



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Airgeadais
Feidhmeannacht na
Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seomra 125, Ospidéal
Dr. Steevens
BÁC 8

Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Health Service Executive
Room 125, Dr Steevens
Hospital
Dublin 8

17th November 2020

Deputy Jackie Cahill TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

Re PQ 32483 20: *To ask the Minister for Health the estimated amount the HSE spent on private ambulances in the south-east and mid-west regions in the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Cahill,

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. Your PQ above has been referred to me for response.

Context

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) helps people with serious or life threatening conditions. Its main role is to respond to emergency 999 or 112 calls, providing medical care to patients across the country 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Every year NAS receives between 275,000 and 280,000 emergency calls and in addition it provides a number of inter-hospital transfers.

There is a significant requirement for transfers of non-urgent public patients for various clinical reasons and private ambulance providers are used to provide additional capacity to handle such transfers where deemed necessary and required by the HSE. Examples include transfers between hospitals, between residential and acute settings and transfers for diagnostic tests at another hospital. Guidelines on the safe provision of quality inter-hospital patient transfer have been produced by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC). Expenditure on the use of private ambulances is managed at local hospital level.

As outlined in the Health Act, 2004 the objective of the Executive is to use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public. In the last number of years, in accordance with this strategic objective, the HSE has centralised and reconfigured services nationally to create centres of excellence for the provision of critical services. Examples include the centralising of Renal Patients nationally to Beaumont Hospital, the development of Dialysis Services in Mid-West and provision of Radiation Oncology services in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

Please see below in **Appendix 1** the amount spent on private ambulances in the South East Financial Region and in both the Mid-West and North West Financial Regions for the years 2015 to 2019. Please be aware that the Mid West and the North West Regions are reported on together for financial reporting purposes. The

data was sourced from the HSE Regional Finance general ledger systems and is for HSE Statutory services only.

In view of the fact that there are still currently numerous ledger systems in operation in the HSE some differences in coding may arise. The figures collated may therefore include some other patient transport costs such as minibuses and local transport initiatives. It is not possible to identify the level of costs involved as an extensive exercise would be required to perform such an analysis for which there are no resources at this time.

The shortcomings in the HSE legacy financial systems are well acknowledged and their replacement by a single standard financial system for the Health Sector is at the core of the Finance Reform programme initiated by the Department of Health.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah.anderson1@hse.ie or tel: 087 9423319.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Anderson

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Appendix 1

Table for Response PQ 32483 20

<i>HSE Private Ambulance costs for the South East, Mid West and North West Financial Regions only for the years 2015 to 2019</i>					
<i>HSE Statutory services only</i>					
Financial Region Name	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
	€	€	€	€	€
Mid West & North West	1,845,224	1,937,207	1,904,011	2,284,920	3,064,298
South East	829,547	1,633,899	1,759,389	1,883,993	1,818,229

Source: HSE Regional Finance Ledger Systems

***Note:** Please note in view of the fact that there are still currently numerous ledger systems in operation in the HSE some differences in coding may arise.