

Dear Lord Chancellor,

I'm writing to you as a campaigner, broadcaster, survivor and victim. My voice sadly represents far too many victims but I am determined through my own pain to make sure that our voices are heard.

I'd like to tell you about Katie. She was a daughter, sister, an auntie and my friend. Katie was fun-loving, had a smile that would warm your heart, she'd do anything for anybody else even if it meant sacrificing herself. She was strong and determined; she achieved an elite level in multiple sports and was incredibly motivated. On January 6th 2023, Katie's mum, Sue, received the worst phone call any mother could ever get, she was told her daughter had died by suicide from hanging herself.

But I know Katie didn't want her life to end. She wanted the pain inside to stop, she wanted the awful memories of her past to stop haunting her, and she wanted an escape from the sexual abuse she suffered as a teenager that still followed her despite how hard she tried to leave it behind. This is the problem with trauma. Trauma is the aftermath of a horrific moment in your life and it needs to heal. When someone is sexually abused or has a distressing experience that makes them fear for their life whether it is physically or emotionally it doesn't stop when the act is over. We, victims and survivors, are left to deal with the pain and torment, often on our own.

I know this all too well.

Katie and I were part of an all-girls running group that was like a family. We were so tight-knit, we shared everything, our ups - winning races and smashing personal bests - and our downs, pushing ourselves in training and the pressures our coach put on us.

What we didn't share, is the sexual abuse that we were suffering at the same time, at the hands of our coach.

Our coach preyed on us, he manipulated us, and he got in our heads. He created friction and fear in the group, he pitted us against each other, all to make sure nobody told anybody what was going on. We were just children.

A girl in our group did open up to her dad after our coach abused her. It led to her and Katie testifying against our coach. She was incredibly courageous, strong and so brave to stand up in court as a teenager against a middle-aged man who had so much power over her and us. Paul North was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Katie saved so many other children from being sexually abused by this abhorrent rapist. We know there were girls abused before us but Katie made sure there were none after us.

Yes, our coach got put in prison - he has been out a long time and is living a new life with his family - but for us, the destruction of his actions carries on. We were desperately failed by the police and justice system. None of us received any support, in fact, we weren't kept informed with what was going on during the process or after and neither were any of the parents. Once the police got their conviction and we were no longer of use, we didn't matter.

Georgina, also our friend and a girl in our group, died by suicide not long after our coach was put in prison. Katie is now the second to have lost her life. I truly believe that if we had been offered the support and help we deserved, Georgina and Katie would still be here. What happened to Katie made her feel worthless and like she wasn't enough. It impacted her mental health, as is common for all survivors, myself included. I know if I had been supported and helped to understand what had happened to me I wouldn't have lived with trauma and shame for decades.

Katie deserved so much better, as did Georgina, as did I.

I want to do everything to honour Katie the way she deserves, to speak her name, live her legacy to continue to help other survivors of abuse, and for Katie to be grieved and celebrated. To show Katie she was and is loved.

I am joining now with the undersigned organisations and individuals to appeal to you, in Katie's name and what happened to us, please make sure further lives aren't lost by these crimes of abuse.

Victims deserve to heal and recover from their trauma, and to do this they need access to specialist support services whether they report to the police or not.

I have advised on the Victims Bill as a member of the Ministry of Justice panel since its inception and many of the undersigned have contributed to its development.

If you truly want to put victims and survivors at the heart of the bill then I strongly call on you to ensure that sufficient multi-year funding is allocated to make sure that victims can get access to specialist support when they need it, particularly specialist counselling and emotional support that help survivors to work through trauma and rebuild their lives after sexual abuse.

Specialist support services are facing unprecedented demand coupled with a chronic lack of underfunding. At the moment survivors are waiting many months, even years, for support - if they are able to access support at all. Victim support services can't meet current demand. For example, Rape Crisis England & Wales reports that there are currently 14,000 victims and survivors on their waiting lists. Desperately needed specialist services must be properly funded to support the growing numbers of survivors trying to access help. It is irresponsible and dangerous to raise awareness of victims' rights to then leave them unable to access any help or support due. This in itself is a huge step for a victim. It can be very damaging and further devastating for a victim/survivor to be made to feel rejected and isolated when they are encouraged to step forward for help only to find none is available. It's also the most economically sensible thing to do: according to recent research from Women's Aid, every £1 invested in specialist domestic abuse services represents at least a £9 saving to the public purse.

