

COVID-19 Notice

Saturday 04 April 2020



NIAS introduces protocol to protect response to most seriously ill

As the demands on the Health Service relating to Covid19 are expected to increase over the coming weeks, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has implemented plans to ensure that we are best placed to respond to the most clinically urgent calls during that period.

From today, NIAS will implement a level of escalation which includes a specific Covid-19 protocol to categorise 999 calls. The protocol allows for more specific questioning of patients to assess the likelihood of Covid-19 symptoms so that crews can be pre-warned of the need to use appropriate PPE. The protocol will also enable improved diagnosis of the severity of Covid-19 symptoms, resulting in more specific advice being provided to patients.

As the demand on ambulance services increases this protocol also enables NIAS to ensure that ALL patients with immediately life-threatening and serious conditions, whether or not they are related to Covid-19, will be prioritised for the most immediate response.

Regrettably, it may be necessary to withhold an ambulance response to calls and deal with some calls through triage. These will be calls which have been assessed as less serious in nature and do not need an Ambulance Response. NIAS apologises to any patients who may find themselves in this situation but we would ask for your understanding in advance. These are exceptional circumstances requiring exceptional measures. NIAS will continue to monitor and review our response capacity and will react to any improvement in the situation without delay.

Until then, we would ask you to stay safe by following the measures identified to reduce the spread of the virus – stay home, keep socially distant and, regularly, wash your hands. We would particularly ask that the public consider the safety of our staff and reduce the risk of infection to them, and their families, by only calling 999 in real emergencies.