

**Domestic Homicide Review Panel – LB Wandsworth CSP
'Fleur' found murdered in September 2017 in Wandsworth**

LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

**DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW
AND JOINT
LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FLEUR AGED 21

MURDERED IN SEPTEMBER 2017 IN WANDSWORTH

**CHILD A AGED 9 AND CHILD B AGED 5
EMOTIONALLY ABUSED IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD**

**REVIEW PANEL CHAIR AND AUTHOR
BILL GRIFFITHS CBE BEM QPM
2 OCTOBER 2020**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Review Process

This summary outlines the process taken by the London Borough of Wandsworth (LBW) Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Chair’s decision to establish a Domestic Homicide Review Panel in November 2018 under s9 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, to review the homicide of a French citizen, ‘Fleur (not her real name) aged 21, caused by multiple injuries in late September 2017, that had been inflicted by her employers, ‘Danielle’ (not her real name) then aged 35 and ‘Pierre’ (not his real name) aged 40, each also French by nationality. Fleur had been appointed nanny/au-pair to Danielle’s children ‘A’ then aged 8 and ‘B’ then aged 5 who had been emotionally abused in the same household and a joint ‘lessons learned’ review has been undertaken. The full report contains about 30 footnotes that signpost the source of references used in this summary.

The process began with a meeting of all agencies that potentially had contact with those involved prior to the death of Fleur. The Panel met on five occasions and robustly discussed the findings from the IMRs the Chair’s drafts of the overview. The process ended when the Wandsworth CSP Board approved a final version of the joint DHR and lessons learned review at a meeting in September 2019.

Contributors to the review

Agency representatives on the Panel and participating in the review were:

- Robin Thomas, LBW Head of Community Safety
- Mick Allen / Mark Wolski, LBW Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Manager
- Ruth Lacey, LBW Children’s Social Care (CSC)*
- Deidre Nunes, Safeguarding School 2, LBW Education*
- Dr Claiure Taylor, Named GP for Wandsworth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)*
- Patrick Bull, South West London and St Georges Hospital (SWLSG) NHS Foundation Trust*
- London Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS)
- Janice Cawley, Detective Inspector, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Specialist Crime Review Group*

Independent specialist Domestic Abuse advice to the Panel was also received from:

- Dina Sahmanovic, Victim Support, specialist adviser on modern slavery

Individual Management Reviews (IMR) were also provided by

- Westminster City Council (WCC) CSC*
- London Ambulance Service (LAS)*

Agencies were asked to give chronological accounts of their contact with the victim and perpetrators prior to their deaths. Further relevant information was provided by an IMR from agencies listed above marked *. The Panel were satisfied that the IMR/letter was undertaken by a senior manager not connected with the events being reported upon. The main source of information about what happened to Fleur in her last weeks and days came from the criminal investigation and trial.

The loss of a child to homicide is a terrible situation for a family to endure, particularly when it has been carried out in a foreign country, the UK. Through the Chair in a meeting at the Central

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Criminal Court, the Panel has offered their deepest condolences to Danielle's family on their loss with a commitment to learn the lessons from this tragic loss of a young life.

Author of the overview report

Bill Griffiths is also the author of the overview report. He is a former police officer who has had no operational involvement in LB Wandsworth. He has been appointed as the independent Chair of the DHR Panel having had no involvement in policing since retirement from service in 2010. Since 2013, he has been involved in more than twenty DHRs.

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review

ToR were agreed at the first Panel meeting and also shared with family members. They set out the methodology for the review, the operating principles and the wider Government definition of domestic abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviour. The main lines of Inquiry were:

1. Scope of review agreed from January 2008 to date of homicide (following Panel debate initially set at five years) with any earlier event of significance to be included
2. Identify relevant equality and diversity considerations, including Adult and Children Safeguarding issues
3. Establish whether family, friends or colleagues want to participate in the review. If so, to ascertain whether they were aware of any abusive behaviour to the victim prior to the homicide (any disclosure; not time limited). In relation to the family members, whether they were aware if any abuse and of any barriers experienced in reporting abuse, or best practice that facilitated reporting it
4. Take account of previous lessons learned in LB Wandsworth
5. Identify how people in the LB of Wandsworth gain access to advice on sexual and domestic abuse whether themselves subject of abuse or known to be happening to a friend, relative or work colleague.

Summary chronology

Fleur was born in January 1996, the only child of a rural family in North East France. Her parents separated after a few years; her mother re-married and had another daughter and a son, half-siblings to Fleur. Her mother describes Fleur as placid, shy and naïve. Her father has lost his only child whom he described as kind, quiet and reserved. She was very nurturing and liked animals and children. When she told him she wanted to go to England as an au-pair, he encouraged her as he thought it would help her to become more independent, mature and confident. It was her 'life goal' and she had studied a vocational training course in child-care.