It's also vital that The Victims' Code applies to all victims, regardless of their immigration status and whether they pursue action through the criminal justice system. The Code must be fully accessible to victims who are deaf, disabled and/or have visual impairment so they can understand their rights and entitlements.

It is also key that any counselling and therapy that survivors can access, is possible without the likelihood of very private and personal feelings being requested by criminal justice agencies via their notes. I support the work being done by charities to [Keep Counselling Confidential](#).

As you can see from Katie's story – and the stories of so many women – coming forward, speaking out, even admitting to yourself that someone hurt you can be a harrowing, heart-breaking experience. Just one in five victims will ever report abuse to the police, according to the Office of National Statistics. Women need all the encouragement and support they can get and criminal justice agencies should be required to signpost victims to appropriate support services, removing the onus on the victim. To this end, staff in the criminal justice system should receive training delivered by specialist domestic and sexual abuse services to ensure they have an in-depth understanding of domestic and sexual abuse to enable them to provide better support to victims they encounter.

I strongly urge you to make sure the Victims and Prisoners Bill gives victims what we never had. Katie did what society and the system asked her to do. She spoke out, she stood tall despite victim blaming and because of her courage, others were saved. Katie did her duty to society. But what about Katie? What did the system do to help her? She deserved better.

Yours Respectfully,

Charlie Webster, Katie's friend, Campaigner, Broadcaster and Journalist, Ministry of Justice Victim's Panel Member, Women's Aid and NSPCC ambassador, Rape Crisis supporter, Survivor.

In support:

Sue Stothard, Katie's mum

Jonathan Shone, Katie's brother

Jean Webb, Georgina's mum

Joy Slinger, Charlie's mum

Jayne Butler, Chief Executive Officer, Rape Crisis England & Wales

Farah Nazeer, Chief Executive Officer, Women's Aid

Sara Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive Officer, Welsh Women's Aid

Ruth Davison, Chief Executive Officer, Refuge

Simon Gunning, Chief Executive Officer, CALM

Dan Paskins, UK Impact Director, Save the Children UK

Fay Maxted, Chief Executive, The Survivors Trust

Estelle du Boulay, Director, Rights of Women

Leni Morris, Chief Executive Officer, Galop

Lord Sebastian Coe, IAAF President

Deniz Ugur, Deputy Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition

Charlotte Kneer MBE DL, Chief Executive Officer, I Choose Freedom Charity

Gary Pleece, Chief Executive Officer, Male Survivors Partnership

Duncan Craig OBE, Chief Executive Officer We Are Survivors, Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Criminology, University of Manchester

