

# Family of Benwell dad who stabbed his partner to death say legal highs turned him into a killer

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Manslaughter victim Zaneta Balazova with killer Pavel Cina

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The family of a dad who stabbed his partner to death in front of their two children say legal highs turned him into a killer.

Parvel Cina knifed Zaneta Balazova 80 times at the family home in Benwell while his two young kids - at the time aged just seven and five - watched on.

A neighbour later told police he heard the youngsters screaming as the brutal killing happened.

Cina, 27, was severely mentally unwell at the time he launched the vicious attack on 23-year-old Zaneta with a court hearing he has severe schizophrenia and presents a risk of causing serious harm to the public.

He pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and was sent to a secure hospital.

Now Cina's dad Parvel Snr, 54, has claimed his son's use of so-called legal highs turned him into a killer.

He said: "He used to be a quiet boy, normal and looked after his family. He was very loving, he loved his kids and was very friendly. It was all good until he started changing.

"When he lived back in the Czech Republic he had never used legal highs but he fell in with people who used them over here and started using them himself. They changed him and he got worse and worse.

"He fell out with his best friend from home who he had known since he was a toddler. Parvel started getting paranoid and accused him of having an affair with his girlfriend. He started to have hallucinations saying he had seen weird things.

"We blame legal highs for what happened. Before he started smoking them he was fine - then he changed. Twenty five years of being normal but as soon as he started smoking he changed."

The couple moved to the West End of Newcastle in May 2013.

At the start of 2015 Cina began beating her and after showing signs of paranoia, was taken to the RVI who advised him to seek psychological help.

Newcastle Crown Court heard Cina started believing Zaneta was the devil and was eating human brains.

On April 2 2015, after a court appearance for assaulting Zaneta, Cina went around to her house at around 10pm and committed the killing.

Now, as the family come to terms with the death, Cina Snr revealed the couple's children ask about their dad.

He said: "We lost our son. We miss him so much. The kids always ask for their dad, what he looks like and how he is doing. We just tell them he is in hospital."

A post mortem revealed Zaneta had sustained 80 knife injuries, including stabs, slashes and scratches.

Two wounds would have been fatal, including one which penetrated her heart and one which cut her jugular vein.

Paul Cross, defending Cina in court, said: "It's clearly a tragic, tragic case."