



29 August 2025

Email:

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

**Request No:** 43218-25  
**Subject:** Station Officer interview documentation  
**Date Received:** 18/08/2025  
**Date of Monitoring:** 18/08/2025

Thank you for your request for information received on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2025 which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information you requested and that is detailed below.

FOI QUESTION(S)	ANSWER(S)
- Interview questions that have been used in the past by the NIAS for a Station Officer position	Please refer to exemption below
- Any previous interview formats or structures that the NIAS have used as a guidance during interviews	Please refer to exemption below
- Examples of good/preferable answers to the questions asked	Please refer to exemption below

**Question 1, 2 and 3**

The Trust has handled your request in line with your rights under section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The Trust would confirm that we hold information falling in the scope of your request. However, the Trust is unable to disclose the information requested and the reasoning for this has been outlined below.

**Information Withheld**

**Exemption Section 36(2) – Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs**

Unfortunately, we are unable to disclose the interview questions or model answers to you.

We have applied the exemption at section 36 (2)(c) to this information.

This exemption states that:

information is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure under the legislation.



(b) would, or would likely to inhibit –

- (i) the free and frank provision of advice
- (ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or

(c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

Unlike other exemptions in FOIA, an exemption in section 36(2) can only be applied where a public authority has consulted with a qualified person, as defined in the legislation, and it is the qualified person's opinion that the harm stated in the exemption would, or would be likely to, arise through disclosure.

On this occasion, the Trust considers that prejudice to the conduct of public affairs refers to our ability to offer an effective service through selecting and recruiting the right candidates and our ability to offer a fair recruitment process.

However, the exemption under s36 (2) (c) is qualified. This means that we need to carry out a public interest test to determine whether the balance lies with or against disclosure.

**The public interest arguments in favour of disclosing the information:**

- The general principles of transparency and openness
- The public interest in increasing openness, transparency and understanding of the candidate selection process, of which interview questions and model answers are part.
- That the questions are already potentially in the public domain as the interviews have already occurred

**The public interest arguments in favour of maintaining the exemption:**

- The public interest in us maintaining a position from which we can run an effective recruitment and selection campaign. This can be adversely affected if we are unable to run interviews where all candidates did not know the interview questions/model answers or know the specific type and nature of questions we are likely to ask. Knowing too much about questions/model answers is likely to remove the element of quick thinking from the assessment process and can lead to schooled answers. There is also a risk that candidates could ask others to prepare answers for them which can lead to us choosing the wrong candidates.
- We also need to be able to offer a fair recruitment process. Were we to disclose the information you have requested; it seems likely that this would advantage those candidates who are aware of the disclosure. This might be internal candidates, those who check our disclosure log or who are in regular contact with us in some way.

Short of giving all the questions and model questions as part of the application process, to disclose the questions under FOIA may lead to advantages for some and disadvantages for others. We could of course write new questions/model answer but there is little public interest in causing unnecessary work and further, the disclosure of this set of questions we think, would give enough away about the nature, type and focus of our questions so as to disrupt our recruitment process. We would likely be in a position where we had to rethink the process which would take time and effort.

On this occasion the Trust has decided that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Based on the above a decision to exempt the information currently held by NIAS in line with Section 36(2)(c) of the FOIA has been made in respect of Question 1 and 2 above. We appreciate this may be a disappointing response, but I hope our reasoning provided above is clear.

For your ease, we have further included the link to NHS Leadership Academy which may assist you in terms of interview structures at manager levels and including areas of leading with care, inspired shared purpose, evaluating information, engaging the team etc. [Healthcare Leadership Model – Leadership Academy](#)

I hope the above fully assists you.

Please note that, under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, if you wish to publish or otherwise use this information besides for your own means, you will need to seek our permission to do so.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Director of Planning, Performance and Corporate Services, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) HSC Trust, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the Trust has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

**Email:** [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

**Website:** [ICO Website](#)

**Post:** Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF

**Telephone:** 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114 (Belfast based Office)

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that NIAS replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <https://nias.hscni.net> Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Yours sincerely  
*(not signed – issued by email)*

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**Information Governance Team**