

HARLEY WATSON FAMILY - PRESS RELEASE - 30 June 22

At the conclusion of the Inquest in Chelmsford today into the death of 12-year-old Harley Watson, Harley's mother, Jo Fricker said:

"Our caring, kind-hearted and much-loved son Harley is missed beyond words.

We are appalled by what has come to light during the inquest - the numerous and repeated failings to keep people safe.

The entire evidence should have been made available to us in January 2021 when the IOPC and EPUT conducted their initial reports.

We will now spend the next 24 hours planning a celebration for Harley's 15th birthday without him."

She added:

"Harley was a loving, talented, and beautiful boy.

He had everything to live for. He should not have died in the way he did.

We have heard much disturbing evidence during this inquest – an inquest that state agencies argued shouldn't happen.

We are glad it did. It has exposed numerous, repeated failings by the state and the jury agreed.

Harley was not protected by Essex Police, the Council, or mental health services. He was failed by them.

Glover's repeated and known threats to run over and harm children were not effectively acted upon by state agencies.

He was allowed to be dangerous, untreated, and at liberty on the day he killed Harley.

The evidence showed the police investigation into Glover's criminal acts, before he killed Harley, was totally inadequate – it was seriously flawed.

- Essex police failed to take adequate steps to prevent Harley's death.
- Essex police did not take Glover's threats to run over children seriously. He made multiple, documented threats to run over children from 2016 to 2019, threats which increased substantially from June 2019.
- Essex police didn't share vital information between other officers and EPUT staff when dealing with mentally ill offenders.
- The evidence highlighted severe problems in the use of Police internal information systems.
- There was evidence of incompetence and an inability to apply basic common sense when dealing with mentally unpredictable offenders who are known to be dangerous.
- Essex police knew Glover had a dictaphone which he used to record his threats. This device was in Glover's possession when arrested on 30 September 2019. He told Police to listen to it which they failed to do, ignoring crucial evidence of how dangerous and seriously mentally ill he was at the time.

- Following his arrest in September 2019, Glover was released without any sanction, bail, or follow up at all. We consider this reckless and unsafe.

After his release Essex police failed to take any steps to ensure Glover no longer posed a risk to the public. He was left unmonitored for 62 days until the fatal attack on Harley took place.

Essex police were aware of Glover's threats to his neighbour's children who attended Debden High school and his loitering in his vehicle outside the very same school – the school that Harley attended. The Police did not share this vital information with the school, removing their ability to take protective steps to keep students safe.

Essex County Council, responsible for mental health act assessments, failed to carry out a full and accurate assessment of Glover whilst in police custody on September 30th 2019 – their 'assessment' was very seriously flawed indeed.

- We heard evidence that the assessing team (two Doctors and an approved mental health professional) took just three minutes to decide he was not detainable under the mental health act despite knowing his very serious threats to run over children.
- We say this was totally inadequate. It was negligent and unsafe.
- Earlier that day a Community Psychiatric Nurse interviewed Glover at the police station for an extended period and found he may be suffering from a severe and enduring mental illness.
- She was concerned he posed a real risk to others, particularly neighbours and children, and needed to be properly assessed – which didn't happen.
- The assessing team made no attempt to gather Glover's full medical or criminal history.
- They failed to follow the Mental health Act code of practice in their assessment. They didn't do their jobs properly.
- Giving evidence, they accepted the mental health act assessment was "fundamentally flawed".
- They accepted that Glover should have been detained - or at the very least subjected to a further assessment the following day.

The evidence we have had to endure over the past week has not only been extremely difficult to listen to, but also extremely concerning, given that internal investigations by both the Essex NHS Partnership Trust and the IOPC, concluded that there were no failings or lessons to be learned from Harley's death.

We had to fight extremely hard for this inquest to even be heard, as the other state bodies did not feel that an inquest was necessary given Glover's conviction of manslaughter. Given what we have now heard, it was vital that the inquest took place. We have also been provided with assurances from the state bodies, specifically ECC, EPUT and EP, that lessons have been learned and changes implemented as a result of their failings into preventing Harley's death.

We feel vindicated by the jury's conclusion and the multiple failings they found contributed to Harley's death.

Whilst we are eternally grateful to the jury for their conclusion and their findings. They were in our view, prevented from finding that any of the accepted failures PROBABLY caused or contributed to Harley's death by a ruling made by the Coroner. This was subject to extensive legal argument and the Coroner decided that despite the multiple accepted failings, there was not enough evidence for the jury to return a safe conclusion that such failings PROBABLY caused or contributed to Harley's

death and as such were only permitted to use the word POSSIBLE. There is no doubt in our mind that had the jury been allowed to make findings on a probable basis, they would have done.

We believe, and the evidence from several witnesses agreed, that had these significant and serious failings not occurred, Harley would still be alive today.

We miss him terribly."

[ENDS]