Lisa Bates: Commemorative Statement in respect of her daughter, Tillie-Anne King

Date of Birth: 23 October 1998

Date of Death: 8 March 2020

[Message from Holly, Tillie's best friend]:

"Well Tillie was one of the kindest people I have ever met, she put everyone else's needs before her own. She had soooo many plans for the future and I was included in the most of them. We were best friends and sometimes it felt like it was just me and her against the rest of the world. We had plans to go and see birds of prey, go to the emo shops in town, play animal crossing together, we were going to have so many sleepovers and have so much fun together. She had so much love to give the world even though the world wanted to give her crap all the time. She went through so much and still managed to make others feel special. Recently before she had passed she told me that she didn't want to die anymore and that she was too scared to die. She was going through so much mentally and even physically but she wanted to be here. Every time I think about her I get angry and sad that she didn't get to live out her plans and her death has ripped a giant hole in my heart. She's an unforgettable person and I know this because I have even spoken to some business owners the she bought from and they said they have never forgotten her. I could really go on about how amazing she was and all the plans she had. I could literally write for days on end, she deserved the absolute best and I am so glad to have gotten to know how pure and kind she was. She made me feel so special and no one else has done that for me…That's the kind of person she was. She wanted me to be okay…she wanted every one to be ok. She was the BEST person I have ever met…I will cherish that forever."

Lisa's account

I struggled deciding how to approach this commemorative account, it's not something any parent ever prepares for, we as parents all hope our children live long and happy lives, achieving all the things they could ever dream of. But the unthinkable sometimes *does* happen and it has in my case, and now I am here having to talk about my beautiful daughter in the past tense. Every day since my Tillie passed has been a struggle—a fight to get up and keep going. But not a single day has gone by without me thinking about her, and seeing her smile wherever I go. Her wonderful soul has never left my side since the day she died.

As painful as it has been, I decided that I owe it to Tillie to just tell it like it is today. Not making it nice in case it offends, because frankly, nobody was worried about offending my daughter when her life was at risk, and nobody cared about ripping our lives apart.

The only good I can hope for now is that this inquiry wakes people up, so that more families do not have to go through the same life changing agony that we, as Tillie's family have had to live with.

My sweet beautiful dear little girl, Tillie-Anne King, was born at 11:20PM on Friday 23 October 1998. She was born with waters intact, which is meant to be lucky. I got the name *'Tillie'* from a midwife who saw my eldest daughter in her crib after she was born, picked up her leg and shook it calling her *"Tillie"* – I thought to myself, wow I like that, I will have to remember that for my next one! And sure enough when my next one was born, I knew instantly that she was my '*Tillie'*.

Before Tillie was ever a patient of CAMHS, when she was just an infant, she was a delightful, bubbly and passionate little girl. She had so much energy inside her at such a young age. She wanted to experience everything life had to offer. We enrolled her in swimming lessons, she joined the Brownies and the Rainbows, she mastered karate and even learnt how to play the violin and guitar. Her interests and her abilities at that young age were truly endless.

Having an older sister for Tillie was also a real blessing because that relationship gave her the confidence she needed to just be herself. They were both extremely close. I'll always treasure my memories of them performing shows for us in the living room after they'd been practicing in their rooms for hours. I would sit there, watching them, as a proud mum feeling so happy that my girls were enjoying life.

And when Tillie found out I was expecting, she was so excited, she couldn't wait to meet her new baby sister. Finally, ***she*** was going to be the older one! And when my last born arrived, Tillie was right there, ready for duty. She would sing to her, give her a bottle, it was beautiful to see how naturally she cared for her. That was one of Tillie's greatest strengths – that she was always so caring. She could always pick up on other people's emotions and vibes, and if she knew you were upset or depressed, she would not leave your side until she found a solution to make it better. I cannot tell you how many messages I received from people after Tillie died who told me how much she changed their lives. Whether it was her just being there for them, or her convincing one of her friends to call the Samaritans when they were feeling suicidal, or her raising thousands of pounds for charity. In her short life, she was one of the most caring and impactful human beings I know.

Then as Tillie got a bit older, after CAMHS and repeated failures by hospitals and the community adult services, her mental health deteriorated and addiction took hold. Life for Tillie then became much darker. At one point, she wanted to be a tattoo artist—a big contrast to the little girl who, at 8 years old, loved dressing up in every Disney princess costume she could find, dancing around in her clippy-cloppy shoes. None of us could have ever imagined that, that child, who once radiated joy, would one day end up so dark, wearing the darkest clothes, covering herself in the darkest tattoos, having the deepest darkest thoughts imaginable and cutting herself into pieces.

