



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Oibríochtaí
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta
Bloc 4, Lárionad Gnó,
Tulach Mhór,
Co. Uíbh Fhailí, R35 FH59

Office of the Director of Operations
National Ambulance Service
Block 4, Central Business Park,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly R35 FH59

www.hse.ie
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t 057 9357696
e william.merriman@hse.ie

Ref: WM/PQ/230414

03 May 2023

Deputy Robert Troy
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 16678/23

To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the expansion of ambulance services in Athlone, County Westmeath. -Robert Troy

Dear Deputy Troy,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) National Ambulance Service (NAS) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The NAS recognises that call demand in the Midlands area has increased significantly over recently years without a corresponding increase in resources, similar to many regions across the country.

The increase in demand is a result of many factors:

- The population in Athlone has increased significantly in recent years and is estimated to reach 40,000-50,000 by 2040.
- This population is also aging, similar to the overall population.
- The development of Centre Parcs and the Direct Provisions Centre in the vicinity
- The expansion of the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)
- A growth in tourism and industry in the area.

All of the above factors have contributed to the increase in demand for NAS Services from the Athlone Station.

The NAS is committed to building a new ambulance station in Athlone and to increasing staffing levels in the town to meet the increase in demand. While the current plan is to build a new station adjacent to the Primary Care Centre in the town, the size of the proposed site is unlikely to meet our needs and alternative site options may have to be explored.

NAS also intend to increase the level of Emergency Ambulance service, particularly on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

Alternative Care Pathways are also being explored:

- A new Pathfinder Service is being established at the Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, which will facilitate a See and Treat service for over 65s in their homes





**Oifig an Stiúrtóra Oibríochtaí
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta**
Bloc 4, Lárionad Gnó,
Tulach Mhór,
Co. Uíbh Fhailí, R35 FH59

**Office of the Director of Operations
National Ambulance Service**
Block 4, Central Business Park,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly R35 FH59

www.hse.ie
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t 057 9357696
e william.merriman@hse.ie

across the region, thus reducing the need for older patients to be brought to the Emergency Department and/or be admitted to hospital.

- It is envisaged that the region will benefit from the deployment of Community Paramedics in the near future.
- The increased resourcing of our Clinical Hub, operated by doctors, nurses and paramedics, and located in the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) facilitates assessment and where suitable redirection of low acuity calls to more appropriate healthcare services, particularly during times of high call volume.
- A new alternative transport protocol for our Rapid Response Vehicle in Tullamore is being piloted which permits a solo Advanced Paramedic operating from a Rapid Response Vehicle in the region to redirect patients to alternative forms of transportation for low acuity calls, where suitable, following clinical assessment.

In line with International Best Practice, the NAS operates a dynamic deployment model which results in the closest ambulance being tasked to respond to high acuity Echo calls (Life Threatening cardiac or respiratory) or Delta calls (life threatening illness or injury other than cardiac or respiratory arrest). This call taking and dispatch function is operated by the NAS National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) which operates across two sites, Dublin and Ballyshannon. All NAS resources are dispatched to calls across the country from the NEOC on a nearest available (to the incident) basis and not on a county boundary basis.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

William Merriman
Director of Operations
National Ambulance Service

