



19 February 2026

Email:

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: 47120-26

Subject: Therapy Dogs

Date Received: 03/02/2026

Thank you for your request for information received on Tuesday 3rd February 2026 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)

1. Does the trust/ambulance service utilise therapy dog intervention? If so, why or why not? Is there a specific reason why the trust/ambulance service has or has not utilised a therapy dog.
2. When did your trust/ambulance service first offer these interventions, is it ongoing? If they have ceased, why?
3. If your trust/ambulance service offers therapy dog intervention, what form does it take? Can you provide details on how staff access these interventions. For example, timings, setting, on an ad hoc basis or at specific times etc, etc.
4. Who exactly can access a therapy dog? Is it available to frontline staff/staff working in acute care situations? Or staff who are not patient facing? If it's for a specific population of workers and not available to frontline clinical staff, why?
5. Is there a specific reason why a dog is used? For example, for mental health, to improve staff wellbeing, etc.
6. If your trust/ambulance service doesn't use a dog, does the trust/ambulance service utilise any other animal intervention?
7. Please provide any details of barriers or limitations in the use of therapy dogs.
8. Does the trust/ambulance service collect any data surrounding the use of therapy dog intervention? If so, what? Please provide data, if you have it. Details on how the use of a therapy dog impacts staff wellbeing are particularly useful.
9. If your trust/ambulance service utilise a therapy dog, have you had improvements in staff mental health and wellbeing? Has there been an identifiable trend in staff sickness absence numbers etc.
10. Have staff provided feedback on such intervention? If so, please provide details. Furthermore, how were they recruited for their feedback, was it given voluntarily or requested? Additionally, was there a reasonable amount of feedback provided?



11. Does the trust/ambulance service have any policy, standard operating procedures or guidance on dog therapy or animal assisted interventions in the workplace? If so, please provide this.

12. Who provides therapy dog intervention?

ANSWER(S)

The trust engaged with Pets As Therapy (PAT) in 2025 and 2024 to provide a one off service as part of Ambulance Control Room week.

Pets As Therapy bring regular animal companionship to people in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and prison and fosters reading confidence in children in schools with or through visits from volunteers and their registered, temperament-tested pets.

Volunteers and their pets are bound by PAT policies and procedures and insurance.

NIAS nominates a designated member of their staff (peer support team member) as a point of contact to direct and support the volunteer.

PAT Volunteer Teams are supervised by a member of NIAS staff at all times during their active visits and never left alone with a recipient.

The intervention was measured through event evaluation and blood pressure testing before and after the intervention. Both showed that mood was boosted during and following the intervention and each participant tested displayed reduced blood pressure.

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.

If you require an internal review to be undertaken, please request this via the email address: information.governance@nias.hscni.net

Or submit via

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, 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
Website: [ICO Website](http://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)

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

(not signed – issued by email)

Information Governance Team

This response has been prepared for disclosure log publication. Only minor editorial or redaction amendments have been made for clarity and compliance with data protection legislation. The substantive content is identical to that provided to the requestor and the original issued version remains the authoritative record.