Following a two-week visit with Danielle's family in December 2015, Fleur left France to work full time for them, aged just 20. The reality of her au-pair life from January 2016 was to be paid £50 a month (for the first few months, anyway) and to share a bedroom with the two boys, given the upper bunk bed. Her mother and father never saw her again.

Danielle and Pierre are French Algerian by heritage. Very little is known about their early life which was spent in France. They met in 2001 when, aged 18, Danielle was working at a fairground outside Paris and their relationship appears to have been turbulent from the outset. Pierre has been observed to be constantly in the background and has never really disappeared from Danielle's life, albeit he is not the father of either of her two children. Danielle referred to him, or

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professionals assumed for him, the complete range of titles, from brother to through to uncle. AB, a French national, is the father of Child A and now has custody. 'Luke' (not his real name) is the putative father of Child B and lives and works in the US.

Danielle is known to agencies from the time she lived in Westminster City Council area and gave birth to Child A in 2008. She lived there for a time with Luke before Child B was born. She then moved to LB Wandsworth and Luke supported her financially with rent and payments for Child B's upkeep. From April 2014, Danielle developed an obsession with Luke and, often through manipulation of Child A, repeatedly alleged one instance of historic Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) from 2012 which Luke has consistently and firmly denied. Luke did not know and had never met Fleur. He had not spoken to Danielle for about three years prior to the fatal incident. He had settled in the US and did not visit the UK at all in 2017.

Overview of Fleur's treatment by Danielle and Pierre

There is an extensive timeline of interaction between Danielle and agencies from 2007 that will be summarised later. In order to understand the relevance to what happened to Fleur in August/September 2017, it is felt that an overview of her treatment at the hands of the perpetrators would be helpful.

The life Fleur led in Wandsworth was at times bizarre and oppressive. She was financially exploited, in that she was rarely paid for her work as a nanny/au-pair, but Fleur thought that that was acceptable because she believed that Danielle could not afford to pay her. Fleur was generous by nature but was not worldly wise and it was easy to take advantage of her.

There were times that Fleur was happy; she had wanted to work with children, but as the months passed there was a marked deterioration in her circumstances and health. At other times she appeared scared and hungry. She complained to witnesses, a local shopkeeper and a parent who had got to know Danielle through the school, that she was being beaten and that she was not allowed to return to her home in France. They could only comment from what they saw and heard, mainly outside of the house. What took place behind closed doors when no independent witness was present was very much worse.

Danielle had begun to make a series of accusations against Fleur, but there is substantially more evidence available from a series of audio and video recordings made by the perpetrators in their 'interrogations' of her. For example, Danielle alleged that Fleur had stolen a diamond pendant and although Fleur denied the charge, that did not stop it from being repeated. These allegations were a way of intimidating and controlling Fleur and also to influence her mother.

Then, Fleur was accused of taking Child B to a house where his putative father, Luke, had arranged to be and where Luke told him that he would shoot dead his family. This allegation was first reported to the police by Danielle in August 2017. She said that the threat had been made three months before, in May. Fleur was present when Danielle went to the police and Fleur denied the accusation. Child B's father has also denied it. In any case he was living in the US at the time. The police took no further action because, apart from anything else, the allegation made no sense and, if true, why continue to employ the same nanny; and why wait three months to report it?

But Danielle's allegations continued, and her suspicions concerning Fleur's activities and her supposed collusion with Luke was developed, extended and taken to new extremes. Danielle began to accuse Fleur of working together with Luke to sexually abuse the entire family. The

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accusations developed to the stage where it was alleged that Fleur had let Luke into the Wandsworth home, where he had drugged the family and sexually abused them. The purported activities included taking semen from Pierre, after he had been rendered unconscious. The semen was required to frame Pierre for a charge of child sexual abuse. The fact that Fleur continued to be employed as the nanny and continued to sleep in the children’s bedroom seemed unimportant. The allegations did not match reality.

Precisely what was in Danielle’s mind may be difficult to determine but it seems that the more outlandish the allegations, the more she pursued them, despite the fact that they were denied and despite the fact that there was no evidence to support them. And her allegations appear to have been contagious because Pierre was clearly beguiled by Danielle with her obsessions and delusions and he began to adopt them himself. Eventually, the two perpetrators confronted Fleur and wanted her to confess to conduct and crimes she had not committed. The allegations were untrue but a number of factors must have begun to operate on Fleur’s will. Fleur became a prisoner in the home and she must have been terrified.

