



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: AD-IG-01(2)-78-2017
Key Word: British Sign Language
Subject: British Sign Language
Request: **Date Received:** 21/06/2017
 Date of Monitoring: 22/06/2017
 Date of Response: 11/07/2017

Thank you for your request for information received on 21 June 2017 and which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We would also inform you that Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information and is detailed below for your attention.

Question 1

How many paramedics in your area/region are qualified in British Sign Language (state the level of their qualification - eg. Level 6 - if possible)?

Answer 1

NIAS does not hold any information in relation to same. NIAS do not train staff in this area. However potentially some staff members may have undertaken this training themselves for personal or other reasons but we do not hold records in relation to same

Question 2

If none of your paramedics are qualified in British Sign Language, what policies or procedures does your ambulance service have regarding dealing with emergencies/ambulance callouts concerning deaf BSL users?

Answer 2

NIAS does not have any specific policies or procedures in relation to British Sign Language or Deaf Awareness Training.

Deaf awareness training has been provided in the past to frontline staff. Work is ongoing to facilitate similar training in 2017/18.

NIAS promotes the emergencySMS 999 text service which is led by our partners, the Police Service of Northern Ireland. This service allows people with hearing loss difficulties to register their mobile phone in advance of a possible emergency, thereby ensuring that their emergency text is handled appropriately.

A small number of such calls are referred by the police to NIAS Control on an annual basis. NIAS staff have also distributed leaflets about the emergencySMS 999 text service to targets audiences and sectoral representatives, for example at a regional Making Communication Accessible event held in Knockbracken Hall, Belfast, in June 2016.

NIAS has a facility on its main switchboard telephone line for textphone access, and this number is included on corporate communications such as public information leaflets.



In 2016, NIAS acquired copies of the NHS Confederation Multilingual Phrase Book (Third Edition). Most of these were distributed locally through NIAS Area Managers during April/May 2016, and directly to frontline staff in training. This booklet contains a section with the sign language alphabet for communicating with deaf-blind individuals.

NIAS has a section on its website for any citizen who wishes to complain about the Trust. This includes an explanatory video accompanied by sign language, available at the following link: <http://www.nias.hscni.net/about-the-trust/how-to-make-a-complaint/>

NIAS ensures that all events involving patients and the public (such as engagement or consultation events) can provide sign language translation in the event that this is required, on a case-by-case basis. The Trust's ongoing engagements assess and consider the needs of people with disabilities, including the deaf community. Reasonable adjustments to NIAS services and facilities are always considered as appropriate.

I hope the above fully assists you. 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.

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.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Finance and ICT Director, 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
Alison Vitty

Alison Vitty (Miss)
CORPORATE MANAGER