

Question and Answer

Will Suffolk Police be seeking to review the previous investigation into the attempted abduction of Emily Doherty and the murder of Victoria Hall in 1999.

We note the comments made by Mr Justice Bennathan and will further review. We are grateful for the commendations he has given to the current investigation team.

Could you have stopped the murders of the 5 women in Ipswich in 2006 had you taken the attempted kidnap the night before Victoria was murdered more seriously?

It is impossible to say, however we are now in a position of being in possession of more information, some from 1999 and other information more recently and, specifically, forensic evidence that was not available at the time. We now have a much more compelling body of evidence that allowed us to secure a charge and has resulted in the guilty pleas.

This line of enquiry relating to the attempted kidnap could have been more prominent in the original investigation. However, this was an incredibly large, complex and challenging investigation that, at the time, was the largest in the constabulary's history.

Whilst Steve Wright's name featured in the initial investigation around this incident, he was on a long list of names in 1999. There was also a patchwork of circumstantial evidence all dependent upon each other and, significantly, the forensic advances that have been made since then have identified DNA evidence that was not available in 1999. This DNA evidence has allowed us to draw together the circumstantial evidence and has led to Steve Wright's guilty plea.

Why wasn't more credence given to the attempted kidnap in the original enquiry?

This line of enquiry could have been more prominent in the original investigation.

In the days after the report, further information was obtained in detail and shared with the investigation team.

The Constabulary is very sorry that the victim was disappointed by the initial response. The ordeal she suffered, the fear and the report she made has contributed to the overall evidence and the constabularies ability to bring Wright before the court and to secure the first admission of guilt.

In the context of the 1999 investigation, it's important to say, there were two early arrests made during this original investigation. This would have no doubt directed significant resources and focus to ensure that they were fully investigated.

The enquiry moved on to another suspect who was ultimately charged and led to a trial and an acquittal, and this also saw significant enquiries and resources focussed around that person. The attempted kidnap the night before did not feature in that prosecution and was not revisited as a main line of enquiry.

It was not until 2018 when the re-investigation was launched, that more focus was placed on the attempted kidnap incident. This circumstantial evidence, and the greater knowledge we had around Steve Wright at this time, subsequently led to the case presented at court and the guilty pleas received.

Was the original investigation flawed?

The appropriate structure, resources and support were in place for this investigation in 1999. This would be much the same as a murder investigation now. What should be noted, however, is that this was, at the time, the largest investigation ever conducted by Suffolk police. There was significant pressure and demand on those involved. We also now know that Steve Wright did everything he could to avoid detection. He drove Victoria some 25 miles away from Felixstowe in the hope that she

would never be found, or if she was it would not be connected easily to Felixstowe. He also disposed of her clothing before he sold his vehicle, changed his phone and fled to Thailand.

It should also be noted that, whilst there was circumstantial evidence connecting Steve Wright to the kidnap and subsequent murder of Victoria, it was the advances in DNA evidence that pulled this altogether to secure a charge. This was not available to the original investigation team in 1999.

What other murders may he be responsible for?

After his conviction in 2008 for the five murders, the joint Norfolk and Suffolk Major Investigation Team carried out extensive enquiries into Wright's activities.

He has been a consideration in several unsolved case reviews across both Norfolk and Suffolk and we remain open to any credible new information, as was the case in the Victoria Hall investigation.

As things stand though, Wright is not considered as a suspect for any other unsolved murder and in some cases there is no forensic evidence available.

Whilst colloquially unsolved homicide crimes are referred to as so called 'cold cases' this is not the case and we have a dedicated team who continually review and assess information for a potential re-investigation to open.

This conviction of Steve Wright for the murder of Victoria Hall came about as a consequence of our ongoing mindset and ethos that we never close unsolved cases. It is down to the tenacity and dedicated and professional attitude of the team to secure justice for the families of the respective victims.

Cases remain under regular forensic review and involve a process that is very structured and rigorous.

We are always alert to new opportunities, be they further advances in forensics that we can exploit, a new investigative approach and, of course, the value of new information we receive from the public.

Why wasn't the murder of Victoria Hall opened earlier than 2018 when you knew Steve Wright's name was linked to the attempted kidnap the night before?

Norfolk & Suffolk operate an unsolved case review team looking at new information and forensic opportunities. This investigation was re-opened because of new information we received relating to an individual who we now know is not connected in any way to the murder of Victoria. The subsequent investigation and forensic review, with a fresh pair of eyes, led to this conviction.

The new investigation spanned seven years, requiring a large, dedicated team to manage the volume of material generated during the original investigation and this represents the obvious challenges that these unsolved murders create. It needs to be remembered the force has also investigated and solved many other complex murder enquiries over that time.

Can you explain the role of DNA in the current investigation?

There are many sources of DNA - for example blood, saliva, semen, skin cells and hair.

There are two main types of DNA analysis – the traditional DNA (huge database) and Y-STR. The Y-STR is only found in men, inherited from the father, it has the same profile passed down through the paternal line which means it is not unique to an individual. It is a much smaller database in comparison to traditional DNA. You cannot determine a Y-STR profile from the information obtained from a traditional DNA sample and information on that large database, so you need a new sample to develop the Y-STR profile for comparison.

The Y-STR samples were tested over the course of the recent investigation which spanned several years used techniques and interpretation of results not available in 1999 or 2008 when Steve Wright was convicted of five previous murders.

This culminated in a key aspect of the evidence being presented in this case providing very strong support for the DNA matching Steve Wright's.

Was this investigation worth it considering he is in jail for life for other murders anyway?

Bringing resolution to an unsolved case is always important as is bringing those responsible to justice. It's important we secured Victoria's family justice in this case. If we have clear and compelling evidence and there is a strong case for a re-investigation, then we will do so. Our thoughts remain with Victoria's father, her brother and her wider family and friends. Victoria's family deserved answers and her killer has now admitted his guilt.

Can the women of Suffolk feel safe on the streets of the county?

Ensuring everyone, not just women and girls feel safe, is a priority for Suffolk Constabulary. We hope people feel reassured that we are committed to pursuing violent and sexual perpetrators and seek for the very best outcome for victims. Tackling violence against women and girls requires a whole system approach, where we work collaboratively with partner agencies to influence progress. We work with businesses and licensed premises to improve the safety, and crucially, the *feeling* of safety, amongst women and girls on a night out. For example, Project Vigilant uses dedicated uniformed and plain clothed officers patrols in areas outside nightclubs, bars and pubs, to identify people who may be displaying signs of predatory behaviour such as sexual harassment, inappropriate touching and loitering.