Still, even with that state of mind, she never stopped being a creative. Art became her passion. Drawing whatever was on her mind became her way of expressing herself, and she was very good at it too.

[Pause to show a picture of Tillie's drawings?]

I first knew that Tillie was self-harming when her school reported it to me, after Tillie had told her school therapist about her cutting. It was such a shock to me, I immediately blamed myself because "how could I not have been it before?". Soon after that, Tillie's mental health began to spiral. Very soon she was in and out of inpatient hospitals, in and out of A&E and her self-harming got worse and more frequent over time.

I remember when Tillie's dad and I met with the Head of CAMHS for the first time and we said to him – *"this is our daughter we are handing over to you, the most precious gift we have in this world. Treat it as such".*

That is what we do as parents, we are not medical professionals after all, so when we don't have the answers, when we need assistance keeping our children safe, we put our faith and trust in people who we are told are trained to help. As scared as I was at that time, I knew we could not keep Tillie safe on our own. I knew my beautiful little girl was in trouble, so we did what we needed to do, asked for help and support from the so-called "professionals".

But what was the outcome of that? For this young, impressionable child who had, just a few years prior, been so full of life and energy:

1. They placed her in unsafe, unsuitable inpatient hospitals like Rochford where she started learning tricks from other bulimia and anorexic patients about how to disguise the illness;

2. CAMHS were cancelling her outpatient appointments repeatedly when it was already a battle getting her in the car to go because of the chronic anxiety she would feel; and
3. They pumped her up with powerful, mind-altering sedatives for years and years to come. Ensuring she developed a cycle of chemical dependence that stripped away the girl she once was.

And that last thing, about the medication, was perhaps the worst part of it all. Tillie was 15 years old when they prescribed her **zopiclone and venlafaxine,** and in doses that only ever increased over time. These are incredibly strong drugs! If you read the side effects, among other things:

- Venlafaxine can cause dizziness, insomnia, long-lasting confusion, tremors, mania, unexplained muscle weakness, suicidal thoughts and the list goes on
- Zopiclone can cause drowsiness, hallucinations, unusual behaviours, mood changes, and thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideation.

I found out later that zopiclone should not have even been prescribed for someone suffering with borderline personality disorder, **let alone a child** who was also young and impressionable. And venlafaxine can, instead of easing BPD symptoms, actually make them far worse!

Eventually, after spending years and years on these drugs Tillie ended up so addicted to the feeling of being *"high"* that she started to not be able to tolerate being sober. She told her adult services doctor this, and what did they do? Kept her on them, added more on, increased her doses and even gave her weeks' worth of supply in advance sometimes. And they wonder why she became an addict?!

And when Tille was handed over by CAMHS to the adult services, it was more of the same issues, but this time even worse because she was now also legally an adult which meant she suddenly had the freedom to do whatever she wanted whenever she wanted. That is when her addiction to alcohol began – when she turned 18 and could buy all the drink she wanted. And as that addiction got worse, so did her mental health.

But with any addiction, it can be resolved with specialised treatment, but Tillie never had that opportunity. For example, her bulimia, which got worse and worse over time. Why was she never referred for specialist treatment for that? Why did the adult services never try to address it? If you look through the community health records, they hardly even mention it despite it being obvious that she was severely underweight by just looking at her. Do you know how painful it is watching your child have an eating disorder, watching her fade to nothing before your very eyes? The coroner at the inquest even made a point of saying that her body succumbed to the drug toxicity in part *because* she was so underweight. Her tiny body just couldn't fight all the drugs in her system.

And yet, despite the downward spiral she took, EPUT and the adult services still claim they did *"everything they could"* for my daughter. Well, if that is true, you tell me this:

- If a patient is in the middle of a crisis – do you turn around and call them a spoilt brat?
- If a patient is being difficult or rude or finding it hard to engage, do you say to that patient *"I just don't know what to do with you"*
- If a patient is demonstrating signs of having a breakdown or airing their frustrations about feeling unsupported, do you put that down to them being "*hysterical"* and *"kicking off again*"?
- If a patient tells you she feels *"dead inside",* and *"welcomes her demise"* and that she is *"quite looking forward to death"*, do you as a mental health professional encourage her thoughts?
- What about if a patient has taken an overdose so bad that she ends up in a coma for 2 days, do you discharge her home without so much as a mental health assessment because she tells you she's fine now and won't do it again?
- And what about if she has been admitted to a mental health ward after yet ANOTHER overdose, and tells you after one day of being there that she is now fine and won't do it again? Do you simply let her go without any push back?
- What if she has been admitted to that same mental health ward <u>3 times in the space of 3 months,</u> all after serious overdoses, do you let her discharge herself for the 3rd time in a row, because she tells you she is fine now and won't do it again?
- Does that sort of person sound like she is fine? Does it sound like she won't do it again? Does it sound like she is safe to be left in the community?