Together they mistreated and intimidated Fleur in a manner that is way beyond anything that could be considered normal or rational; their actions, at times, difficult to comprehend. Fleur had a great desire to please, even in adversity, and if she did not have the strength to walk out of this horrendous household, as she plainly did not, she must have found this unnatural and increasingly toxic situation wholly outside her experience and ability to manage. The perpetrators not only held her prisoner in their home, but occasionally had succeeded in removing her will to fight the allegations made against her.

At times Fleur made confessions to please her oppressors and then would withdraw them, or she would make a confession in terms that were unacceptable to the demands of the perpetrators. As the pressure increased so did the violence against her. The last days and hours of Fleur’s life must have been truly wretched. She was subjected, at times, to a brutal and oppressive inquisition and to significant violence: there were fractures to her sternum; to four of her ribs; and to her jawbone. She also had bruising to her left arm, back and chest. Whilst in the custody of Danielle and Pierre, Fleur died.

Their plan was frustrated by the combination of a neighbour and inquisitive fire fighters. The neighbour became concerned about the fire which had been started to cremate Fleur’s body. The fire was in a residential area and it seemed to last for an unnaturally long time. The neighbour became so concerned that she rang 999. The firefighters who attended were troubled by a number of factors and eventually they discovered Fleur’s remains under the ash of the fire. Without such vigilance the two perpetrators might well have got away with murder - which was, of course, their aim.

With this overview in mind of what happened to Fleur at the hands of her employers from January 2016 to September 2017, it will be insightful to now turn back the clock to examine the extraordinary and complex trail of events and interactions by Danielle with agencies from 2008, that Fleur had unwittingly joined. There is a risk that, through this extensive examination, Danielle becomes ‘the loudest voice’ in this review, but it is felt necessary and proportionate to summarise the narrative of what is known about the perpetrators in order to understand the lessons to be learned from the suffering that Fleur endured in her relatively short time in this country.

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Timeline of events and contact with agencies

The main report of this timeline between 2008 and 2017 is a large part of the total report so is summarised here for the salient features relevant to the purpose of the review. Unless otherwise stated, it can be assumed that correct procedures were followed.

2008

June Following the birth of Child A in Westminster, Danielle was placed in a Psychiatric Unit for Mothers and Babies for a 6-week period of parenting mental health assessment

2012

July Pregnant with Child B, Danielle called police to remove Luke from their flat in WCC

September Danielle called police over argument with Luke because he had allowed Child A a wooden toy in the bath

October Danielle called police to allege Luke had smacked Child A. Four weeks later Danielle alleged harassment by Luke

November Danielle called police because Luke had entered the flat and removed his clothing

December Complained to police that Luke had left threatening messages. Assessed as non-threatening but officer concerned about persistence so warrant issued. Danielle went to France and Luke to Ireland, so warrant withdrawn

2013

March Birth of Child B. Danielle and Pierre move to Wandsworth, initially financially supported by Luke

August Child A enrolled at school 1. Danielle claims disability to lobby for move to school 2 nearer to home

November Danielle provided with GP letter to support move to school 2

2014

February Child A starts at school 1. Danielle and Luke meet to discuss future child access.

Danielle then complained to police of harassment by Luke in emails - later assessed as legitimate messages about the care of Child B

March School 1 staff concerned about Danielle's volatile behaviour toward them and neglect of Child A's needs. She claimed poor support for her disability. Education Welfare Officer (EWO) made referral to Wandsworth CSC. Danielle complains to police about Luke's threatening phone calls. Assessed as non-abusive. Police called to disturbance at school 1 where Danielle was abusive to the head teacher and were asked to conduct welfare check on Child B

First reported allegation by Danielle of historic CSA by Mark

April LAS called late afternoon by Child A to Danielle who was 'unresponsive'. Danielle was hyperventilating on arrival and taken to local A&E where informed doctor that Child A had inappropriately touched Child B in the bath that he alleged was learned behaviour from child sexual abuse (CSA) by digital penetration committed by Luke on Child A some three years earlier. Reported to police. Psychiatric Liaison Nurse suspected delusional paranoia. Child A disclosed to teaching assistant that his mother had 'crazy eyes'.

