

**MEDIA EXERCISE - CANDIDATE BRIEFING**

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes | **Interview time:** 10 minutes

**Scenario**

It's Monday 22nd April 2024. Your first interview in post with a national outlet will be with BBC Radio 4's Today programme this morning. The date was agreed several weeks ago to tie in with the launch today of National Stalking Awareness Week 2024, since it was felt that this would be a good opportunity to:

- show support for the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, a key partner of North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (NYPFCC)
- highlight NYP's work to tackle violence against women and girls, most recently through its award-winning work on Project Shield<sup>1</sup>
- help raise awareness of the NYPFCC's recent anti-stalking campaign 'JustAKiss', the result of a successful funding bid to the Home Office Safer Streets 4 Fund.

Unfortunately, however, the timing of the interview could not be more challenging. Over the last week, the force has been the focus of unrelenting media interest in a missing person investigation that escalated into a critical incident, culminating in the murder of the young woman concerned and the death of the murder suspect. Intense scrutiny, debate and discussion about the investigation has dominated the headlines, and media have been camped outside the force headquarters for a week. New (and often inaccurate) criticisms of the force's handling of the case seem to be emerging with each passing day. Most notably, the headlines in yesterday's Sunday papers make particularly difficult reading, with allegations of incompetence, racism and 'institutional antipathy' towards violence against women and girls made against the force. You've spent the weekend deep in discussion with the SIO, Det Supt Eric Baxter, to ensure that you are fully appraised of all the facts of the case. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Through [Project Shield](#), NYP developed a ground-breaking new approach bringing together police, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, Independent Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS), technology company, CGI, and Edge Hill University, to launch a Domestic Abuse Non-Molestation Order Pilot. This enables vital information about the existence and conditions of victims' non-molestation orders that had been granted by the courts to be easily accessible to safeguarding professionals and police officers.

Fri 12/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At 16:00hrs 19-year-old Hamida Asif, a resident of Stokesley and a student nurse at the James Cook Hospital in Middlesbrough, submits an online report alleging that a man she knows is stalking her.</li> <li>• At 18:00hrs, officers call Hamida to take more details.</li> <li>• The man concerned is 28-year-old Steven Conway, an IT consultant who also lived in Stokesley and had previously been working as a contractor at the same hospital. Hamida explains that he had turned up in the hospital car park as she left work that afternoon; this was the fourth time in a fortnight that she had seen him loitering nearby and she was beginning to fear for her safety. In the first incident, which was near her home, he had approached Hamida and tried to speak to her, which she had ignored. On each subsequent occasion, she said, he had just stared at her from a distance. This time Hamida had called her older sister Maryam, a lawyer, who had persuaded her to report him to police.</li> <li>• Initial checks on Conway by the call handler did not reveal any history of contact with police.</li> <li>• Hamida was told that officers would visit her the next day, Saturday, to talk to her in person.</li> </ul>
Sat 13/4/24	<p>Due to several officers off sick and the need to respond to a spate of vehicle thefts in Great Broughton overnight on Friday, the visit to Hamida did not take place and is rescheduled for the following day.</p>
Sun 14/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers arriving at Hamida's house shortly before 11am on Sunday morning find no reply.</li> <li>• On checking the rear of the property, they discover a broken window and the back door slightly ajar. They search the house but find no trace of Hamida. Her coat and purse are there but her mobile phone appears to be missing.</li> <li>• Hamida is immediately classified as a High-Risk Missing Person and a major investigation initiated.</li> <li>• Officers visit the home of Steven Conway, who was not present. His car was also found to be missing.</li> <li>• Hamida's family tell police that her disappearance is unprecedented and are now extremely concerned for her wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Mon 15/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamida does not return overnight.</li> <li>• The team traces and interviews Conway's ex-girlfriend, Rhona Williams. Rhona tells police that the reason they broke up is because Conway's behaviour had become increasingly erratic and often unpleasant: the final straw in their relationship was when she found him putting a plastic bag over her cat's head in an apparent attempt to suffocate the animal.</li> <li>• Cell site analysis of Hamida's mobile phone establishes that while it was at her house at 11pm on Saturday night, by 2am on Sunday morning it was near the village of Goathland, in the North York Moors. No further data is available after this time.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A decision is made not to share the information about Goathland with Hamida's family until initial checks into potential links between Conway and that area have been conducted.</li> <li>• A media appeal asking the public for help is issued via social media and press release, which includes an appeal for IT consultant Steven Conway to come forward 'as he may hold vital information for the investigation team'</li> </ul>
Tues 16/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers working through the night identify CCTV footage of Conway's car captured in two locations.</li> <li>• The first clip shows the car heading into the North York Moors at 23:30hrs on 13/4/24 with Hamida just about visible in the passenger seat.</li> <li>• The second clip captures the car about 40 miles east of the first location at 05:40hrs on 14/4/24, travelling in the direction of Scarborough. It is not possible to see whether Hamida is in the car at this point.</li> <li>• A small team of officers deployed on the outskirts of Goathland to conduct initial searches in the area have begun to attract interest. At 16:00hrs, a journalist calls NYP press office to ask: <i>"Is the police presence on the North York Moors connected to the disappearance of Hamida Asif?"</i></li> <li>• At the same time, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) assigned to the Asif family reports that the family have just been asked the same question by a journalist and are disappointed that the police appear to have been hiding important developments from the family, who are observant Muslims.</li> <li>• Other journalists have already tracked down Rhona Williams via Conway's Facebook profile. Williams has given an interview to Sky News in which she talks about Conway's previous attempted cruelty to her cat; in the interview she said that she had called the police about this at the time but was told that it wasn't a police matter and that they hadn't even bothered to record Conway's name.</li> <li>• A further press briefing is held at 16:00hrs. The SIO appeals for public assistance in helping to locate Hamida, saying that the force is very concerned for her safety. He adds that they have reason to believe that she and Conway may be in the Scarborough area but does not elaborate.</li> </ul>
Weds 17/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At first light, a body is spotted floating in the water next to Scarborough Pier by a man fishing for crabs. It is quickly confirmed to be that of Steven Conway. Police announce the discovery, followed by that of Conway's car nearby. There is no sign of Hamida.</li> <li>• Media interest is now unprecedented, with camera crews from across the country descending on Scarborough as well as Goathland.</li> </ul>

Thurs 18/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cadaver dogs deployed near Goathland signal what turns out to be a shallow grave. Hamida's body is discovered, with a carrier bag tied tightly around her head.</li> <li>• Hamida's distraught family are informed. In a statement to media gathered outside their house, Hamida's sister says that she and her parents firmly believe that Hamida's death could have been prevented if only police had acted sooner to address her fears about Conway, saying that she and her parents believed that Islamophobia had hampered the investigation from the beginning.</li> </ul>
19/4/24 to 21/4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYP submits a formal request to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), asking it to conduct a full review of its investigation.</li> <li>• In a BBC interview, former Scotland Yard detective Rick Roman says it appears that opportunities may have been missed to apprehend Conway at an earlier stage.</li> <li>• A former leader of HMICFRS has told the Sunday Times that a critical incident should have been declared earlier.</li> <li>• Woman's rights activist and member of the North Yorkshire Police IAG, Katrina Campbell, has expressed her 'heart-wrenching disappointment that, yet again, a young woman who put her trust in the police appears to have been catastrophically let down', insisting that policing leaders should be held to account for 'institutional antipathy' relating to violence against women and girls.</li> </ul>

Prepare for the interview.