

## **UK Paramedic Honoured for Response to Murder Scene**

A paramedic who was one of the first on the scene after Theresa Riggi killed her three children has spoken of the moment he found their bodies.

Craig Gray was called after reports of multiple casualties following an explosion at the Slateford town house along with colleagues Donna Swadzba and Elaine Wilson. Despite a raging fire and the risk of a second gas explosion, the trio went into the building to try to save the youngsters.

Their actions have now been recognised by the Scottish Ambulance Service, which has handed them a top award at their first ceremony of its kind in Edinburgh.

It said the crew showed "the highest level of commitment" during the emergency in August last year, despite obvious risks to their own safety. Mr Gray told the Evening News how the decision to go in had to be made in a split second.

The Tollcross man said: "We were the very first on the scene for a good five or ten minutes and we had a decision to make. "It went against all the health and safety procedures, but we knew there may have been multiple victims and it would have been very difficult to stand by and watch. "We didn't have time to think, we just had to go in. There were three floors to climb and we had to take it a flight at a time, making a decision as we went if it was safe to go in. "We knew there could have been a second explosion. "Unfortunately when we got into the room and saw the casualties there was nothing we could do to help them."

Riggi, 47, is now serving a 16-year sentence after stabbing to death her eight-year-old twins, Austin and Luke, and her five-year-old daughter, Cecilia, before setting a fire. Ms Swadzba and Ms Wilson, who are emergency medical technicians, arrived just one minute ahead of Mr Gray, and treated Riggi outside the property. Mr Gray added: "Of course with it being so high profile it can be difficult to deal with in the aftermath, it takes a long time to come to terms with but that's part of the job. "We're often on the scene of emergencies first and have to make decisions there and then, but of course this one sticks in the mind.

"At the point of going in, all the information we had was that there had been a gas explosion, there may be another one, and there could be multiple casualties."

It is not the first high-profile incident Mr Gray has been involved in. In 1999 he was shot at with a cross-bow as he attended an emergency at a Granton block of flats.

The bolt missed him, but the incident made news across the whole UK.

And he said of his co-award winners: "I have to give my heartfelt praise to Donna and Elaine for the work they did that day."

Pauline Howie, chief executive of the ambulance service, said: "The professionalism and commitment of all our staff, especially when faced with the most challenging situations, is second to none. These awards recognise some fantastic examples of that high level of dedication and the recipients should be very proud of their achievements. "They exemplify the Scottish Ambulance Service's ethos of putting the patient first."