



Caring today,  
planning for tomorrow -  
**NIAS Corporate Plan**  
**2023-24**



To consistently  
show compassion,  
professionalism and  
respect to the  
patients we care for



# NIAS Facts and Figures

2022/23

In 2022-2023

We received 225,182 calls

of which 176,517 resulted in an ambulance arriving on scene

12,793 calls were for immediately life-threatening conditions (Category 1)

93,383 calls were for serious but not immediately life-threatening conditions (Category 2)

32,280 calls were for not immediately life-threatening or serious conditions (Category 3)

We made 158,115 non-emergency journeys, taking people to and from hospital appointments or for routine treatment

We currently have:

Circa 1,400 staff supported by 250 volunteer

first responders and almost 100 volunteer car service drivers 116 frontline, double-crewed emergency ambulances

43 rapid response ambulance cars and 115 non-emergency vehicles coordinated by one Emergency Control Room and

one Non-Emergency Control Room, across five operating divisions and out of 59 ambulance stations or deployment points

NIAS has an annual operating budget of circa £100m



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Strategy to Transform: 2020-2026

## Context:

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Corporate Plan sets out the key strategic actions which will be taken forward by NIAS during 2023/24. NIAS Trust Board uses this document to assess delivery against 'Caring Today, Planning for Tomorrow: Our Strategy to Transform 2020-2026'. This is a summary of the key objectives for public information. The objectives contained in this report are underpinned by specific objectives and actions against which each Directorate reports on a quarterly basis to NIAS's Senior Management Team.

This year's Corporate Plan is drafted in the context of ongoing pressures on the wider HSC and the Unscheduled Care system which have a significant impact on NIAS. NIAS faces a range of important challenges and issues over the period covered by this plan. These include the need to deliver safe, high quality care, improving response times within wider systemic difficulties, whilst modernising our service.



The Trust's frontline challenges are similar to those faced by Ambulance Services across the rest of the UK, including:

- delays in being able to transfer the care of patients at hospitals, keeping ambulance staff away from where they are needed most, with the associated risk to patient safety for those waiting for an ambulance response
- rising demand for our service from patients with more complex needs and co-morbidities
- workforce capacity challenges, and the need to modernise our model of care

These issues cannot be overcome by NIAS alone and require support from the Department of Health (DoH)'s Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), HSC Trusts and local providers. This year's plan also includes key actions which have been agreed in collaboration with HSCNI



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Trusts to mitigate the patient safety risks within the Unscheduled Care System.

The Corporate Plan for 2023-24 outlines how we intend to address these challenges, building on the progress made to date in the delivery of our strategic plan, and articulates our ambition to deliver the best and most appropriate care to patients in Northern Ireland; putting them at the heart of everything we do.

The Corporate Plan has been informed by the draft PfG "Health" outcome "We all enjoy long, healthy active lives", the NIAS strategy, 'Caring Today, Planning for Tomorrow: Our Strategy to Transform 2020-2026', coupled with actions to address any substantive issues and risks. The Corporate Plan will not reflect everything that we do and NIAS staff are involved in many other areas that are not included but are no less important. Rather it highlights the key priorities for the year ahead that will contribute to the implementation of the mission, values and goals of our Strategy to Transform 2020-26.

## Our mission

***To consistently show compassion, professionalism and respect to the patients we care for.***

## Our values & behaviours

*Our values, and the behaviours they instil, form the foundations for the culture and ethos for the whole organisation.*

### Our goals



*Our patients will feel professionally cared for; always with compassion and respect*

*Our staff will feel positive and proud to work for NIAS*

*Our stakeholders and partners will have confidence in us as a reliable provider at the centre of urgent and emergency care*

*Our communities will continue to value and trust us*

Our Corporate strategy is built around the following 7 transformation priorities which help achieve our goals:

1. Delivering Care
2. Our Workforce
3. Organisational Development
4. Quality Improvement
5. Digital Enablers
6. Our infrastructure



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## 7. Communications and Engagement

Each of these priority areas encompass a range of objectives which in turn focus on key deliverables for change. This includes our need to address the current challenges, in addition to implementing new ways of delivering services and integration across the HSC system. All of these objectives are brought together within our Corporate Plan and specific actions monitored at quarterly Directorate review meetings.

### Risks

It is recognised that there are significant system-wide challenges that lie ahead for the Health and Social Care sector and as such there are a number of key risks and issues that we need to be mindful of.

Extensive delays in handover times at Emergency Department's (EDs) across Northern Ireland which are due to issues around patient flow through hospital and delayed discharges. During 2022-23, NIAS was losing up to 28% of operational capacity per month due to delayed handovers at ED. There have also been a number of incidents of patients coming to harm whilst queuing in the back of ambulances, additionally, patients have experienced harm whilst waiting on an emergency response in the community.

