



Oifig Stiúirthóir na Seirbhíse Náisiúnta Otharcharranna,
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24th December 2019.

Ms. Lisa Chambers TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

Re: PQ 51288/19: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to open a full-time ambulance base in Ballinrobe, County Mayo in view of the inability of the ambulance bases in the county to meet HIQA response times for parts of south County Mayo due to geography and distance.

Dear Deputy Chambers,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) is the statutory pre-hospital emergency and intermediate care provider for the State. The NAS National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) received accreditation as a Centre of Excellence in 2015 and was awarded 'ISO 9001:2008 Accreditation' in 2016 which is a key internationally agreed standard for internal quality management. All 112/999 calls to the National Ambulance Service (NAS) are categorised under the internationally recognised Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS). This system ensures that life threatening calls receive an immediate and appropriate response, while lower acuity calls may have to wait until an emergency resource becomes available. Treatment commences the moment a 112/999 emergency call is received as callers can be given instructions by the trained emergency call takers to deal with a number of situations including CPR, defibrillation, choking, control of external bleeding and childbirth all while the emergency resources are en route to the scene.

The NAS is also supported by Community First Responder schemes, responding to particular types of medical emergencies (i.e. cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest, chest pain, choking and stroke), where it is essential for the patient to receive immediate life-saving care whilst an emergency response vehicle is en route to the patient. In January, the number of active CFR groups in Mayo were two with five in training. By the end of October, the number of active CFR groups had increased to three with six groups in training.



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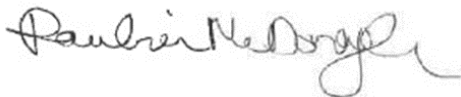
Internationally, it is recognised that achieving response times in rural settings can be problematic for any ambulance system. Therefore, considerable planning and effort went into establishing the Emergency Aero Medical Service by the NAS, the Irish Air Corps and the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) and it is an essential part of our country's emergency response particularly in the West of Ireland and has greatly reduced scene to hospital times from rural areas. This service is a great example of three State agencies working together to provide a service for the citizens of our state in a cost effective manner.

For low acuity calls, where needs are more appropriately met via alternative care pathways other than the Emergency Department, the Clinical Hub (Hear and Treat) provides advice on self-care, discharge or referral to other appropriate local treatment pathway, e.g. GP and primary care, local based urgent care service, specialist services – such as mental health service, social care services and dental services. In addition, NAS in partnership with HSE Mental Health have initiated a new 'Your Mental Health' information phone line to provide information on mental health supports and services across the country provided by the HSE and their funded partners. In preparation for the information and sign posting service going live, the NAS staff call takers received additional training from mental health professionals which included 'SafeTALK', 'ASIST', 'Understanding Self-Harm', Bereavement etc., to assist them in delivering an effective Sign Posting Service.

The NAS operates on a national and region basis as opposed to a local or county basis. It is important to note that the NAS operates a dynamic deployment system where the nearest available emergency resource may be deployed to an area to provide cover or to respond to incidents as they arise. Determining the optimum number of Emergency Ambulances (EAs) and their deployment locations is informed by both historical data and future projections of anticipated Echo and Delta call volumes within the areas to be served. In relation to the Ballinrobe, this area is also covered by NAS resources based at Castlebar, Tuam, Ballina, Mallaranny and Loughlinn.

I trust this information is of assistance to and should you require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Pauline McDonagh,
Senior Executive Officer.