# Survivors of Nottingham attack call for mental health system overhaul after killer’s repeated release



# Unfolding Tragedy: Survivors Speak Out After Nottingham Attacks

Amidst the aftermath of the Nottingham attacks, a survivor has shared her harrowing experience for the first time, expressing a heart-wrenching wish that she had been the one to die instead of two promising students. Sharon Miller, one of the victims of Valdo Calocane’s brutal rampage, reflects on the traumatic impact of the attack, which claimed the lives of University of Nottingham undergraduates Grace O'Malley-Kumar and Barnaby Webber, along with school caretaker Ian Coates.

In an interview with the BBC, Miller recounted how the attack left her with both physical and psychological injuries, hindering her career as a commercial cleaner, a job she held diligently for 27 years. At 46 years old, she now relies on a stick for mobility and is undergoing extensive rehabilitation. She vividly remembers the moment Calocane's van struck her: "I thought I was dying. I just wish he had taken me instead of the students." This sentiment resonates powerfully with fellow survivor Wayne Birkett, who was also seriously injured during the attack, asserting that both he and Miller feel that their lives, despite being irrevocably altered, should have been the price for the young victims' futures.

Calocane, 33, had a history of violent and erratic behaviour linked to his severe mental illness, paranoid schizophrenia. Prior to the attacks, multiple warning signs had been overlooked by healthcare and law enforcement agencies, including a stark prediction from a psychiatrist three years earlier that he could kill someone. An independent report later revealed that Calocane had not engaged with mental health services for about nine months before the attack, after being discharged due to his non-compliance with treatment.

Calocane’s family has described his ongoing struggle with mental illness as indicative of a “broken” mental health system. His brother and mother articulated their frustration at the lack of effective intervention, highlighting that the system failed to provide meaningful treatment, instead merely managing his symptoms. The family underscored the urgent need for reform, asserting that stronger measures could have potentially prevented the tragic events of June 2023.

The sequence of missed opportunities raises uncomfortable questions. Calocane had been sectioned four times in less than two years, with his records indicating a worrying pattern of violence and mental instability. His violent incidents included a break-in at a neighbour’s flat and multiple interactions with law enforcement regarding aggressive behaviour. Despite these alarming behaviours, he was repeatedly released, with his mental health deteriorating significantly over time.

Miller has taken the opportunity of her public speaking to advocate for accountability. She and Birkett are hopeful for a forthcoming public inquiry, announced by Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood, to investigate the systemic failings that allowed Calocane to remain at large. They seek clarity on why he was able to commit such heinous acts despite numerous warnings from both his family and professionals who interacted with him in medical settings.

Both survivors, in their quest for understanding and justice, have voiced the necessity for a coordinated approach across healthcare and law enforcement agencies. They stress the need for robust mental health provisions and better oversight to prevent such tragedies from recurring.

Mr Birkett, who suffers lasting cognitive impairments following the attack, poignantly notes the challenges he faces in daily life, including the frustration of losing memories and skills he once took for granted. As he grapples with profound changes, he credits his partner with "saving" him and providing the support he desperately needs.

As the inquiries move forward, the broader community watches closely, with many expressing solidarity with the victims’ families. Emma Webber, Barnaby’s mother, has called for a statutory inquiry into the failures of both the NHS and police, echoing the sentiment that accountability is necessary for the healing process.

