



Oifig anStiúrthóir  
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta,

Foirgneamh Aibhneacha, Crosbhóthar  
Thamhlachta, Tamhlacht,  
Baile Átha Cliath D24 XNP2

Office of the Director  
National Ambulance Service

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Ref: RM/PQ23-14300/1/23/04/06

6 April 2023

Deputy Holly Cairns TD  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ 23/14300**

***To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the shortages of ambulances in Cork south west. — Holly Cairns***

**PQ 23/14301**

***To ask the Minister for Health the average response time of ambulances in west County Cork; the number of ambulances ordinarily based at each location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. — Holly Cairns***

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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.

**PQ 23/14300**

The availability of emergency ambulances in any area is affected by a complex range of factors including demand, capacity, acute services configuration, availability of GPs, demography, geography, abstraction for professional developments, personal development opportunities for staff, industrial relations, confounding issues such as severe weather, Covid, RSV and influenza and arrival to handover delays at hospitals.

Local Managers work to manage the impact of all of these issues on a daily basis with a view to maximising the availability of capacity to respond to demand.

Based on the recent outputs of the capacity and demand analysis I commissioned in July 2021 and the new developments set out in our draft Strategic Plan up to 2031, the subsequent NAS Workforce Plan which we have now developed recommends significant numbers of additional staff, across a broad spectrum of roles, to ensure we are better placed to meet this expected demand and support planned new developments.

Given the nature, volume and complexity of work carried out by the NAS, the development of a workforce plan was vital to ensure that the NAS adopts a detailed and analysis based approach focussed on predicting and planning the capacity we will require into the future if we are to provide high quality, safe and person centred emergency and urgent care services against the background of ever rising demand.

NAS continues to actively recruit new staff throughout the year and launched a rolling advertising campaign for Qualified Paramedics, Student Paramedics and Intermediate Care Operatives in March 2022. This campaign was successful and NAS has thankfully been oversubscribed for the September 2022 intake of Student Paramedics into our NAS College





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campuses in Tallaght, Ballinasloe and Tullamore. The next round of the Student Paramedic campaign closed for applications on 5 September 2022 and we received a similar strong response in preparation for our January 2023 academic intake.

There is no ready supply of paramedics in Ireland and therefore, NAS for the most part must educate their own workforce in their own college. The Paramedic Programme is to a degree level and it takes three years to complete, with the latest group of 62 paramedics qualifying at the end of August 2022. These have taken up new positions across the country in locations no more than 45km from their home address.

NAS are also planning to commence a further batch of up to 128 Student Paramedics in September 2023 in four courses with one of these places in Cork for the first time.

At the end of 2023, 161 Student Paramedics are due to graduate to post graduate internship and based on home addresses, we anticipate that subject to successful completion of the necessary exams, 23 will take up duty in the Cork and Kerry area. It is expected that a critical mass of new staff in Cork City will have a positive impact on West Cork.

#### **PQ 23/14301**

The average response time for calls originating from 999 in the Southern region that were categorised as PURPLE (ECHO) and RED (DELTA) in February 2023 was 26 minutes.

The number of ambulances ordinarily based at each location in West Cork is set out in the table below:

#### **The number of ambulances that are ordinarily based at each NAS location (West Cork):**

	Day	Night
Bantry Emergency Ambulance	1	1
Bantry Intermediate Care Vehicle	1	-
Bantry Rapid Response Vehicle (Dunmanway)	1	-
Castletownbere Emergency Ambulance	1	1
Skibbereen Emergency Ambulance	1	1
Clonakilty Emergency Ambulance	1	1

I hope you find this information helpful

Yours sincerely

Robert Morton  
Director  
National Ambulance Service

