

Inquest hears how woman fled the horrors of Somalian civil war to start new life in London

Tears as coroner pays tribute to the friends who helped out tragic artist

A CORONER wept when acknowledging the “love” shown by the friends of a vulnerable artist who had started a new life in Islington after fleeing war-torn Somalia as a teenager.

An inquest at St Pancras Coroner’s Court found that Nimo Younis, 37, a personal trainer and artist from Barnsbury, faced “inadequate” treatment from both the Met police and Camden and Islington NHS Trust (CANDI) before she took her own life in January.

Friends from the LGBTQ community were present on each day of a week-long inquest, taking on roles normally carried out by lawyers in court by asking questions to various witnesses from the Met Police and CANDI about the treatment Ms Younis received.

The court heard how Ms Younis had experienced a catalogue of abuse while growing

by EMILY FINCH

up in Somalia and had escaped to London from the civil war as a teenager.

Her mother and grandmother had been killed while she was growing up and she spent stretches living on the streets.

Mary Hassell, the senior coroner for Inner North London, cried at the end of inquest when she addressed Ms Younis’s friends and told them: “When I began this inquest I was under the impression that Nimo was not in touch with her family. I realised very quickly that that’s not the case at all and she had a family that she was not just in touch with but who loved her and cared for her and that family is standing in court today in front of me.”

The jury heard how Ms Younis had absconded from the psychiatric intensive care ward at St

Pancras Hospital after a row with another patient on January 24, this year.

She had made an attempt on her life just a few days before and had been diagnosed with depression and emotionally unstable disorder. There was confusion among the nurses on the ward as to whether the Met Police would be doing a welfare check on Ms Younis after she went missing.

Her disappearance was only deemed “high risk” around a day later and police officers eventually found her dead at a friend’s house in Hungerford Road.

Within their narrative conclusion, the jury criticised the absence without leave framework at the Trust as “inadequate” alongside the “inadequate communication within and between the Met and CANDI which also included a lack of collaboration between



Coroner Mary Hassell

agencies”.

Ms Hassell said she would be writing a Prevention of Future Deaths Report to the Met and Camden and Islington NHS Trust.

A spokeswoman from CANDI said that the Trust had “already updated our Absent Without Leave policy to make it clearer and more rigorous” and added: “We are also committed to doing whatever is necessary to ensure better, more effective communication and



Nimo Younis died in January

collaboration in future with the police”.

A Met spokesman said:

“The Metropolitan Police Service are aware of the narrative determination

made by the jury following the inquest into the death of Nimo Younis.

“We hope to work closely with Camden and Islington NHS Trust to assess whether there are areas of learning for the Met.”

Describing her friend, Leah-Norah D-Antrah who went to art college with Ms Younis, said after inquest: “She brought out the best in everyone. She was thoughtful and enhanced your greatness.”

Nicolette Webber said her friend of 10 years was “an astounding human being, brilliant, intelligent and spontaneous. She would have done 110 per cent for me, and I would have done the same for her.”

● **Anyone struggling is urged to call the Samaritans who offer free and confidential advice during times of crisis. You can contact them on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org**

‘Nimo was the nicest, kindest’

THE “chosen family” of Nimo Younis paid tribute to the “exceptional” personal trainer and artist from Barnsbury who died in January.

Five of her friends, who were present at each day of the inquest at St Pancras Coroner’s Court, said they took part because they didn’t want Ms Younis to be remembered as just a faceless statistic.

Ms Younis was orphaned in Somalia during the civil war and arrived in London through the Red Cross.

Hayley McCourt, a make-up artist, said Ms Younis “was amazing, she could make you feel so good about yourself”.

Jessica Parish, who used to train with Ms Younis at the gym, said her friend of 15 years had “enriched” her life.

She said: “Nimo was the kindest, nicest person. Despite everything she’d been through she was so giving. If she saw a homeless person she would always help. Even when she had no money she would buy a sandwich and share it. She was a wonderful, kind person and that



Nimo’s friends who attended the inquest: Emma Southby, Nicolette Webber, Jessica Parish and Hayley McCourt

doesn’t come across in a court case.”

Her closest friends, who raised more than £4,000 to pay Ms Younis’s funeral costs earlier in the year, said they were “very pleased” with the jury’s conclusion.

They said they had “no idea” that the inquest would last so long and would comprise of a jury when they turned up at court last week.

But they all took time off work to be present at

each day of the case to ensure Ms Younis was represented.

“Nimo did consider us family. She told us we were her chosen family. We are very pleased and are very happy with the conclusion. We wanted to make sure that the right questions were being asked,” said Emma Southby, a senior midwife who first met Ms Younis 21 years ago.

She added: “I was like her big sister, almost kind

of motherly. She always supported me and she was delighted for me when I found my biological mother, not a flicker of jealousy.”

Ms Southby said: “She wanted to talk about it all the time. She was just so pleased for me. Nimo didn’t have any of her family and some parts were estranged and rejected her. But she was genuinely excited for me. That’s just one example that sums her up.”

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