May Brighter Futures worker assessed risk as 'high' based on professional judgement and referred the case to the local MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). Danielle reported to have depression and borderline personality disorder. Section 47 assessment completed that day with both children seen. Police investigation initiated into CSA allegation with a view to an ABE (Achieving Best Evidence) interview with Child A. A TAC (Team Around the Child) meeting was held at school 1 and Child A assessed as making good progress. In the joint police/CSC assessment interview, Child A did not disclose CSA and there were many inconsistencies. Danielle complained about the closure of the investigation and also alleged Luke had hacked her phone, but did not respond to requests for more information

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July Danielle produced a Non-Molestation Order (NMO) against Luke for harassment. The email messages were examined and seemed mainly about access to Child B. The risk was assessed as ‘Standard’ because Luke did not know where Danielle lived but he was placed on the Police National Computer (PNC) as ‘wanted for questioning’. Luke surrendered to a police station with a solicitor. He did not deny sending the emails but said they were all about child access. When he engaged a solicitor to negotiate access, the NMO email arrived. Luke set out the substantial amounts of money he had provided from March 2013 when Child B was born. He had ceased these payments about three months earlier, in April, when the CSA allegations were first made. A member of the public called police to Danielle, barefoot, with Child B in her arms, walking in front of cars near their home. She was clearly upset and agitated, saying she wanted to kill herself. She was distressed that an allegation of sexual abuse she made concerning her other son, Child A, had not been taken seriously by police and Children’s Services. She decided on impulse to “storm down” to Children’s Services to demand justice. Consideration was given to Mental Health Act powers but Danielle had calmed and appeared more rational

August Due to concerns about this incident a Child Protection Plan (CPP) was implemented under the category of ‘Emotional Abuse’. It was reviewed and stood down in October
In mid-August, Danielle took the children to the local Mosque, seeking a reading from the Quran and saying she was vomiting after drinking water. She was found by an LAS crew wandering nearby. She was depressed due to her “second husband” having abused the children and felt unable to cope with them. The A&E assessment concluded she was tired and fed up with not being believed about the alleged sexual abuse of Child A. There were signs of depression but treatment not required and she was discharged with a safeguarding referral made

November Child A called an ambulance to Danielle drifting in and out of consciousness. He thought his mother could not breathe. On examination, she had flu-like symptoms. She declined hospital and said she would see her own doctor

2015

February Child A enrolled at school 2. Meeting held with school 1 and safeguarding notes and a chronology shared

March Danielle called police in a distressed state having been accused of stealing from a local shop. She was escorted home but then wanted to complain about the officers and that was dealt with by the duty inspector

June Danielle contacted the CSA investigator with ‘new information’, that Child A was having nightmares that Luke was going to kill him. This had already been noted so she was invited to seek further help from her GP. About a week later Danielle informed police that Child A had contacted the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and told them he had been sexually abused by Luke. He did this because a lesson at school. Social workers noted that Child A appeared to be seeking approval from his mother as he recounted the allegation. Danielle added that she had not heard from the suspect for three years. This was linked to the original investigation and reopened

July A strategy meeting was held and established that NSPCC had no record of the call. On the morning of the meeting. Child A had called the LAS to attend his mother who was unconscious, lying on her front. She had a history of panic attacks. Clinical parameters were normal and Danielle said she would see her own doctor. Five days after that, the LAS responded to a similar call and said she had experienced a panic attack when Child A revealed more details of the historic CSA incident. In late July, the NSPCC reported an allegation by Danielle regarding the same allegation that they had linked to a similar call earlier that month

August The police investigator and WSC social worker met with Danielle with a French interpreter and explained that the investigation had been closed and there would be no ABE interview

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because there was no initial disclosure by Child A to professionals and there was no trace of the call by Child A to NSPCC. She countered that he had called Childline but did not mention that she had called NSPCC. They noted that Child A was lively and bright and no school problems had been reported. The only remaining investigation action was to interview Luke under caution *September* Luke contacted police by email from the US to report that someone had posted a message on Facebook, naming and accusing him of CSA on a 4-yr old boy. The author purported to be male but Luke suspected Danielle and he alleged an offence of ‘malicious communication’ *October* Danielle’s home was searched under a warrant with social worker present and social media devices seized. Due to the presence of Child B it was agreed Danielle would attend later for interview. The WCS s47 investigation reached its conclusion that no evidence of significant harm to the children

November In interview in the presence of a solicitor, Danielle admitted setting up a false account and posting the CSA allegations naming Luke. She accepted a criminal caution for malicious communication in December

December Luke attended for interview with his solicitor to answer the historic CSA allegation. He provided a history of his relationship with Danielle and admitted that, during the relationship, he disciplined Child A when he was naughty by smacking him on the bottom. He said he had acted as a parent to Child A and had bathed him and help clean him up when he had been to the toilet. He denied digital or any other penetration. A supervisor reviewed the interview and noted the additional enquiries with NSPCC/Childline found no trace of the call from Child A and the case did not pass the evidential threshold for referral to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The case was closed to WCS and support by CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) had been declined because Danielle believed they had not disclosed all the information they held on Child A

2016

January Fleur travelled from her home in France to take up employment as the family nanny/au-pair to Children A and B

