

Police investigation on elderly deaths to be vindicated

Contributed by John Walsh
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A review of the deaths of five elderly couples across the north west – one case in Kendal – is expected to confirm the original police findings.

It was originally concluded that they were murder-suicides in which no third party was involved before a surprise report claimed the deaths could be the work of a serial killer.

That report was written by a senior Cheshire Police coroners' officer and suggested the deaths could have been the work of a third party rather than the husband killing his partner and then himself.

After the Sunday Times published details of the report, the three police forces concerned – including Cumbria – began reviews of each case on their patch.

These are not re-investigations of the original cases but paper exercises where officers are going through every line of the 179-page report to check them against the original police reports presented at inquests into the deaths.

The Manchester Evening News understands senior detectives who have read the report believe the 'murder-suicide' conclusions of the original investigations will be vindicated.

The report names a potential suspect who, it is understood, is currently behind bars serving a long jail sentence.

It calls on the National Crime Agency and Interpol to review cases in Britain and Europe to determine whether there are more related murders.

Written by Stephanie Davies, not a police officer but a member of civilian staff for Cheshire Police who had been working as senior coroner's officer, it is supported by evidence from her predecessor from the time of the first deaths and a US-based crime-scene analysis expert.

The report points to a 'number of inconsistencies which do not corroborate the original manner of death of being murder-suicide'.

Martin Bottomley, head of the cold case unit of Greater Manchester Police, told the Manchester paper: "At the request of the relevant coroners of south Manchester and the city of Manchester, we are reviewing coronial files in the context of the report that the lady from Cheshire has written."

One of the five killings occurred in Kendal in February 2011 when the deaths of Stanley and Peggie Wilson, who were found dead in their home, had been officially recorded as a murder-suicide.