

# The Telegraph

## Mother claims wifi allergy killed her daughter and accuses school of failing to safeguard children

Jenny Fry, 15, was found in woodland near her home in Chadlington



The inquest heard Jenny Fry had been suffering from the rare condition electro-hypersensitivity (EHS) Photo: © Facebook/Newsteam



By Lucy Clarke-Billings

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A mother claims a **Wi-Fi allergy killed her daughter** and is accusing an Oxfordshire school of failing to safeguard children against the physical effects of wireless technology, an inquest has heard. Jenny Fry, 15, was found in woodland near her home in Chadlington, on June 11 this year after texting a

friend telling her she would not be going to school and intended to kill herself.

An inquest heard the teenager was intelligent and organised but that her life had been made a misery due to the prolonged effects of a condition known as electro-hypersensitivity (EHS).

### • **Woman who claimed she was 'allergic to Wi-Fi' gets disability allowance from French court**

Jenny's mother, Debra Fry, said her daughter suffered with tiredness, headaches and bladder problems as a direct result of **wireless internet connections at Chipping Norton School**.

*"Wi-Fi and children do not mix. Much more research needs to be done into this because I believe that Wi-Fi killed my daughter,"*

Mrs Fry, Jenny's mother



Mrs Fry told Oxfordshire Coroners' Court that Jenny had started showing signs of EHS in November 2012 and that the closer she was to a wireless router, the worse she felt.

"Jenny was getting ill and so was I" said Mrs Fry. "I did some research and found how dangerous Wi-Fi could be so I had it taken out of the house.

"Both Jenny and I were fine at home but Jenny continued to be ill at school in certain areas.

Jenny Fry Photo: © Facebook/Newsteam

"She was receiving lots of detentions, not for being disruptive in class or misbehaving, but often because she used to take herself out of the classroom to find another where she was able to work. She took her schoolwork seriously.

"I took lots of information into school to show the headteacher, Simon Duffy, but he said there was equally the same information available claiming Wi-Fi was safe.

"I also had a heated exchange with teachers telling them Jenny was allergic to Wi-Fi and that it made no sense making her take detentions in rooms that were making her ill."

**The World Health Organisation does not characterise EHS as a medical diagnosis** but does recognise the symptoms.

### • **Grandmother spends £4,000 WiFi-proofing home**

In a 2005 report, WHO concluded: "EHS is characterized by a variety of non-specific symptoms that differ from individual to individual. The symptoms are certainly real and can vary widely in their severity.

"Whatever its cause, EHS can be a disabling problem for the affected individual. EHS has no clear diagnostic criteria and there is no scientific basis to link EHS symptoms to EMF exposure.

"Further, EHS is not a medical diagnosis, nor is it clear that it represents a single medical problem."

*"I remember saying to the school 'if someone had a peanut allergy you wouldn't make them work surrounded by peanuts',"*

Mrs Fry, Jenny's mother

The inquest also heard Jenny previously spoke of suicidal thoughts in November 2014 following the death of close friend Tom Boomer.

The family is now campaigning to raise awareness of EHS and how wireless technology can affect health. They hope to get the use of wireless technology in schools changed.

Mrs Fry said: "Jenny died after making a cry for help. She texted her friend saying she was intending to die but told her where she was.

"If she had intended to kill herself she wouldn't have said where she was. Unfortunately the friend did not have her phone with her so never saw the message in time.

"Jenny left letters for us where she said she couldn't cope with her allergies from wifi anymore.

"She left them for us in case things went too far but I don't believe she wanted to die.

"She wanted to do well at school and go to university but she knew Wi-Fi was having a bad effect on her studies.

"It got to the stage where she would hide herself away in unused classrooms in the school to work just so she could escape the Wi-Fi.

"In the classroom she had a seating plan but if she was near where the router was she would suffer headaches and feel very hot and bothered.

"As soon as Jenny walked away from a router she felt instantly better so she was almost hunting out areas of the school which weren't covered by Wi-Fi just to do her work.

"I remember saying to the school 'if someone had a peanut allergy you wouldn't make them work surrounded by peanuts'.

"Just because Wi-Fi is new and all around us doesn't mean it is safe. Wi-Fi and children do not mix. Much more research needs to be done into this because I believe that Wi-Fi killed my daughter."

Simon Duffy, headteacher of Chipping Norton School, said: "The safety of our students whilst they are in school is paramount and Jenny's safety at school was just as important as anyone else's.

"Just like many other public spaces, Chipping Norton School does have Wi-Fi installed to enable use to operate effectively.

"The governors are content that the installed equipment complies with the relevant regulations and will ensure this continues to be the case."

Oxfordshire coroner Darren Salter recorded a narrative verdict but did not include the factors relating to EHS as he said there were no medical notes to prove Jenny did suffer from it.

### **Is EHS real?**

'Radiowave sickness' was first named and described in 1932, with most of the early cases being discovered in military personnel.

In 2011, an American woman told of how she was forced to abandon her family farm in the state of Iowa and moved to Green Bank, West Virginia - a tiny village of 143 residents in the heart of the Allegheny Mountains.

Green Bank is part of the US Radio Quiet Zone, where wireless is banned across 13,000 sq miles (33,000 sq km) to prevent transmissions interfering with a number of radio telescopes in the area.

Diane Schou said the community enables her to escape symptoms such as red, itching skin, blurred vision and headaches.

However the condition is yet to be identified by official health bodies as a medical diagnosis. At present, there are no accepted research criteria other than 'self-reported symptoms', and for clinicians there is no case definition or clinical practice guideline.

Dr Jill Meara, Director of Public Health England's (PHE) Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, said: "Public Health England is aware that some people report that they have symptoms that are brought on or made worse by exposure to electro-magnetic fields (EMF), so-called electrical sensitivity.

"The overall scientific evidence does not support the suggestion that such exposure causes acute symptoms or that some people are able to detect radiofrequency fields. Nevertheless effective treatments need to be found for these symptoms."

However in August this year, a French court ruled that electromagnetic hypersensitivity to mobile and wifi waves is a "serious handicap", setting a legal precedent that lawyers say could lead to "thousands" of claims.

Although France does not recognise EHS as a medical problem, a court in Toulouse decided that claimant Marine Richard should be awarded £500 a month in disability allowance as she displayed "irrefutable clinical signs" of suffering from a syndrome linked to electromagnetic waves.

French courts had previously refused pay disability benefits to people who suffer from electromagnetic sensitivity, so after winning the case, Ms Richard said that her win was a 'breakthrough'.