February WCS opened another referral, this time following an email from Luke suggesting Danielle was associating with organised crime and that she was coercing Child A to make false allegations against him. A C&F (Child and Family) assessment was completed in early April and closed because there were no safety or welfare concerns for the children. In this context, the presence of Fleur was noted for the first time when Child A showed his bedroom and commented that there was also a bed for a French au-pair. Fleur’s presence was also observed on home visits in May and July 2017 and there were no indicators, observations or concerns about her treatment from the mother and “stepfather”

March Child A disclosed to the educational psychologist at school 2 that Danielle suffered from panic attacks and he had to call an ambulance. He had been hit by her and he wished his “dad” would move back to London. This was referred to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) but WCS had visited only the week before, so not passed on. Danielle was upset with the referral to children’s services. A few days later, Danielle contacted police to complain about Luke’s manipulation of WCS. She added that a NMO was in place. The investigating officer ascertained the case was now ‘open’ with WCS and referred it there. The presence of a “nanny” (probably Fleur) was noted but the opportunity was missed to record her details in the report form

September Child B started part-time at Nursery School 2

2017

February Child A disclosed to the School 2 Deputy Headteacher that he had seen Luke looking through the fence at school while holding a torch under his chin. He took staff to show them the

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area and pointed to a small gap of approximately 10cm between two residential garden sheds. The opposite end was blocked off and the space was too narrow to fit between. It was felt that it was highly unlikely that Luke could have been there. It is now known that he was in the US for all of 2017

Danielle and Pierre attended the school for a meeting to discuss the incident and the staff concern that Child A seemed unhappy. They also raised concerns about his observed behaviour toward Fleur: being openly rude to her, arguing back and on one occasion attempting to grab a toy from her hand that he wanted to bring to school. The “parents” were supportive and agreed that he could be referred for counselling, providing they could meet the counsellor

April a consultation was held with the educational psychologist, which Danielle did not attend, and a seven-point plan of action agreed. One action was for Danielle to re-apply for the restraining order against Luke and communicate this to Child A which might make him feel safer at home

Early May On a Sunday morning staff at a large DIY store in Wandsworth became concerned about Child A who had been wandering the store for at least an hour without an adult. Police arrived promptly and spoke to him. He claimed he did not know who he was, including his name, where he lived, how he got to the store or who his family were. He said that he believed that he was adopted and might live in France. When probed further, he said he had been abused, tortured, beaten and locked inside a car by a man called Luke. LAS attended found no illness or injury but noted his claim that he bumped his head the previous day when “running away from a man” and had “concussion” which caused his memory loss. When asked how he knew about concussion, he said he had seen this on television. The crew noted that Child A was calm, alert and orientated, able to make appropriate and rational observations of the people in the room. Then Danielle and Pierre attended the store looking for Child A and identified him to the officers. They said he had run away from Church; they had been looking for him and had entered the store because they saw police cars parked outside. Danielle said that Child A had been a victim of sexual abuse by her ex-partner when he was 4 years of age that had been investigated by police. A suitability check on the home was conducted

The church location was not identified, there was a lack of curiosity about the fact that Danielle had not reported Child A missing and consideration was not given to child neglect. Danielle informed the school that Child A had run away from Fleur in this incident

Late May/early June There were two incidents at the school when Child A had a ‘toileting’ problem due to what Luke had done to him and insisted on returning home to shower and change clothes. Staff did not detect odour or other signs of soiling. The GP became involved and noted that Child A had been referred for constipation a year before and did not attend (DNA). The doctor had a ‘gut feel’ of concern that the presentation is a manifestation of psychological stress and suggested a Team Around a Child (TAC) meeting with all professionals to share information. This was held with Danielle and Pierre the next day and they agreed to 14 actions

July WCS contacted police with their 5th referral following Child A’s disclosure to a social worker with the same allegation of digital penetration four years earlier. A few weeks later, an ABE interview was undertaken with Child A. He recounted that Luke had made a digital penetration “a hundred times” and said the abuse mostly happened when he and Luke were alone or when they were in public toilets at the swimming pool or the park. He said that Luke threatened him and said he would kill him. Preparations began for the submission of a case file to the CPS for consideration.

