



23 June 2025

Email:

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

**Request No:** 30388-24

**Subject:** Ambulance responses, costs and diagnostics

**Date Received:** 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Thank you for your request for information received on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2024 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.

FOI QUESTION(S)	ANSWER(S)
a. Number of emergency vehicles in your service from the financial year 2022-2023.	208
b. Number of emergency call outs per financial year (2022-2023) that were attended by an ambulance. (If not per year then per month/ week; please specify which you are referring to in your answer). It would be helpful for comparison also if you are able to write the total number of 999 calls received.	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
c. Percentage of staff that were infected with contagious diseases i. during the pandemic (April 2020-July 2021) ii. during normal operations (August 2021-March 2023)	This question cannot be answered as these details would not be known to NIAS as an organisation.
d. Does the service have a requirement to test patients for infectious diseases when possible and appropriate and if so, which ones? If they do not have a requirement, are/ where they exploring it? (If there is both a requirement and exploration, please specify) i. during the pandemic ii. during normal operations iii. is there evidence the level of interest would change if the disease could be detected: 1. pre symptomatic 2. pre contagious	NIAS do not have a requirement to test patients for infectious diseases at any point.  NIAS are not exploring this.



e. What is the average time for an ambulance to reach a patient, from the time the call has been made?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
f. What is the average time for the ambulance, once it has reached the patient, to reach the hospital?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
g. What is the average time taken for an ambulance to depart the hospital, after the patient has been brought by it to the hospital?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
h. For chest pain-related emergencies: What is the average time for an ambulance to reach a patient, from the time the call has been made? During both regular times and busy times?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
i. For chest pain-related emergencies: What is the average time for the ambulance, once it has reached the patient, to reach the hospital? During regular times and busy times?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
j. For chest pain-related emergencies: What is the average time taken for an ambulance to depart the hospital, after the patient has been brought by it to the hospital? During regular times and busy times?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
k. For chest pain-related emergencies: Have there been conversations regarding whether the wait time be materially improved if the first troponin test could be conducted by the ambulance crew? Yes No Other:	NIAS do not provide this level of testing and it is not commonplace across UK ambulance trusts.
l. What is the annual percentage/number of emergencies related to chest pains and other cardiac symptoms?	Please refer to the attached document entitled Summary Report - 30388-24.
m. What tests/procedures do the ambulance crews typically carry out? Troponin Tests Heart Monitoring Laminar Flow Tests	Troponin Tests: NO Heart Monitoring: YES Laminar Flow Tests: NO Blood Samples - please give the purpose for this in the next question.

<p>Blood Samples - please give the purpose for this in the next question.</p> <p>Administering medications</p> <p>Respiratory procedures</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Administering medications</p> <p>Respiratory procedures</p> <p>Other: N/A</p>
<p>n. Regarding blood tests and administering medication: what purpose is there for the ambulance crew in doing so? There is no consideration of other diagnostic/ screening procedures for diseases being actively considered.</p>	<p>Assess patient blood sugar levels.</p>
<p>o. What other diagnostic/screening procedures are actively being considered for infectious diseases? Please write them below. Please also write if a decision has been made.</p>	<p>There is no consideration of other diagnostic/ screening procedures for diseases being actively considered.</p>
<p>p. What other diagnostic/screening procedures are actively being considered for other diseases?</p>	<p>There is no consideration of other diagnostic/ screening procedures for diseases being actively considered.</p>
<p>q. Who is head of procurement ambulances/equipment?</p>	<p>Assistance Directorate of Fleet is responsible for fleet and patient handling equipment.</p>
<p>r. How often do they replace ambulances?</p>	<p>Planned replacement cycle is 5 years</p>
<p>s. How often do they update medical-related, particularly cardiac, ambulance equipment?</p>	<p>The frequency of medical equipment replacement varies greatly depending on the type of device. For example, cardiac defibrillator machines are replaced every 5 to 10 years or so, whereas consumables needed to provide cardiac care would be replaced much more frequently or in some cases after single use. The replacement schedule will be informed by instructions by the device manufacturer and/or established clinical guidelines and practice.</p>
<p>t. What is the cost of (a) an ambulance (vehicle) on its own (b) the fully-equipped ambulance</p>	<p>Refusal Notice – Answer T Section 43 (2) – Commercial Interests</p>

u. What is the cost of the Equipment supplied by ambulance company?	The NIAS does not supply equipment.
v. What is the cost of equipment supplied by the ambulance service itself? (a) for medical equipment (b) for all equipment	The NIAS does not supply equipment.
w. What is the cost of cardiac related equipment in an ambulance?	The approximate cost of cardiac related equipment in an ambulance at any given time would be around £25,000.
x. Finally, please list what equipment, particularly for diagnostics, you have in an ambulance.	Patient monitor: ECG/ECT02/SP02/NIBP. Tympanic thermometer. BM blood glucose machine.

### Refusal Notice – Answer T - Section 43 (2) – Commercial Interests

I can confirm that NIAS holds the information relevant to your request for Question T above. However, this information is exempt under Section 43 (2) (Commercial Interest) of the Freedom of Information Act. With (Section 43 (2)) being a prejudice based qualified exemption there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in confirming or not whether the information is held as well as considering the public interest.

In determining whether, or not the public interest in withholding information outweighs the public interest disclosing information, NIAS considered the factors favouring disclosure and the factors against disclosure. The application of the Public Interest Test is set out below.

<b>Exemption claimed in respect of Section 43(2) Commercial Interest</b>	
<b>Considerations in Favour of Disclosing</b>	<b>Considerations in Favour of Not Disclosing</b>
<p>Expenditure of public money requires openness, transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Disclosing information could feasibly aid the public in understanding the expenditure of public money for the receiver purpose.</p>	<p>The disclosure of the purchase cost of vehicles may prejudice the providers commercial interests as it would enable a member of the public or other companies to have a significant advantage in a similar procurement process. The procurement process is closed to the public and other competitors and is not in the public domain.</p>

<p>Promoting competition for public sector procurement processes. There is public interest in ensuring that there is competition for public sector procurement processes. Releasing information about rates may encourage more potential suppliers to enter the market. This could lead to improved numbers entering a procurement process.</p>	<p>Providing this information to the public and other competitors, would deter competition for a procurement process. There is a public interest in ensuring provider/companies can compete and there is fair competition. Disclosure of tendered vehicle pricing paid may prejudice this. Disclosure may restrict the number of providers willing to work with the public sector for fear of losing a competitive advantage if their pricing structures/costs are released to the wider public. This also has the potential to compromise the ability to achieve value for money for future procurement process. The trust between contractor and NIAS would likely be prejudiced.</p>
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## Balancing Test

NIAS relies on good relations with all its contractors and to ensure value for money and fair competition. To release this information would severely impair these relationships and the continued working relations which are key to keep NIAS fleet operational and supported throughout their life with the service.

We have therefore concluded that the exemption applies and that withholding the material serves the public interest better than release in this instance.

I hope the above 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:

**Email:** [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)  
**Website:** [ICO Website](#)  
**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 @ <https://nias.hscni.net> Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Yours sincerely

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**Information Governance Team**

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