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# Evicted woman drowned at sea

### VICTIM OF RENT ARREARS TRIED TO MAKE LAST CALL TO HER NEIGHBOUR

BY KIRSTY PURNELL  
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A foster carer who was found drowned at sea after being evicted for rent arrears tried to make a last call for help, a neighbour has revealed.

Margaret Blenman, of Romanfield Road in Tulse Hill, tried to call the neighbour the night before her body was pulled from the sea in Brighton.

The neighbour called Ms Blenman, 48, straight back but the phone had

been switched off. She never heard from her again.

Ms Blenman's body was found by fishermen just south of Brighton Marina the following morning on November 19.

The coroner recorded an open verdict as to the cause of death.

It is understood that Ms Blenman fell into significant rent arrears with housing provider Optivo when she stopped fostering in 2014 because of

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### Professor Green supports homelessness charity

Rapper Professor Green took a trip to South London to show support for homelessness charity 999 Club.

Professor Green met users and volunteers at the 999 Club in Deptford which provides advice, shelter, health checks and activities for homeless people in Lewisham and across South London.

He said: "It's inspiring to see a charity like the 999 Club preventing the social injustice of homelessness.

"Homelessness is a cause close to my heart."

● See page 27 for the full story

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# Counter-terrorism police investigate 'unexplained death'

Counter-terrorism police are investigating the death of a Russian who was found with "strangulation marks" in his South London home.

Nikolai Glushkov, 68, was found dead on Monday, in his home in Clarence Avenue New Malden by his daughter Natalia.

The ex-Russian national was a close friend of Boris Beresovsky, an outspoken critic of President Vladimir Putin, who was found hanged at his home in Berkshire in 2013.

Mr Glushkov, who fled from Russia to the UK in 2006, was granted asylum in 2010 after a Moscow court sentenced him to a two-year suspended sentence for fraud for his involvement

in the airline company Aeroflot.

In March 2017, he was sentenced in absentia in Russia to eight years in prison and was given a 1million Ruble fine for allegedly defrauding the airline firm of \$122million when he was director in the 1990s.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: "The death is currently being treated as unexplained.

"At this stage the Met Police Counter Terrorism Command is leading the investigation as a precaution because of associations that the man is believed to have had.

"There is no evidence to suggest a link to the incident in Salisbury."



Police investigate Nikolai Glushkov's death in Clarence Avenue, New Malden

# Woman is found dead at sea

**FROM FRONT**

bedroom tax on her spare room.

She was evicted from her property on Friday, November 17, two days before she was found dead.

Optivo stressed that eviction is a last resort but said that it was looking for any lessons that can be learnt from Ms Blenman's case.

Ms Blenman's neighbour, who does not want to be identified, told the *South London Press* that she had known Ms Blenman for about nine years.

She said: "She used to pop in for a drink and chat sometimes. My kids and her (foster) kids were the same age.

"After she stopped fostering she went downhill. She hadn't been herself for years.

She never came out – she'd just do all her shopping online and pop to the shop to buy fags. She was private but still this was a big shock – I had no idea about the debt.

"It is so sad to know that she couldn't come to one of us."

Ms Blenman was evicted on the morning of Friday, November 17 and she is believed to have left the property suddenly.

The neighbour found out that evening what had happened and knew immediately something was not right.

She said: "She knew what shifts we worked and when we would have been here. It was weird that she didn't wait for us or come back or even ring."

"But she had kept herself to herself more and more. She was a lovely neighbour but you could see she was down."

The phone call that the neighbour had on the night of Saturday, November 18 was the first contact she had had with Ms Blenman for a week. "She came through as call waiting when I was on the phone so I got off the phone and tried to ring straight back but there was no

answer," said the neighbour. I texted her and said 'hope you're OK' but I didn't get a delivery report. I rang again and the phone was off.

"It was weird. It was like I knew. I knew there was something wrong. I kind of felt it."

The next morning the police turned up at Romanfield Road to trace next of kin for Ms Blenman. The neighbour was only able to help thanks to an indirect link at her own work.

"The only thing found on her body was a Morrisons card so the police rang the store to trace it and it came back with our address," she said.

"The police came here and asked if I knew her. They were asking me about what tattoos she had because they were trying to identify the body.

"I knew but my mind went completely blank. I was so shocked."

The neighbour said police struggled to trace next of kin so she had to contact her manager at her place of work to get contact information for a family member she knew.

"It's been hard," she said. "I feel like I've been really involved with this – helping the police and helping tell the family."

Housing provider Optivo said: "This is a tragic case and our sincere sympathies remain with the family of Margaret Blenman.

"We always support residents who are affected by bedroom tax and other aspects of welfare reform and have a close relationship with a number of partner organisations to help those in financial difficulty.

"Evictions are always a last resort and we offer comprehensive assistance to residents to help avoid this happening. We are looking at any lessons which can be learnt from this case. We remain in contact with the family of Ms Blenman and will continue to offer our support to them at this difficult time."

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