

NISTAR

A year of our Nurse led Transport Team



Health Minister Robin Swann thanking the NISTAR team for their efforts throughout the covid pandemic

In early 2020 the NISTAR (Northern Ireland Specialist Transfer and Retrieval) service launched our dedicated nurse led transport team. A first in the UK.

The genesis of the nurse led service was due to the growing demand on resources in facilitating cross-border transfers. These vital transfers allow critically ill children to receive lifesaving cardiac surgery as part of the All Island Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Network.

Prior to the launch of the CHD network, patients and their families would have to travel to Great Britain adding additional stress and strain. NISTAR are extremely proud of the positive impact this team is having on patients by facilitating these transfers

DEVELOPMENT

NISTAR Lead Nurse Emma Thompson was the driving force behind the nurse led team and quickly recruited Linda McCready who joined the service in late 2019. Linda was quickly joined by Vicky Harte and the team became operational in January 2020. Cara Barbour joined the team in March 20 with Natasha Lee then joining in Feb 21. The team now operates 7 days per week and regularly complete in excess of 30 transfers per month.

As the team grew so did the scope of the service. The team have taken on increasingly complex transfers including a repatriation to Cork. One of the overriding principles of NISTAR is that patient care and experience is of the utmost priority. It became clear that for the team to offer the highest possible standard of care and service that some investment was needed.



Cara Barbour
Nurse Led Coordinator



Linda McCready
Transport Nurse



Vicky Harte
Transport Nurse



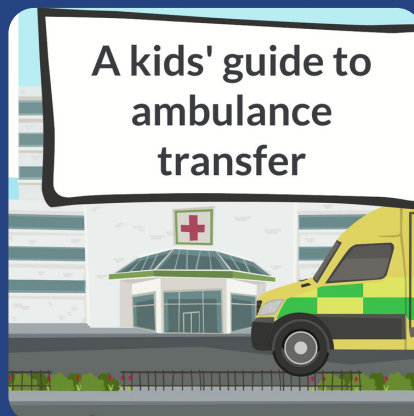
Natasha Lee
Transport Nurse

INVESTMENT

The biggest priority was our transfer trolley. When transporting a patient over long distances the comfort of the patient, specifically children and babies is paramount. Based on service user feedback we upgraded our critical care transport trolley at a cost of £60,000 and invested in an extra thick mattress. This ensures that no matter how long the transfer is, the patient is extremely comfortable and most importantly safe.



Our next challenge was making the transfers more engaging and less boring for our patients. We have upgraded the trolley with a range of sensory equipment. This ensures the patients can remain engaged and calm in what can often be a stressful situation.



IMPACT

When we look back at the first year of the service being fully operational it's easy to focus purely on the numbers. Since April 2020 the team have completed 343 transfers which is a monumental achievement in the first full year.

We are however most proud of the impact made to the lives of our patients and their loved ones.

We have facilitated children getting timely access to cardiac surgery carried out in Dublin. We have transported children home post orthopaedic surgery reducing the strain on beds but more important allowing the children to recover in the place they feel most comfortable. We have helped families dealing with extremely sick children have some sense of normality by facilitating home visits for birthdays, family occasions and helped families spend Christmas outside of a ward.

Thanks to Cara, Linda, Vicky and Natasha for delivering such a great service. Thanks to our colleagues in RBHSC, each of the Trusts and the CHD network for their support in our first year of service and finally thanks to our patients and their families for their feedback which has helped us improve and develop the service.

To make a referral to the nurse led service please ring the NISTAR single point of contact on: 02895 040 167

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