Chris Martin, Chief Executive Officer, The Mix
Andy Cook, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Social Justice
Harriet Wistrich, Solicitor and Director, Centre for Women's Justice
Anber Raz , co-chair, Imkaan
Alison Baum OBE, close friend and founder of Best Beginnings
Victoria Green, Chief Executive Officer Marie Collins Foundation
Victoria Hornby OBE, Chief Executive Officer Mental Health Innovations
James Sainsbury OBE, Chair of Tedworth Trust
Laurence Guinness, Chief Executive Officer at The Childhood Trust
Jacob Bayliss, Chief Executive Officer Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard
Yvonne Field, Founder and Chief Executive Officer The Ubele Initiative
Becky Lyne, former GB athlete, fellow group member with Katie and Charlie
Rosie Haddock, fellow group member with Katie and Charlie, Survivor
Emma Kerry, fellow group member with Katie and Charlie
Paula Radcliffe, athletics and friend of Becky Lyne
Dr Ranj Singh, Emergency Paediatrician, TV Presenter and Author
Lorraine Ashbourne Actress
Andy Serkis Director
Prof. Paul Gringras, Paediatrician
Prof. Alla Konnikov, Solicitor
Prof. Anthony Costello, Paediatrician
Dr Adrian Boyle, Emergency Medicine Consultant
Dr Camilla Kingdon, Paediatrician
Prof Alan Maryon-Davis MBE, public health doctor and journalist
Stuart Roden, Chair of Unlocking Potential
Jonny Benjamin MBE, mental health campaigner
Eva Fernandes, Co-founder and Trustee, Baby Bank Network
Carroll Thompson, singer, songwriter, music producer, playwright, Patron PRS Fund
Mary Gibson, worker with disadvantaged families and underrepresented communities
Dr Deborah Baum, University of Southampton
Poonam Joshi, Humans Rights funder
Michael Hamilton, Director of Practice at The Ubele Initiative
Kyniska Advocacy, Women in Sport
Dr Yansie Rolston - lead for BAYO mental well-being
Nitin Sawhney CBE, musician, producer and composer
Tim Hotham, Father, brother, son and surviving sexual abuse. Some days are better than others but never easy.
Natalie Curtis, Women's Aid ambassador, Survivor
Lucy Gaskell, Women's Aid ambassador, Actor
Alexis Strum, Women's Aid Survivor Ambassador, Actor
Hope Virgo, author and campaigner
Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer, Psychologist, author of The Gender Bias
Satya Jeremie, Attorney at Law, advocate for reform and redress in Sport
Tanya Hudson, close friend, Survivor
Matt Whyatt, close friend, NSPCC and Women's Aid Fundraiser
Jo Taylor, close friend, Nike Global Senior Director
Paul Woods-Turley, close friend, Sports Director & Executive Producer, Olympic Channel.
Jessica Finnegan, NSPCC Real Life Story Volunteer, Fundraiser, Survivor

Henrietta MacEwen, Head of Partnerships, Driving for Change, Change Please & Trustee of Seed (Support and Empathy for people with Eating Disorders)

Roz Hobbey, friend & Communication Specialist & Performance Coach with GiANT London

Bryn Hughes MBE: Father of PC Nicola Hughes and member of The Victims Panel

Phil Kerry, secondary school teacher.

Kerry McCarthy, close friend.

Sue Taylor, Charlie's auntie

Amy Taylor, Charlie's cousin

Ian Wollacott, family friend

Helen Spooner, Filmmaker "Abused By Our Coach: Nowhere To Run" who collaborated with Charlie on a documentary about her experience

Mandy Tolley, mum to Alice, 16 year old athlete who trains with Becky Lyne

Cal Chester, mum to 16 and 18 year old daughters who trained with Becky Lyne, and friend of Becky Lyne

Steve Waldock, supporter & advocate for change

Caroline Jiggins, friend of Becky Lyne

Sophie Stephenson, Owner Thinking Project and friend of Becky Lyne

Richard Beswick, CEO of Riixo Recovery

Rebecca Hutchinson, Lead Coach and Secretary, White Cross Netball.

Olivia Robey, campaigner and policy adviser

Emily Stokes, friend of Becky Lyne

Ella Mundy, friend of Becky Lyne

Katherine Willoughby, 1TeamActive Director

Joanne Scully, special needs primary school teacher

Andrea Wigfield, Professor of Applied Social and Policy Research, and mother of athlete

Shen Wigfield, Turner, Athlete

Che Wigfield-Turner, Actor and Athlete

Claire Cohen, Author, Journalist

Jess Kingsley, Actor, Founder of Magical Quests

Emma Wakefield, Managing Director, Lambent Productions, Executive Producer "Abused By Our Coach: Nowhere To Run" Charlie's BBC documentary

Nicola Grant, SHE2 Leadership and Wonder Women

Gill Hajduk, friend of Becky Lyne

Gabriella Brown, athlete of Becky Lyne

Rhiannon-Faye McDonald, Survivor - Victim & Survivor Advocate at Marie Collins Foundation, Member of Brave UK

David Peters, former athlete, friend of Becky Lyne

David Johnson, father of 2 teenage daughters who are mentored by Becky Lyne

Maz Hall, teaching assistant

Louise Forsyth

Pippa Woolven, athlete and founder of Project RED-S

Sarah Bryden-Smith SEN teacher

Paul Sadler

Katie Down, Running Coach

Kate Morrissey, NHS Manager, TEDxNHS Speaker, Survivor of rape and domestic abuse

