

Background

- Maria Stubbings, from Chelmsford, Essex, was found dead in her home on 19 December 2008. Marc Chivers, 42, of Rochford was found guilty of her murder in December 2009 and was sentenced to 'whole life' imprisonment.
- Chivers had killed another woman in 1992 in Germany. He was arrested in France in 1992 and was imprisoned in 1993 in Germany. On his release in January 2008 he was deported to the UK.

Detail

- Chivers met Maria in early 2008 while she was walking her dog. Soon after their relationship began he became violent towards her.
- Chivers was arrested and remanded in custody for seriously assaulting Maria on 16 July 2008. He was given a 4-month jail sentence on 13 October 2008 but released immediately given his time spent on remand. Before Chivers was released from prison, Essex police disabled an alarm in Maria's home. On his release, no conditions were placed on Chivers and no steps were taken by Essex police to provide protection for Maria. MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) concluded Chivers did not fall within their remit.
- On 3 December 2008, Maria's friend Claire Oliver contacted the police to express concern that Chivers may have assaulted Maria again. No action was taken in response to her call. The IPCC subsequently formally upheld Ms Oliver's complaint against Essex Police in relation to their inaction.
- Maria contacted the police on 11 December 2008 asking about a restraining order, saying Chivers was hanging around her home and had burgled it while she was out, and that she was concerned for her safety. She contacted police again, twice, on 12 December.
- On 12 December a police officer called Maria to say they had found Chivers with her son in his car. She was very upset. They drove her son home and she told them again that she had reported a burglary to the police.
- On 13 December officers contacted Maria. She sounded strange on the phone and the officer believed that Chivers might be with her, so they decided to visit her.

Police attended her home and she did not let them in the house. They asked her to sign their notebook to say she didn't want to proceed with the matter, even though they believed Chivers might be there in the house at the time, and closed the case. This was the last time the police saw her alive.

- Maria's son is believed to have been in the house after her murder with his mother's undiscovered body and her killer. Chivers is reported to have followed him around to ensure he did not discover the body.

- On 17 December, a police officer failed to attend the house to check on Maria after being instructed to do so.
- An officer from the Domestic Violence Unit became concerned for Maria when she saw Maria's calls about Chivers on the police log. Officers were instructed to attend her home. On 18 December, Marc Chivers answered the door and told them that Maria was away. They took no steps against Chivers and did not search the property. Instead they left a calling card and asked Chivers to inform Maria that they had called.
- Police attended again on 19 December, this time with explicit instructions to arrest Chivers and search the property. They searched the property and found her body in the downstairs bathroom. She had been strangled with a dog lead. They arrested Chivers.
- The IPCC report concludes that:
 - "When Marc Chivers entered into a relationship with Maria Stubbings, she and her son were immediately at serious risk of significant harm";
 - "Essex police missed a large number of opportunities to proactively safeguard Ms Stubbings and her son";
 - Three officers, a constable, a sergeant and an inspector, should face disciplinary action for their failings in the events leading up to Maria's murder;
 - "However, the failings of Essex police to protect Ms Stubbings and her son are much wider and deeper than the inactions of these three officers".