



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Oibríochtaí
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta
Bloc 4, Lárionad Gnó,
Tulach Mhór,
Co. Uíbh Fhailí, R35 FH59

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Deputy Sean Fleming,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2

7th August 2024

PQ 32300/24

To ask the Minister for Health to report on funding for an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Sean Fleming I was informed that due to cuts in funding by the HSE the funding of the phones which First Responders use has been cut and is affecting their service and they are not able to respond like they would like to do.

Dear Deputy Fleming,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) National Ambulance Service (NAS) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

Response:

During the introduction of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) Community First Responder (CFR) scheme network in 2005, a number of mobile phones were issued to CFRs for the purpose of community first response. These phones, along with a defibrillator and kit bag (defib and kit bag supplied by CFR schemes) were passed around the CFR volunteers who would have organised their own 'on call' rosters. This allowed the then regional ambulance control centres to contact them by phone call. With advancements in control room technology and the introduction of a national ambulance service and centralised control room, CFR phone calls were phased out and replaced by an automated text alert system. The automated text alert system, still in operation today, enables each CFR to receive a text alert directly from the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Computed Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Once the CFR criteria meet the system-run algorithm, which is based on emergency call type and geographical location, a system-generated text alert is sent to the CFR.

With further advancements in CAD technology, each member of a CFR scheme can now have their personal mobile number added to the system, thus reducing the requirement for a single group phone. This is known as the "multi-text" system. This now allows for all CFR volunteers to receive the text alert simultaneously and enables the nearest available responder to mobilise to an incident. It also negates an issue where a text alert could be missed on a single group phone. Now that NAS has increased its CFR network from circa 50 (2005) to 292 schemes (presently) and with approximately 3,500 volunteers on the system, the multi-text system is proving to be highly beneficial and is resulting in a trained volunteer arriving at a patient's side in a much quicker timeframe.

In early June this year, we noted an issue with some of the legacy HSE phones that are still in circulation. They had not received text messages for a number of weeks previous. From speaking with HSE ICT – Phones and Vodafone, it seems to be an ongoing signal issue with HSE talk and text phones and Vodafone has since corrected the technical issue affecting





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these mobile phones. The NAS community engagement team identified 52 of these mobile phones which have legacy “first responder” tags and they contacted the users to assist them in resolving any issues that they were having.

Over the course of the past month, approximately 50% of these mobile phones have been identified as being no longer in use by the CFR schemes and will be terminated. The remaining 50% that are still in use will remain active on the network. Of the remaining active phones, all except two have been moved across onto the multi-text system and these remaining two schemes have opted to keep the legacy text alert function, with a full understanding of potential issues they may encounter. However, as NAS move towards an HSE-funded mobile-based application for alerting CFRs to further enhance their ability to respond to emergency calls, utilising GPS mapping and an enhanced two-way communication system between the NEOC and the CFR volunteer, all text alert-based notifications will be phased out when the CFR App is fully implemented

The National Ambulance Service is not aware of any funding restrictions in relation to the maintenance of these mobile phones.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Ger O'Dea
Community Engagement Manager
National Ambulance Service

