead, I am left with the weight of unfulfilled dreams and memories that will never be. The moments we never shared are a constant reminder of what was lost. I yearn for the connection that should have been, the comfort of her presence in my life. Instead, I navigate a world where her absence is a daily reminder of the love I crave but can never fully experience.

My mother faced many challenges, including substance abuse, but it is crucial to understand that she was in the hospital seeking assistance, hoping for a chance at recovery. The fact that she sought help demonstrates her strength and desire to change. Unfortunately, that chance was taken away from her, and I am left with countless questions about what transpired during her time in the hospital.

My mother knew she was unable to care for me as a baby so I was put into care. She wrote letters to me, one of them stating 'I hope to see you again someday. If you do not wish to see me for whatever, it's not a problem, but I would very much like to see you when you're ready'. That was written on 31/1/06. She died 5 months later. I will see her again but it just won't be in this lifetime. I wish I could feel her touch and hear her voice and for her to hold me. But I can't. That opportunity was taken away from me.

As I navigate the grief of not knowing her, I reach out to those in positions of authority to reflect on the systems in place. There is a pressing need for change—change that prioritises the well-being of individuals struggling with mental health issues, ensuring that they are treated with dignity and care, rather than being left to become just another statistic.

It pains me to think of her as merely another number among many. Each number represents a life filled with potential, love, and complexity. My mother was not perfect; she battled her demons, but she was also a daughter, a friend, a sister and someone who deserved compassion and support.

I want to clarify that my intention is not to place blame or suggest that any individual is solely responsible for my mother's tragic passing. However, when I reflect on the broader context, it becomes painfully clear that significant changes are urgently needed within our mental health system. My mother's name is just one among many, a stark reminder of the countless lives affected by a system that is, frankly, in disarray. I have experienced this firsthand as a previous patient myself, and later on as a support worker in a psychiatric hospital.

By sharing my mother's story, I hope to shine a light on the pressing need for reform and increased support within mental health care. Each life lost represents a profound tragedy that's impact echoes far beyond the individual; it echoes through families, communities, and society at large. They are not just statistics or abstract concepts; they are cherished individuals whose potential has been extinguished far too soon.

It is imperative that we honour the memory of my mother and others like her by advocating for a system that prioritises mental health, offers adequate support, and fosters an environment where individuals can seek help without fear or stigma. Together, we can amplify these voices and work towards a future where no one else has to endure the heartbreak of losing a loved one to a broken system. Where people get to experience hot cocos by the fire and be pushed on a swing in a playground. Let us remember that every life lost should not just be another somber statistic, but a call to action that demands our attention and commitment to change.