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# Gilfoyle suicide letter genuine, experts say

**Dominic Kennedy, Investigations Editor**

One of the world's leading suicide experts has said that a farewell note written by Paula Gilfoyle before she was found dead appears to be genuine, undermining one of the key elements of the case against Eddie Gilfoyle.

Police and prosecutors suggested that Gilfoyle dictated the note to his wife, falsely claiming that he needed it for a course about suicides in his job as a hospital porter.

Brian Mishara, president of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, was provided by *The Times* with a copy of the message written in Mrs Gilfoyle's looping feminine hand. "This is certainly an odd case," Professor Mishara said. "After looking at the suicide note and showing it to a dozen suicide researchers, including two others who have read hundreds of suicide notes, the note appears to be genuine.

"If it was dictated by someone else, the person would have had to have done some research on what suicide notes are like and been really good at concocting a false note. There are no indications that this is a false note."



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The two-page note begins: "Dear Eddie, I've decided to put an end to everything and in doing so ended a chapter in my life that I can't face up to any longer. I don't want to have this baby that I'm carrying..." She continues: "Don't blame yourself Eddie, it's not your fault... I just hope you can rebuild everything and realise your hopes and dreams.

She ends: "Goodnight and God bless, love Paula."

Professor Mishara is director of the Centre for Research and Intervention on Suicide and Euthanasia. A psychology professor at the University of Quebec, in Montreal, he is invited each September to open World Suicide Prevention Day at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Pregnancy usually acts as a protection against suicide, he said, but Mrs Gilfoyle may have been at risk because of her traumatic past and pressures on her before she was found hanged. She had had anorexia diagnosed at 15. Her GP treated her with Valium at 16 when her former boyfriend raped and murdered a teenage girl, strangling the victim with his belt. It is known that Mrs Gilfoyle had money problems and that a fortnight before she died she learnt that a friend's husband had committed suicide.

"The fact that there does not seem to be any physical evidence, based on the medical examination, that indicates a struggle would suggest that she hanged herself,"

Professor Mishara said. "A diagnosis of anorexia is associated with increased suicide risk and exposure to a situation where there was a rape and murder is certainly the type of trauma that can be unsettling."

Professor Mishara's conclusions reinforce those of David Canter, the criminal profiler, who drew on research into the difference between genuine and concocted suicide notes to declare in *The Times* last year that Mrs Gilfoyle was the sole author of hers. Positive emotion is expressed, often through terms of endearment. She wrote: "I loved you in my own way... Tell them that I loved them."

There is a tendency to express the reasons for suicide as external to the person, out of their control: "I can't face up to [this chapter in my life] any longer... this is just too much... I can't face up to my problems anymore... I can't run anymore... I can't change or alter what I've done."

Genuine letters are longer than simulated ones and hers was of average length for a real letter. "The bulk of the letter is an apology. Yet the intensity of emotion and internal repetition that produces the length of the letter is in accordance with the commitment to expressing things as fully as possible that would come from a genuine letter," Professor Canter said.

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