The journey towards closure is fraught with challenges, but for survivors like Miller and Birkett, the fight for answers transcends personal pain. Their collective voices demand that lessons be learned from this tragedy, highlighting the critical importance of reform in mental health and public safety protocols.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14693153/Nottingham-attack-survivor-speaks-time-says-wishes-triple-killer-Valdo-Calocane-taken-instead.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/13/nottingham-attacks-series-of-errors-led-to-valdo-calocane-being-discharged-cqc-review)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14693153/Nottingham-attack-survivor-speaks-time-says-wishes-triple-killer-Valdo-Calocane-taken-instead.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cg7zexzndvko)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14693153/Nottingham-attack-survivor-speaks-time-says-wishes-triple-killer-Valdo-Calocane-taken-instead.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/aug/12/doctor-warned-valdo-calocane-could-kill-three-years-before-nottingham-stabbings> - A psychiatrist warned that Valdo Calocane's mental illness was so severe he could kill someone, three years before he stabbed three people to death in Nottingham, his medical records reveal. Calocane's family, who were shown the records only after he was sentenced to indefinite detention in a high-security hospital for the attacks, have criticised the missed opportunities they believe could have prevented the killings. He was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in 2020 and discharged into the care of a community mental health team. He was sectioned four times in less than two years. The second time he was sectioned was in July 2020 after he violently broke into a neighbour’s flat. Notes from a medical meeting after that attack recorded that a psychiatrist said Calocane showed no “insight or remorse and the danger is that this will happen again and perhaps Valdo will end up killing someone”, BBC’s Panorama reported. Speaking for the first time, his brother and mother, Elias and Celeste Calocane, told the BBC that the mental health system was “broken” and that the “tragedy that could have been prevented”. They are also seeking a public inquiry and an overhaul of mental health services. His brother said: “I don’t think he was ever really treated. He was sort of managed so he had interventions. But with regards to a proper treatment plan, I’m not sure that we ever saw that.” The family say they knew Calocane was unwell but they were never told that he had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c990rmvy4ero> - A doctor warned three years before the Nottingham attacks that Valdo Calocane's mental illness was so severe he could "end up killing someone", the BBC can reveal. This was one of a series of missed opportunities over three years that could have prevented the killings, Calocane's mother and brother told BBC Panorama in their first interview. The doctor's warning appeared in a 300-page summary of medical records the family received only after Calocane was sentenced for the killings, which they have shared with Panorama. The chief executive of Nottinghamshire's NHS trust said he would do everything he could to stop such a tragedy happening again. Calocane was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in 2020 and was sectioned four times in less than two years. In June 2023, he went on a rampage through the streets of Nottingham, killing students Barnaby Webber and Grace O’Malley-Kumar, both aged 19, with a knife as they returned from a night out, before stabbing to death Ian Coates, 65, near the school where he worked as a caretaker.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/13/nottingham-attacks-series-of-errors-led-to-valdo-calocane-being-discharged-cqc-review> - It says Calocane frequently “provided misleading information” and showed “little understanding or acceptance of his condition”, and evidence showed he was not taking his medication at home. The report says Calocane’s family repeatedly contacted the trust to share concerns about his deteriorating mental state, but this was not always acted upon. In December 2021, Calocane told mental health staff to stop contacting his family. The CQC criticises the trust for not assessing whether Calocane was in a position to make his own decisions about his treatment, and for not opting to medicate him via depot injection, a slow-releasing form of medication, since he was not taking it himself. In an interview with BBC Panorama, Calocane’s mother, Celeste, and brother, Elias, said the mental health system was “broken” and that the “tragedy that could have been prevented”. Elias said: “I don’t think he was ever really treated. He was sort of managed so he had interventions. But with regards to a proper treatment plan, I’m not sure that we ever saw that.” Hospital records show that in July 2020 a psychiatrist noted: “There seems to be no insight or remorse and the danger is that this will happen again and perhaps Valdo will end up killing someone.” Calocane was discharged from mental health services to his GP in September 2022 due to a lack of engagement, nine months before the killings, and on the same day an arrest warrant was issued over his assault of a police officer while being sectioned. The CQC report says it was “beyond any real doubt” that Calocane would “relapse into distressing symptoms and potentially aggressive or intrusive behaviour” without antipsychotic medicine and monitoring. He was not seen by medical professionals again until after the killings. Chris Dzikiti, the CQC’s interim chief inspector of healthcare, said: “While it is not possible to say that the devastating events of 13 June 2023 would not have taken place had Valdo Calocane received that support, what is clear is that the risk he presented to the public was not managed well and that opportunities to mitigate that risk were missed.” The report’s recommendations include that NHS England issues new guidance on care for people with complex psychosis and paranoid schizophrenia within 12 months.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cg7zexzndvko> - The new report also sets out the contact Calocane had with mental health services before he killed Mr Webber, Ms O'Malley-Kumar and Mr Coates, and then stole Mr Coates's van before driving it into three pedestrians - Wayne Birkett, Marcin Gawronski and Sharon Miller - all of whom were seriously injured. The report states the former University of Nottingham student first came into contact with mental health services on 24 May 2020, when he was 28, when he was arrested for criminal damage to a neighbour's flat. It was documented that Calocane's behaviour was an episode of psychosis brought on by the stress of course work and a forthcoming exam, coupled with a lack of sleep. Shortly after returning to his home, Calocane again tried to gain access to a neighbour's flat. His neighbour was so frightened that she jumped from a first-floor window, sustaining back injuries which required surgery. Calocane was then detained for the first time under section 2 of the Mental Health Act, which meant he could be kept in hospital against his will for up to 28 days - known as a "section". Subsequent contacts with services saw him labelled as having paranoid schizophrenia. PA Media Emma Webber, mother of Barnaby Webber making a statement alongside relatives of the Nottingham attacks victims, outside Nottingham Crown Court in January 2024. PA Media Voicing their anger outside Nottingham Crown Court in January 2024, the victims' families said they were "let down" by the police and Crown Prosecution Service After about a month in hospital, Calocane was sent home with reviews expected from the community crisis team and the early intervention in psychosis (EIP) service. He was initially called by the crisis team. The contact was a phone call rather than a face-to-face appointment "because of Covid-19 restrictions at the time". His family expressed concerns because they felt he could "play down his symptoms" over the phone. In July 2020, Calocane was admitted to hospital for a second time after forcibly entering a neighbour's flat. He was sectioned again, this time under section 3 of the Mental Health Act, which allows for a longer hospital stay of up to six months. According to medical records shared by Calocane's family with BBC Panorama, while Calocane was ill in hospital, a psychiatrist observed that "there seems to be no insight or remorse and the danger is that this will happen again and perhaps Valdo will end up killing someone". Two weeks after this entry was made, Calocane was discharged from Highbury Hospital. According to the report, his family "felt this was a real missed opportunity to fully understand [Calocane's] diagnosis, risk and to get to grips with a treatment plan that [Calocane] was concordant with". Three months before his third hospital admission in August 2021, Calocane's family again reported concerns over his mental health.
6. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/emma-webber-statutory-inquiry-nottingham-attack-valdo-calocane> - Emma Webber, mother of Nottingham attack victim Barnaby Webber, has demanded a statutory inquiry into failings by both NHS England and the police watchdog, following a crucial report into killer Valdo Calocane being published. Speaking to GB News, Webber described the "horror" of having to battle with NHS England over the publication of their unredacted report three weeks ago. Following backlash from the families of Calocane's victims - Grace O'Malley-Kumar, Barnaby Webber and Ian Coates, the NHS eventually reversed its decision to only publish a summary, releasing the full report into Calocane's mental health care. The report revealed "multiple missed opportunities" in Calocane's mental health care before he killed Barnaby Webber, Grace O'Malley-Kumar and Ian Coates in June 2023. Emma Webber demanded a 'statutory inquiry' after suffering 'mental torture' by the failings of the police and NHS