

Grieving mother says hospital failed troubled young singer

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WHITEHALL EDITOR

A YOUNG musician and singer who once sang at No 10 for the Blair family fell to her death from a hospital roof hours after being admitted to a psychiatric unit as a suicide risk.

The parents of Rebecca Jones, known as Becky, say they cannot understand how their daughter was allowed to “wander about” the hospital at night unsupervised without being fully assessed by a psychiatric team.

Jones, 23, had won academic scholarships to a top independent school and a university in America. She was taken to the Lister psychiatric unit in

Stevenage, Hertfordshire, in August 2013, by police who had found her at a railway crossing.

Within hours she left her room. CCTV cameras appeared to show her walking away from the psychiatric unit and towards the hospital’s maternity unit unhindered.

She made her way onto a roof and was found dead on a path near the hospital’s mortuary in the morning. The hospital has admitted liability and paid her family damages.

At an inquest last week the coroner found that Jones “was not adequately observed” and a mental health assessment was not done within three hours because staff were busy and “believed Becky was a lower

risk and in a place of safety”. The inquest jury found that “neglect” of the student while she was in the hospital’s care and failure to observe her

continuously had contributed to her death.

The Lister psychiatric unit had treated Jones since 2007. She had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had a history of trying to kill herself.

Only 11 days before she died, she had taken such a large number of painkillers that she had to be given medication to reverse damage to her internal organs, according to her mother, Lucy.

Lucy Jones added: “Becky was in a desperate, tormented state and what was telling her to end it all on the railway line hadn’t gone away. As her mother, that is one of the hardest things for me: that she was taken to a place of safety but was failed in her hour of need.”

The family’s lawyer, Nancy Collins of [Irwin Mitchell](#), said: “It is heart-breaking that such a talented young woman should have been let down so terribly by those responsible for ensuring her safety.”

Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the unit, said: “We wish to express our sincere condolences again to Miss Jones’s family, and are very sorry we did not prevent her from leaving the unit.

“We . . . carried out our own extensive investigation and have put a number of actions in place to reduce the risk of such an event happening again.”

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YOUNG
MINDS



COURTESY LUCY JONES



An inquest jury has found that the death of Becky Jones, who had won a scholarship to study in America, was contributed to by neglect while she was in hospital care