August Danielle called police and reported that, in May 2017, her ‘baby-sitter’ had taken her children to meet a male. She added that the male told them he was their dad; their parents were not their real parents and that he would kill them with a gun. Danielle did not know where this incident had happened but provided the sitter’s name, Fleur. She took Fleur to a local police station the next day and demanded she be interrogated which was declined. There were

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inconsistencies with Danielle’s story, she had waited 3 months to report the allegation and had retained the services of the au-pair for that period. Fleur did not participate and seemed ‘untroubled’. With limited English, she may not have understood or, given her ‘interrogation’ had commenced two days earlier, she may well have been coerced. An opportunity was missed to record her details

That month, Danielle’s friend had Fleur stay with her because she had been “kicked out” by Danielle. Two days later Danielle appeared at the house and shouted at Fleur to leave with her which she did. The friend saw Fleur by chance in September while shopping. She seemed reserved and quiet and said she would be home soon

The WCS C&F Assessment following the last referral had recommended transfer to the CIN (Child In Need) team. The social worker attempted to make contact and visit the family and children and also discussed strategies with the previous SW for meeting/working with them. At the end of August their unavailability was escalated to the team manager

September Danielle contacted the investigator in the reopened CSA inquiry with “additional documents” to share. She did not respond to follow up requests, the CPS case file was reviewed by a supervisor and a rationale recorded for taking no further action

Child B started full time in reception at school 2 and Child A joined year 5. His behaviour was concerning and raised with the social worker about five days later because he was by now having meltdowns at school and refusing to do much work. The response from CAHMS was that the family had not engaged and had ignored calls and knocks on the door. When contact was eventually made on the phone during the holidays, Danielle was aggressive and said to leave them alone as they were on holiday. As the result of the escalation to a team manager, the social worker sent a letter highlighting concerns and to set a TAC meeting for late September

One of Fleur’s jobs was to take the children to and from school but she had not been seen there since the autumn term began. The last use of Fleur’s phone was in mid-September when Pierre called her. Police enquiries established she was last seen by a neighbour in company with Child A outside the home on the afternoon of the Sunday before the homicide.

Evidence of abuse to Fleur discovered by the homicide investigation

There are three material sources of evidence on what was really happening inside the flat, first, from notes or letters written by Fleur; second, from what Fleur told others, in particular her mother; and third, most bizarrely and disturbing of all, the conduct of the perpetrators. They exerted considerable and ever-increasing pressure on Fleur to make confessions in agreement with the allegation that Danielle had made against Luke since 2014. Added to this is the eye witness account of Child A.

Recovered from the flat are notes written by Fleur to Danielle:

She denied she had taken Child B to a strange place and had left him alone with anyone
There was no reason for her to be insulted and called a “whore”, a “bitch”, a “slut”
She made it clear she wanted to leave and how much she missed her family – her mother had threatened to send the French Embassy “If you don’t let me go”
Writing in June, she complained it was 1 year and 5 months there and not a single break and herb family are fed up with hearing: “soon”

In June, she also wrote plaintively to her father that she had no internet access, no phone credit to phone France. She was very worried about what was happening, with “lots of tension” and accusations about: “things she would NEVER do”

In the beginning, Fleur wrote to her mother in positive terms but in the last six months her experience had changed. She was bored and the children were difficult to manage

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Danielle telephoned Fleur's mother on two occasions during the summer of 2017 and, in the first, complained that Fleur was lazy and would not do anything at home for her. She also said that Fleur was going out with dubious, older characters and described a man who was almost certainly the local shop owner. She claimed that Fleur would come home late and drunk.

Police were able to recover Facebook and text messaging between June 2016 and August 2017 in which she updated her mother:

August 2016 [Danielle] "won't let me go [home] until the pendant has returned ... why does she accuse me for no reason?"

December Danielle had accepted all her apologies and would pay the salary owed that could be home for Christmas

February 2017 Danielle needed Fleur to look after the children because she was so busy ... Fleur could be hired for modelling ... Danielle had no time to interview a replacement

August In response to a request, Fleur's mother deposited 40 Euros in her bank. Four days later, the recorded interrogations of Fleur began

In the second telephone conversation with Fleur's mother about this time, Danielle shared the allegation that Fleur had taken Child B to meet Luke and about the threat to shoot the family. She added that she had taken Fleur around the neighbourhood to identify the house where this incident occurred but Fleur could not do so. Danielle then said that she was going to keep Fleur until she had identified the house. Fleur's mother begged Danielle to let her daughter go, but she refused. Danielle made it clear that without the information she sought, Fleur would have to stay. Fleur could be heard crying in the background and her mother sent a series of desperate text messages to find what was wrong but heard nothing more.

The third source of evidence is the recording of Fleur's interrogations in 19 sessions amounting to more than 8 hours that ran over the six weeks from early August until mid-September and can be dated and timed. The interrogations were sometimes calm but more often than not, aggressive. The purpose of the interrogations was plainly to record Fleur making a confession, but what they would then have done with the recordings is not clear. They were dominating and intimidating Fleur throughout and she was threatened with imprisonment, rape and violence if she did not cooperate. Danielle kept demanding "the truth". These 'interviews', as the perpetrators called them, were an extreme exercise in control and fear.

