

A judge whose affair with a married woman drove her jealous husband to murder is facing the prospect of a disciplinary inquiry into his behaviour. James Muir-Little, 45, cheated on his wife with Joanne Hall, 31, after meeting her through an Internet site for 'swingers'.

Mrs Hall's husband Gavin is beginning a life sentence for murder after he cold-bloodedly killed the couple's three-year-old daughter Amelia to punish his wife for the affair.

Hospital radiographer Hall, 33, smothered and strangled Amelia - known as Millie - after giving her anti-depressant pills to make her drowsy.

He then texted his wife, who was asleep upstairs with the couple's younger daughter Lucy, to say he had taken Millie's life as revenge for her 'deceit'.

He also texted Mr Muir-Little to make it clear he was also to blame, then tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide by cutting his wrists. His wife found what was described as "a scene of horror" when she awoke the next morning.

Yesterday Hall trembled and wept in the dock at Northampton Crown Court as a jury unanimously convicted him of murder, rejecting his claims that he was suffering from an "abnormality of mind" after reading "extraordinarily sexually explicit" e-mail exchanges between his wife and Mr Muir-Little.

Hall's estranged wife Joanne, who is in the process of divorcing him, raised a slight smile as the verdict was delivered.

Judge Charles Wide QC sentenced Hall, of Irchester, Northants, to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 15 years.

He told Hall: "It has been said, and it is true, that you will have to live for the rest of your life with what you did."

Mr Muir-Little, who lives near Faversham, Kent, with his wife Jane and two daughters, met Mrs Hall twice for sex in hotels after they swapped naked pictures of each other online and exchanged e-mails in which Mrs Hall said she would be a "dirty little slut" for him.

Hall discovered his wife's affair in October last year but was reassured by her that the fling was over.

He later discovered text messages proving she was still in touch with Mr Muir-Little and knew she was planning to move into rented accommodation with her daughters.

In the early hours of November 29 last year Hall woke Millie, dressed her in her favourite nightdress and gave her pills to make her sleepy, then held a rag soaked in chloroform over her mouth to suffocate her. He then arranged her body under a duvet with her teddy.

Mr Muir-Little, a solicitor specialising in divorce law, qualified as a deputy district judge, sitting in county courts on the south-east circuit, on the day after Millie's murder.

Yesterday a spokesman for the Office for Judicial Complaints said an investigation into Mr Muir-Little's behaviour would be considered if a complaint was made about him or if the Lord Chancellor or Lord Chief Justice saw fit to mount their own investigation.

However, such action remains confidential unless and until a judge is found guilty of bringing the profession into disrepute, and the OJC could not confirm whether Mr Muir-Little was under investigation.

If an inquiry is launched, Mr Muir-Little would become the third judge in recent weeks to come under investigation over their private life.

Last month the Department for Constitutional Affairs announced that it was investigating two

immigration judges who employed an illegal immigrant as a cleaner.

Brazilian Roselane Driza was jailed last month for blackmailing a female judge, known as 'Judge J' who she claimed had been caught on video snorting cocaine. She was also found guilty of stealing two home-made sex tapes from her former lover Judge Mohammed Ilyas Khan, who was also sleeping with Judge J.

The Law Society, which regulates solicitors, said it had no plans to investigate Mr Muir-Little, as the affair was "part of his private life".

Yesterday Joanne Hall, a cardiac nurse who has reverted to her maiden name of Rainsley, paid tribute to her "beautiful little girl".

She said: "My children, Millie and Lucy, were our pride and the love and joy of our lives. It is incomprehensible to us as to how anyone under such circumstances could deliberately take away such a beautiful little girl as Millie.

"Millie will always be remembered as a happy, lively and beautiful little girl and I am proud to have been her mum.

"Assisted by my family, as always, my focus now will be to devote attention to Lucy who has mercifully survived this ordeal. It will be my intention to ensure that she carries only the positive memories that we all share of Millie.

"With the huge cloud of the trial over we will hopefully be able to bring back to the forefront of our minds the wonderful times Millie brought us."

As a lasting tribute to her daughter, Mrs Hall said a cherry blossom tree would now be planted in their village in her memory.