Sue and Steve Roper, parents of Emma Kerry who was a member of Katie and Charlie's running group

Zuzana Nemeckova, Sports Nutrition Coach, friend of Running at 40 +

Raj Adgopul, son of mother who suffered domestic abuse for 9yrs
Tom and Micheal Kerry, Emma Kerry's Brothers in law
Dr Andy Knox, GP and Associate Medical Director for Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB
Charlotte Hall, NHS worker
Jen Gilroy Cheetham, Former NHS worker
Sian Dyer and Rob Kerry (Emma Kerry's brother and sister in law)
Roy and Yvonne Kerry, Emma Kerry's parents in law
Tina and Mick Warwick, parents of a boy in Katie's class at Junior school.
Paul Finney, Survivor and Advocate
John Hetherington, friend of Becky Lyne
Sarah Natchez, close friend of Charlie
Chris and Andy Brewster, parents of Emma Kerry's friend.
Alvis Netball Club, Emma Kerry's friends and netball club.
Russell Lyne, proud brother of Becky Lyne for helping to raise awareness on such a dangerous subject.
Judith Steele, friend of Emma Kerry
Matt Moran, friend of Charlie Webster
Hilary Clayton-Lyne, Sister in Law of Becky Lyne
Lois McFarlane, friend of Becky Lyne
Gareth Lyne, brother of Becky Lyne
Christine Lyne, mother of Becky Lyne
Toby Slinger, brother of Charlie
Joe Slinger, brother of Charlie
Joe Maloy, Olympian, friend of Charlie
Scarlett Womersley, family friend
Nicola Ross, Emma Kerry's sister and fellow running group member of Katie and Charlie
Janet and Lionel Phillips, friends of Emma Kerry
Lyn Baran, runner, retired project manager and school safeguarding governor.
Mhairi Maclennan, survivor, safe sport advocate & campaigner, athlete
Tessa Peasgood, friend of Becky Lyne
Pat Clayton, friend of Becky Lyne
Trevor Bembridge, uncle of Becky Lyne
Trish Johnson, mother of two teenage daughters who are mentored by Becky Lyne
Katie Sloane, MD Sporta Media, Runner and Friend of Becky Lyne
Nicola Stuckey, Emma Kerry's aunt
Liz Rackoff, friend of Charlie Webster
Erika Swilley, friend of Charlie Webster
Kait Borsay, journalist and broadcaster
Shilpika Gautam
Katie Bain, Mum to Ruby Styler who trains with Becky Lyne, Registered Nurse and Psychotherapist
Sean Fletcher, journalist and broadcaster
Emelia Spencer, Registered Nurse, former Tipton School pupil
Steph Ferry, friend of Becky Lyne
Charlie Copsey, friend of Charlie Webster
Harriet Johnstone Pratt, play in a club run by Becky Lyne
Graeme Driver, A-Level German teacher of Charlie Webster
Abbie Pearse, runner and friend of Becky Lyne

Caroline Fuggle, mother of former GB athlete (and victim of safeguarding abuse)
Joe Fuggle, former GBJ 400mH, Founder of The Athlete Place and safeguarding victim
Abbie Grantham, colleague and friend of Emma Kerry
Dr Sarah Hillman GP
Rachel Garnett, godmother of Charlie, counsellor
John Garnet, godfather of Charlie
Jo Hartwell, friend and colleague of Emma Kerry
Priya Lakhani OBE, entrepreneur and news commentator
Daniel Jeydel, friend of Charlie Webster
Linsey Rae, colleague and friend of Emma Kerry
Dawn Fox, colleague and friend of Emma Kerry
Dr Peter Stuckey, uncle of Emma Kerry
Victoria Kelly, friend of Becky Lyne
Darren Sumner, friend of Becky Lyne
Sarah Poxton Le'Strange, friend of Becky Lyne
Dr Cheryll Adams CBE, Founder and Former CEO of Institute of Health Visiting
Paul Farmer OBE
Dr Chris Van Tulleken, doctor and broadcaster
Dr Rebecca Mills Clinical Psychologist Child and Adolescent Mental Health