



31 January 2022

Email:

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: AD-IG-01(2)-2009-22

Subject: Training NI Fire & Rescue Staff - 2022

Request:	Date Received:	15/01/2022
	Date of Monitoring:	18/01/2022
	Date of Response:	31/01/2022

Thank you for your request for information received on 15 January 2021 which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information you requested and that is detailed below.

Question 1

How many NIFRS are currently being trained by NIAS to support the service?

Answer 1

There are two separate contexts in which NIAS is currently engaging directly with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service over and above the regular day-to-day interaction at the scene of emergency calls:

- (a) Ten NIFRS personnel are currently being trained by NIAS to potentially support the service through driving of NIAS vehicles while accompanying a member of NIAS staff.
- (b) There are future plans to ensure that all frontline NIFRS personnel receive a minimum of Basic Life Support Training in order to support co-response to cardiac arrest calls across Northern Ireland. NIAS may assist with the provision of this training.

Question 2

What is the training that these staff are receiving?

Answer 2

- (a) NIFRS staff receive a one-day training program. They are already trained to drive on emergency calls and are therefore given vehicle familiarization training with a driving instructor and training on the operation of the tail lift on A&E vehicles. The remainder of the day is covering what equipment is utilized on emergency calls and where this is located in the NIAS vehicle. They will receive training on donning and

doffing PPE in relation to COVID-19 in line with NIAS policy. All NIFRS will be fit tested to wear PPE supplied by NIAS during any joint deployment.



Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust, Ambulance Headquarters, Site 30 Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8SG •Tel: 02890 400999 •Fax: 02890 400900 •Textphone: 02890 400871

- (b) A number of NIFRS staff are already trained to FREC Level 3 for the provision of emergency care to casualties at the scene of incidents when they arrive ahead of NIAS resources. The remainder of frontline NIFRS staff will undergo training to either FREC Level 3 or Basic Life Support / AED use.

Question 3

What is the expected pay band/wage for these staff?

Answer 3

NIAS does not hold this information. NI Fire & Rescue staff providing assistance to NIAS in this role will remain under the employment of the NIFRS.

Question 4

What is the expected role for these staff? What skill level will they have?

Answer 4

- (a) In the event of critical service pressures leading to a severely reduced level of ambulance cover to respond to emergencies, NIFRS staff will provide assistance to NIAS through driving ambulances while on emergency calls and assisting with the manual handling and care of a patient under the direction of an ambulance clinician. They will be expected to wear the appropriate PPE and maintain professional standards expected of any emergency services employee. NIFRS staff have the appropriate emergency driver (blue light) qualification as well as familiarization with vehicle and clinical equipment, but clinical care of the patient will continue to be provided by NIAS staff at all times.
- (b) NIFRS staff will provide a co-response to cardiac arrest calls although this will not alter the emergency ambulance response by NIAS. This approach is similar to the use of community first responders and has the aim of improving the speed or provision of basic life support and early defibrillation. NIAS undertook a successful pilot of this approach with NIFRS in 2016. NIFRS staff responding these calls will have either FREC Level 3 or Basic Life Support Training.

Question 5

When is it expected that these staff members will begin operational shifts?

Answer 5

- (a) There is no set date for these staff to be actively deployed on operational shifts as their deployment is a contingency to be utilized if there is critical pressure related to NIAS staffing levels. There is consideration at present to running a pilot period to “stress test” the system of deployment of NIFRS staff onto A&E vehicles.
- (b) The NIFRS co-response to cardiac arrest is likely to commence in Quarter 4 of 2021/22.

Question 6

Why has NIAS made this decision?

Answer 6

- (a) As part of Business Continuity planning for interruptions to service, NIAS have identified the risk of “low levels of staff” and in planning for this NIAS have

developed contingency planning arrangements of which the use of NIFRS staff is just one.

- (b) As part of a wider strategy to improve outcomes from cardiac arrest, NIAS has been progressing numerous projects including
- Promoting greater public awareness of Basic Life Support (CPR) skills;
 - Promoting greater public availability of automatic external defibrillators;
 - Engagement with community first responder teams;
 - Incorporation of CPR training into the NI school curriculum;
 - Adoption of the GoodSam app for public responders.

Question 7

How can NIAS try and replace EMTs/paramedics with firemen with very basic first aid training?

Answer 7

NIAS is not attempting to and has no plans to replace EMTs/Paramedics with fire and rescue personnel.

- (a) This contingency measure is part of the NIAS Business Continuity Plan which aims to identify all means of maintaining an emergency response to the community if service level covers are severely depleted e.g due to extreme levels of staff absence / sickness. The use of fire and rescue personnel would only be in extremis and this contingency would be implemented in conjunction with a suite of additional steps within the Business Continuity Plan.
- (b) Co-response by NIFRS personnel to cardiac arrest calls is an additional rather than an alternative response, aimed at the earlier provision of effecting CPR and defibrillation. NIAS will retain the statutory responsibility to respond to such calls, and will not alter their response due to a co-response by NIFRS personnel or any other volunteer responders.

Question 8

Will the public be made aware that the ambulance service is being deskilled?

Answer 8

NIAS is not attempting to reduce the skills of personnel. In recent years, the Trust has instead been expanding the skills of staff at all levels through the introduction of new equipment, drugs, training and more advanced clinical roles. This development is set to continue as part of the wider Trust strategy for the next five years.

I hope this fully assists you. Please note that, under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, if you wish to publish or otherwise use this information besides for your own means, you will need to seek our permission to do so.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Director of Planning, Performance and Corporate Services, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) HSC Trust, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the Trust has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Website: ni@ico.org.uk

Post: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114 (Belfast based Office)

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that NIAS replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.niamb.co.uk>. Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Yours sincerely

(not signed – issued by email)

Information Governance Department