There is a human source of evidence in the form of the ABE interviews with Child A that were viewed by the Jury. Child A said that Fleur was only allowed to go into the bedroom he, Child B and Fleur shared and sit at a desk and write notes. He added that for about two weeks, Fleur was not allowed to speak to anyone. As an example of the influence the perpetrators had over Child A, he characterised Fleur as "evil".

Child A went on to describe an incident which he had heard taking place in the bathroom. He said that he could hear the voices of both his mother and Pierre and could hear Fleur screaming and lots of splashing of water. He said that he kept on hearing Fleur go under the water and that his mother and Pierre would then say "breathe". Child A could see water flowing out of the bathroom. The following morning, Child A asked his mother why they were drowning Fleur and she said that they were not drowning her and added that: "Fleur didn't give me, like, a real answer".

Child A saw Fleur the next morning for the last time and was later told she had apparently left to return to France. There is timed video 'confession' evidence for that evening so it is likely Fleur

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was killed that night and her body concealed until the fire was started after the children left for school.

Key issues arising, conclusions and lessons to be learned from the review

Each IMR author was invited to conduct analysis of their respective agency's involvement, primarily with Danielle and Child A, also to provide examples of good practice and make recommendations for internal learning as well as for wider consideration. The Panel has debated these reports and included them in the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for this overview. The Panel were satisfied that the internal recommendations had been acted upon.

There is a substantial body of evidence from the review that Danielle had developed an obsession with Luke following the end of their relationship and the birth of their Child B in 2013. From April 2014 she embarked on a campaign to discredit and humiliate him through an accusation that he had committed a sexual assault by digital penetration on her son, Child A when aged 4, some three years earlier in 2011. It is possible, if not probable, that this campaign started when Luke ceased financial support to her and Child B.

This discredited, and probably bogus, allegation was frequently and repeatedly shared with agencies; then with the wider public through an on-line post naming Luke in December 2015 for which, with the benefit of legal advice, Danielle accepted a criminal caution for malicious communication. Undeterred, her imagination and inventiveness was boundless even to the last few weeks as Fleur was accused of taking the children (three months earlier) to meet Luke who had a gun and threatened to shoot them.

Danielle needed the unwitting cooperation of Child A to provide credence to the original allegation, and there is significant inference that she indoctrinated him with her fabricated story and schooled him over time, on the other frightening manifestations of Luke as his nemesis, thereby cruelly inflicting severe emotional abuse upon him. This had become the pattern of abuse to Child A, long before Fleur appeared on the scene in February 2016, employed under a private family arrangement, as nanny/au-pair to Children A and B.

There is also evidence of ‘Gaslighting’, a form of manipulation that seeks to sow the seeds of doubt in a targeted individual, in this case Fleur, hoping to make them question their own memory, perception and sanity. Using persistent denial, misdirection, contradiction and lying, it attempts to destabilise the target and undermine belief. The false accusation that Fleur had stolen a valuable pendant is but one example.

It was Fleur's first job and the first time away from her family in a strange country, while having to cope with learning a second language. Her passport was not recovered, so was probably impounded. She was assaulted by Danielle when a friend of hers was at the house and again, at least once, in the presence of Child A. The control and coercion on her life by Danielle even extended by proxy to her mother. With these factors alone, Fleur is accurately described as: a victim of modern slavery through domestic servitude. This review exposes a situation that nannies/au pairs are a particularly at risk group given the lack of regulation and specific safeguarding advice for them.

Not only did Danielle exercise control over Fleur, she was adept at manipulation of authorities to achieve her goals. Deception around her physical limitations, secured a doctor's letter and change

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of school. The medical notes relating to the alleged fall that caused the disability never did arrive. The dramas, such as the ambulance calls by Child A, the DIY store incident, the walking barefoot walking in traffic with Child B in her arms, can now be seen to be completely staged by her. Furthermore, as identified by her GP, Danielle was adept at ‘disguised compliance’. She viewed professional curiosity as something to be challenged; in doing so she was aggressive to officials and often threatened to complain to the higher level.

Their respective defence to the murder charge was to deny personal responsibility and infer the other was culpable, each claiming to be asleep at the time; yet each admitted perverting the course of justice by cremating Fleur’s body in the garden. The key eye-witness account from Child A that both were involved in the bath torture was sufficiently compelling for the Jury to find each guilty of murder. The final recorded video confession coerced from Fleur that she had indeed let Luke and two associates into the home in order to compromise Pierre sexually, marked the finale to the labyrinth of lies, elaborately constructed and sustained over more than four years, that had started with the false allegation of historic CSA by Luke on Child A.

The psychology and motivation for the murder of an innocent may be inexplicable. Danielle had caused mental health concerns from as early as 2008 when she and Child A were assessed over six weeks in a residential unit. There was no evidence of psychosis and the Consultant Psychiatrist could find no evidence to support a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder or Personality Disorder. This was before she had the relationship with Luke.

