

22 April 2022

Belfast Trust Payments to Independent Ambulance Services for the Past 5 Years

I am interested in information concerning how much the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust pays to independent ambulance services for the past 5 years? And, what types of services do you pay them for as well?

Spend:

Please see below the amounts Belfast Trust have paid directly to independent ambulance services over the last 7 years. It should be noted that the bulk of spend would go through the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) and we only receive a recharge and so would not hold details of the spend.

The information provided below is spend which comes directly through Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 ytd
Totals	735,372	795,341	571,768	293,636	45,826	30,432	66,480	341,022

Types of Services for which independent ambulance services are used:

Belfast Trust's Mental Health services use a private ambulance service for the conveying of patients who have been detained in the community under the Mental Health Order and need to be brought to the hospital. This was a pilot brought into service because NIAS were unable to provide transport to non-physically critically ill patients in a timely fashion. At the end of the three-month pilot, the service was retained. This is a cost neutral service, as the cost is offset by the overtime paid to the Approved Social Workers (ASW), when waiting for a NIAS Ambulance, which could have been several hours in duration.

The Royal Jubilee Maternity Service occasionally use private ambulances to transfer babies.

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The Northern Ireland Specialist Transport and Retrieval (NISTAR) Service use an Independent Sector ambulance provider when NISTAR is unavailable to complete elective or critical care transfers. The independent sector provider generally assists in the following ways, when required:

- They provide an ambulance only service when NISTAR have a clinical team but no ambulance is available
- They provide an ambulance and nurse-led service for low acuity patients who do not need the input of a critical care doctor
- They provide a full critical care team which includes a critical care doctor, nurse and ambulance

Meadowlands Rehabilitation Unit on occasion order private ambulances to enable patients to discharge home in a timely manner. Service users attending the Frailty Assessment Unit may also require transport, which may on occasion be private ambulance. Red Cross or Pro Paramedics are the most commonly used.

Belfast Trust's Acute Care at Home (ACAH) service may on occasion order private ambulances to transport patients into and out of hospital for diagnostic services such as X-rays and or scans. The team have been using this service for the past 7 years and this can include Pro Paramedics and Green Light Transfers.