

Mother kills herself and son, 5, with a barbecue

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A mother killed herself and her young son while suffering from psychotic delusions caused by her regular use of cannabis.

Anjun Cavanagh, who smoked two or three joints every night, locked herself and five-year-old Dylan in a sealed bedroom where she lit a disposable barbecue.

The pair were slowly poisoned by carbon monoxide fumes as they lay surrounded by the boy's favourite toys.

An inquest revealed that 30-year-old Miss Cavanagh had become convinced her son was being abused by his father as well as fantasising that she had met Moors murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley and believing a 'device' had been hidden in household electrical items to give her shocks.

Anjun Cavanagh killed herself and her son Dylan with the help of a disposable barbecue

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Police found no evidence to press charges against the father and a coroner said he feared a 'psychotic illness characterised by a complex delusional system' had been brought on by her drug abuse.

'There's a considerable body of medical evidence in the background which indicates that cannabis use can either cause or trigger mental illness,' said Nigel Meadows.

The case is the latest to highlight the link between increasingly highstrength varieties of cannabis and conditions such as schizophrenia, fuelling calls for Labour's downgrading of the drug to Class C to be reversed.

Police found the bodies of Miss Cavanagh and Dylan at her home in Blackley, Manchester, in June last year.

Anjun Cavanagh made abuse allegations against Paul Buckley, the boy's father

The hearing in Manchester was told that police had interviewed Dylan's father Paul Buckley, who was separated from Miss Cavanagh, after she made the abuse allegations, but there was no evidence for him to be prosecuted.

Mr Buckley said their six-year relationship had been 'volatile' and that she had started drinking heavily and smoking 'two or three' cannabis cigarettes nightly.

He had seen her a fortnight before her death.

"She kept crying all the time, writing things down. She was acting very strange - not the person I knew."

Miss Cavanagh's father, Philip, claimed that the police investigation into the abuse allegations had not been thorough, adding: "She wasn't getting any help. It was her only way out."

But Detective Sergeant David Turner said her claims had been fully examined and Mr Buckley - who had co-operated fully with the inquiry - had been interviewed at length.

Mr Buckley told the hearing: "I never touched my son."

Psychiatrist Dr Linda Montague studied notes left by Miss Cavanagh and concluded that she had become preoccupied by "the issue of sexual abuse" and "probably believed she was sparing both of them considerable pain and suffering".

Mr Meadows recorded a verdict that Dylan had been unlawfully killed and that his mother took her own life.

He added that what she perceived as harm to Dylan "was clearly something in her own mind".