The next opportunity for mental health assessment occurred in April 2014 and was presented in the context of Child A’s recent allegation of CSA three years earlier that caused Danielle to have an acute stress reaction three days after his disclosure and be admitted to hospital. The initial psychiatric assessment noted that Danielle may have ‘delusional paranoia’. The concluding assessment before discharge from hospital confirmed the acute stress reaction and noted the belief that Luke was using black magic was either due to that stress reaction or may be part of a psychotic illness. Multiple follow-up visits by the HTT in the next two weeks did not identify any new conclusions and their support was ended by Danielle who expressed annoyance that her acute stress reaction had been treated as a mental health issue.

In July 2014, the episode where Danielle was found wandering in traffic with Child B in her arms was considered by police for their powers under the Mental Health Act, but not exercised as Danielle had calmed. WCS implemented a CPP as a result under the category of ‘Emotional Abuse’ which was later stepped down to CNP and then closed as there were no safety concerns. In October 2014, the GP has noted that Danielle showed no signs of psychiatric disorder. There is no further assistance available from IMRs regarding the state of Danielle’s mind.

There is substantive research available that relationship-based homicides are rarely spontaneous and the ‘[He] just snapped’ explanation which suggests an immediate proximal provocation is not supported. Instead, there is an ‘emotional journey to homicide’ that develops over time.

Schlesinger describes ‘catathymic homicides’ as occurring when:

There is a change in thinking whereby the offender comes to believe that [he] can resolve [his] inner conflict by committing an act of extreme violence against someone to whom [he] feels emotionally bonded

It is not suggested that Danielle had formed an emotional bond with Fleur in the conventional sense, rather, Fleur became the surrogate for Danielle’s engulfing emotional connection with Luke,

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the father of Child B. Danielle's behaviour toward him following the breakdown in their relationship is analogous to one definition of stalking: *any fixated and obsessive attention designed to make the victim fearful or distressed*

This recent study into stalking, '*The Homicide Triad*', examines the coincidence of three groups of characteristics, namely, the offender's emotional or psychological state, the presence of acknowledged high-risk markers and the triggers which create escalation. The organisation within the study of key characteristics relevant to homicide, has prompted speculation that Danielle:

- Psychologically had issues with challenge and rejection;
- Had increasingly exhibited the high-risk marker of versatility: vexatious litigation, criminal allegations and child contact battles;
- Which, following the triggers of rejection and humiliation, had escalated the resolve to complete her own 'emotional journey to homicide' by killing Fleur

The Court were told in mitigations by Danielle's barrister that, in May 2017, she had been diagnosed with depression and borderline personality disorder and that her actions were "entirely driven by her delusional and personality disorders". This left her with "irrational and completely overwhelming fear" that Fleur had been recruited by Luke. The Judge was not convinced and remarked, "I do not think for one moment you thought you were acting lawfully".

Recommendations from the review

This joint review of an extraordinary and unpredictable homicide, committed within a very complex family setting, following quite extensive engagement with safeguarding agencies, has identified strategic learning points to draw together the learning from agency IMRs.

1. Guidance is required to ensure that the employment of nannies/au-pairs is safe for them as employees, the children in their care and their employers and to minimise the risk of modern slavery by domestic servitude
2. Improve public awareness that domestic abuse does not just involve family, it can be anyone in the household, and how to report concerns and access advice
3. Expand and reinforce Level 3 Child Safeguarding awareness training on the voice of the child
4. Reinforce the need for healthy scepticism, an open mind and, where necessary, an investigative mindset when dealing with complex families who have multiple vulnerability factors

The following recommendations have been identified by the Panel to address these learning points and an action plan has been constructed. The first is a national recommendation, followed by recommendations to be implemented in the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Richmond:

1. Department for Education to review the current guidance regarding employment of nannies/ au-pairs that protects them, children who may be in their care and their employers to reduce the risk of Modern Domestic Slavery through Domestic Servitude
2. Community Safety Partnership is to use the learning of this review to raise awareness of the risks of Modern Day Slavery through Domestic Servitude
3. To implement a robust awareness raising campaign and plan within the borough's proposed new VAWG Strategy is to be overseen by a specific sub-group involving statutory stakeholders, schools and NGO's
4. To ensure that the 'voice of the child' and the learning from this review is used to reinforce Level 3 Child Safeguarding Awareness Training for front line Professionals across the Partnership

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5. To ensure that learning in respect of 'Professional Curiosity' from local and national SCR's and DHR's is cascaded to front line professionals and those bodies

Bill Griffiths CBE BEM QPM

2 October 2020