

News release



2 December 2008

AMBULANCE COVER IN THE SOUTHERN AREA

Anxieties about ambulance cover in the Southern Area were raised by Southern Health & Social Services Council (SHSSC) members at a recent meeting with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Chief Executive.

The SHSSC had requested the meeting over concerns that the ambulance response times in the Southern Area were failing to meet performance targets. These require an ambulance to be on the scene within 8 minutes for at least 70% of Category A emergency calls. Figures show that in 2007/08 only 66.3% of the highest risk 999 calls were responded to within the 8 minutes. Liam McIvor, Chief Executive of NIAS reported that 999 calls in the Southern Area had increased by 11% in 2007/08 and up-dated the SHSSC members on forthcoming investment into the fleet, which he believed would improve performance in the area.

Mrs Eileen Wright, Chairman of the SHSSC, speaking after the meeting said, "Ambulance response times have been a concern of ours for some time. The Southern Area is very rural, which poses particular problems for the ambulance service. We were glad to hear that there is to be considerable investment in the ambulance fleet including an increase in rapid response vehicles (RRVs). We will be keeping an eye on developments such as the RRVs and the provision of doctor triage from

the Ambulance Control to offer an alternative to emergency ambulance response. Speedy medical assistance can mean the difference between life and death so, if NIAS can focus on transporting the most clinically appropriate patients, this is to be welcomed.”

Ends

Notes to Editors:

- **The Southern Health and Social Services Council is one of 4 Health and Social Services Councils set up in 1991 to represent the views of patients and users of the health and social services. The Council has a total of 24 members, 40% of whom are nominated by District Councils in the Southern Area. The remainder are appointed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety – 30% voluntary/community representatives and 30% are nominees with an interest in health and social care.**
- **Health and Social Services Councils have a right to be consulted by Health and Social Services Boards about and plans for development of services, or where significant changes are being considered. Councils play an important part in representing the views of consumers of services to the decision makers, and provide advice and support to patients and service users in relation to complaints procedures.**

If you require any further information please contact :

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The Council’s website address is: www.shsscouncil.net