



Oifig Stiúrthóir na Seirbhíse Náisiúnta Otharcharranna,  
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Otharcharranna,  
Áras na hAbhann,  
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Tamhlacht,  
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3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020.

Mr. Robert Troy TD,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Dublin 2.

**Re: 2801/20. To ask the Minister for Health his future plans regarding the provision of a reliable paramedic and emergency response service for the Athlone area; and if an air ambulance service will continue to form an integral part of this plan.**

Dear Deputy Troy,

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 a response.

All 112/999 calls to the National Ambulance Service (NAS) National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) 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 March 2019, three CFR groups were established in Westmeath and by December the number had increased to five and the NAS will continue to work with local groups to further grow this support.



Seirbhís Sláinte | Building a  
Níos Fearr | Better Health  
á Forbairt | Service

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 functions 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, e.g. available resources travelling East-West and East-North West along the M6 through Athlone and the M4 through Mullingar. In addition to the Athlone Ambulance Station, the Athlone area is supported by NAS resources from surrounding ambulance stations such as Ballinasloe, Roscommon, Longford, Mullingar, Tullamore and Birr.

The tables below outlines the rostered resources (Emergency Ambulances) of the whole time equivalent of eight crews (sixteen staff) at Athlone Ambulance Station:

| NAME    | MONDAY    | TUESDAY   | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY  | FRIDAY    | SATURDAY  | SUNDAY    | HOURS |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 1 X WTE | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 0800-2000 | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | REST      | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | REST      | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 1900-0700 | 1900-0700 | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 0700-1900 | 0700-1900 | 48    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 2000-0800 | 2000-0800 | 24    |
| 1 X WTE | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | DAY OFF   | 2000-0800 | 2000-0800 | 24    |
| 1 X WTE | 2000-0800 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 2000-0800 | 2000-0800 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 36    |
| 1 X WTE | 2000-0800 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 2000-0800 | 2000-0800 | REST      | DAY OFF   | 36    |

In addition, there are four additional relief staff for sick/annual leave cover and two internship staff. Four developments posts were approved and the processes to fill these posts is on-going. Furthermore, when the Aeromedical Service is grounded as a consequence of weather conditions etc., the Advanced Paramedic assigned to this service is re-deployed to a Rapid Response Vehicle and reports to the NEOC as an additional available resource.

The average response times for Category 1 calls (Life Threatening – cardiac or respiratory arrest [highest priority] and other than cardiac/respiratory arrest) and number of calls (Category 1) received for 2018 and 2019 and are provided below:

| <b>WESTMEATH - 2019</b>       | <b>Number of Category 1 Calls</b> | <b>Average Response Times for Category 1 Calls<br/>HH:MM:SS</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| ECHO Calls (Highest Priority) | 150                               | 00:12:42  |
| DELTA Calls                   | 2,805                             | 00:16:07  |

| <b>WESTMEATH - 2018</b>       | <b>Number of Category 1 Calls</b> | <b>Average Response Times for Category 1 Calls<br/>HH:MM:SS</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| ECHO Calls (Highest Priority) | 155                               | 00:13:03  |
| DELTA Calls                   | 2,331                             | 00:16:28  |

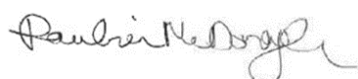
The yearly comparison shows, that while the number of ECHO calls (highest priority) have remained relatively stable, the number of DELTA calls has increased significantly by 474 patients representing a percentage increase of 20.33%. Despite this increase, the Average Response Times have improved for both ECHO and DELTA calls for 2019.

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). It is an essential part of our country's emergency response and has greatly reduced scene to hospital times from rural areas. NAS wish to confirm they will continue to provide an Advanced Paramedic post as part of the overall crew of Emergency Aeromedical Service based out of Athlone.

In relation to the current Ambulance Station which is leased, NAS are working with HSE Estates regarding a stand-alone site which is subject to funding.

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

Yours sincerely,




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Pauline McDonagh,  
Senior Executive Officer.