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Scotland's Most Chilling Child Murder Cases Reveal Disturbing Familial Patterns

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A recent analysis of high-profile child murder cases in Scotland has revealed a concerning pattern involving step-parents or non-biological guardians as primary perpetrators. Notable cases such as that of Rachel Trelfa and Nyomi Fee, who were convicted of killing two-year-old Liam Fee in 2014, have reignited debate about familial violence and how warning signs can often go unnoticed.

Professor David Wilson, a criminologist and former prison governor, has studied these cases closely and highlights a disturbing trend in intra-familial abuse. He notes that violence frequently stems from non-genetic adults within the home, often driven by a desire to remove reminders of a partner's previous relationship. In the case of Liam Fee,

the child suffered prolonged physical and emotional abuse before his death, underscoring the dangerous dynamics that can exist behind closed doors.

This modern pattern contrasts with historical figures such as Peter Manuel, one of Scotland's most notorious serial killers, who was executed in 1958 for seven random murders. While Manuel's crimes were not family-based, today's cases show a shift toward violence perpetrated within the home, with vulnerable children often caught in the middle.

Research from the American Psychological Association (APA), published in 2019, supports these findings. Their study on family annihilation cases in the United States found that 70 percent of child victims were killed by non-biological parents or guardians. The motives often included jealousy, resentment, and a desire for control, as exemplified in the 2020 murder of a child by Lukasz Czapla. The case revealed how personal grievances and emotional instability can culminate in tragic outcomes for children.

These incidents have prompted renewed calls for vigilance among social services, educators, and medical professionals. Experts stress the importance of recognizing behavioral red flags in caregivers and ensuring that child protection protocols are followed rigorously, particularly when new partners are introduced into a child's life.

While the legal system continues to prosecute these crimes, the broader challenge remains prevention. Understanding the psychological and relational factors that lead to such violence is critical to reducing the risk to vulnerable children across the United Kingdom.