Well, that was the care my Tillie received, from CAMHS, from the adult services and from inpatient hospitals she stayed in. For 8 straight years she was failed by the system, and when she died the system determined they did everything they could.

On 11 December 2018 I am quoted in Tillie's community care records as having told her care coordinator that "***they had all given up on my daughter, and when she is dead I would personally invite them to her funeral."***

That was 14 months before she died.

In that same month, I am quoted as having told the doctor assessing Tillie on Edith Cavell ward in Basildon hospital that "***Tillie is at high risk of killing herself"*** because it was "***the second time she has taken a massive overdose"*** and I ***"would rather have Tillie sectioned than have to arrange her funeral."***

That was 14 months before she died.

On 11 October 2019, I am quoted as having told Tillie's dad, who then told her care coordinator, "***that I know one day we are going to find Tillie dead in bed".***

That was 4 months before she died.

…And that is only the warnings they have written down!

I said these things, not because I wanted to upset anyone, I said it because I was desperately trying to warn them of what I knew was fast approaching. But no matter how much I said it, nobody seemed to take me seriously. I knew what Tillie was going through, I <u>lived</u> it with her. Her life became my life, her fear became my fear, and her trouble became my trouble. I knew her best and I knew it wasn't going to be long until she ended her life. I don't know how many more times I could have told them or in what tone of voice I could have said it to get the message across? Nothing ever seemed to work. I felt alone and unheard as though I was nothing but an inconvenient nuisance to them.

Tillie died on 8 March 2020, just 4 months after her 21st birthday, and I was the one that found her lifeless in her bed. No-one can ever truly know what that feels like to find your child dead in the one place on earth that they should be safe. You just won't know that pain unless you've been through it and felt the full impact. It is a grief that tears through your soul. It is an indescribable devastation.

I called up the Adult services team on 9 March, the very next day, to tell them Tillie had died and they immediately gave us the *"we're sorry for your loss"* speech. What use was that to me? What use was that to Tillie? Then 2 weeks later, I get a letter in the post addressed to Tillie, informing us that she has an appointment booked for a medication review. That's how *"sorry"* they were that they couldn't even be bothered to update their system that my daughter had died before such a letter went out. And just in case that wasn't enough, I also then get a letter from the ambulance service, again addressed to Tillie, asking her to fill in a questionnaire about the treatment she received on 8 March 2020. Yes, the day she died, asking her to complete this survey about how well they responded? And this was the only ever time she received such a document, despite all the years of her being taken by ambulance to A&E.

One more thing I have to mention is the inquest which ended up lasting barely half a day. It was shocking— my daughter's 8-year battle with EPUT was compressed into just a few hours. And it only went ahead because I was let down by my Family Liaison Officer. It was only after the inquest ended that I learned, for the very first time, that I could have had legal representation and could have requested a pause until corrections were made to the Serious Incident Investigation report. The entire thing was a disgrace and has caused me immense heartache because I felt lied to and abandoned. They treated Tillie as nothing more than a name on a piece of paper to be filed away and forgotten. And it breaks my heart because I knew it was my last chance to seek accountability from those who failed her.

I already mentioned Tillie's relationship with her older sister, but she was adored by her younger sister and cousins too. Her older cousin wont forget the day he tried to give her CPR, screaming her name while tears rolled down his cheeks. He will forever be traumatised by that. And Tillie's younger sister really looked up to her, Tillie's passing has had a devastating effect on her now. Only recently, 5 December 2025, she broke down in tears and disclosed to me why she has her phone on do not disturb mode now, with tears rolling down her face she said it was because:

"When Tillie was alive, she would call me, regardless of the time, to say she was in crisis".

What a huge burden for a child to have to carry at the age of 12. I didn't know that this was happening at the time, but I can see how it has added to the trauma of already losing her sister at that age.

Tillie went through so much in her short life, but she never deserved the ending she got. Her life was cut short before her time. Her passing has robbed our family of more than a daughter; we lost a friend, a confidante, a source of comfort and emotional support. Tillie was robbed of the chance to have her own children, and grandchildren and get married and achieve all she ever dreamed of. She was robbed of the chance to see her own daughter going swimming one day, or learning the violin or dancing around in Disney costumes.

I am here today because my daughter was failed by the very system meant to protect and treat her. Now she will forever be 21.

[End with 3 minute video from Tillie's sister]