Similar to the rest of the HSCNI, NIAS is further constrained by the cost saving measures required for the financial year. The current financial climate within government departments, cessation of support to mitigate the impact of COVID and the ongoing pressures being experienced across the HSC environment increases risk of funding being redirected, or not fully realised.

Our final challenge, in realising delivery of our plan, is the level of sickness absence across the organisation and the subsequent impact on capacity which could inhibit our ability to implement change.

We have put plans in place to mitigate the above risks:

- Collaborative working across NIAS and other Trusts to develop robust handover procedures
- Development of new pathways and alternative destinations, and continually training staff in existing pathways.
- Developing a programme to ensure efficient delivery of all services to the most vulnerable in our society.
- We have a number of business cases in development and funding is required to deliver on some of our objectives and the overall programme of transforming our service delivery model.
- Implementation of an absence management programme. All directorates have committed to participate in the Good Attendance Programme workshops.





# 2023/24 Key Priorities



## Key Outcome 1 Delivering Care

### Objective

We will continue to provide direction and leadership to staff to deliver NIAS responsibilities within unscheduled and scheduled care planning to ensure patients feel professionally cared for with compassion and respect.

We will develop service improvement initiatives to deliver efficiencies across our Emergency and non-Emergency Operations to ensure we maximise our use of resources.

We will continue to deliver the Patient Care Service (PCS) improvement programme to further enhance the quality and efficiency of our service for this important patient population.

We will continue to increase the capacity, skill-set and skill-mix of Clinical Support Desk clinicians to increase the Clinical Hear and Treat (H&T) rates to reduce unnecessary patient conveyance.

We will continue to embed the regional Patient Care Pathways within operational delivery to ensure patients do not attend hospital unnecessarily.

We will work with trusts to develop new alternatives to ED to reduce demand on frontline services and in turn increase the levels of and See and Treat practice.

We will continue to improve the governance around Medical Devices to ensure safe effective care and appropriate asset management.

We will continue to work in partnership across community and voluntary sectors to build a community of lifesavers.

We will continue to improve cardiac arrest survival rates across Northern Ireland.

We will continue to work with partner agencies to identify the right care for high intensity users of our service ensuring we deliver the best care for them and reducing the demand on the emergency 999 system.

We will continue to ensure delivery of NIAS priorities agreed at the Unscheduled Care Summit.

We will contribute to addressing health inequalities in Northern Ireland by adopting the national ambulance health inequalities consensus statement.



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## Key Outcome 2 Our Workforce

### Objective

We will develop a Workforce Strategy, with the aim of supporting and sustaining a skilled and effective workforce.

We will be an employer of choice offering a wide range of roles, clear clinical career pathways and organisational development frameworks with all staff feeling supported to achieve their full potential.

We will place a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing and safety, providing a broad range of support functions to assist them when they are in need particularly following an injury, traumatic or adverse incident

We will help our staff to lead healthy lives, at home and in work, in the knowledge that the Trust has the best possible support structures in place to proactively anticipate support needs and prevention of ill health among our staff.

We will provide meaningful and constructive feedback through structured appraisal and development conversations so that staff feel valued and included in the organisation's vision.

We will ensure staff feel able to speak up without fear of retribution when they have concerns about patient care, their role or their work environment, and will provide safe mechanisms for them to do so.

We will continue to reduce absence levels across the organisation.

We will develop an HR governance framework to meet our statutory obligations and internal assurance requirements.

We will enhance our operational leadership structure to provide more effective support and expanded career opportunities for all operational staff.

We will embed Emergency Planning Resilience and Response (EPRR) within Operations in line with AACE recommendations.

We will expand opportunities for learning and education for operational colleagues at all levels.



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We will continue to deliver the Clinical Education Strategic Transformation programme to optimise clinical excellence, develop our clinicians and their care to patients.

We will continue to expand our clinical career structure with introduction of new specialist posts to complement and enhance clinical care.

We will continue to develop health and safety management systems, including violence prevention, to improve staff health and wellbeing in the workplace.



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## Key Outcome 3 Organisational Development

### Objective

We will develop the planning function within the organisation to support effective internal corporate planning and to ensure readiness for external changes which NIAS will adopt as part of the wider HSC system.

We will continue to develop the performance function, to support the organisation in utilising information to draw insight and evidence to support effective decision-making across the organisation.

We will review the strategic transformation function, along with the resources required to support the delivery of the corporate improvement and transformation agenda.

We will review governance, assurance and risk management approaches to strengthen the extant accountability and assurance mechanisms.

We will continue to maintain an overall satisfactory internal audit opinion for the organisation for 2023-24.

We will continue to improve oversight, financial governance and approvals for business cases.

We will continue to support the achievement of breakeven through advice on income levels and the financial consequences of service delivery, service developments and the achievement of savings requirements.

We will continue to strengthen the Finance Procurement, Fleet and Estates Directorate's management structure.

We will develop an HR service delivery model to support and deliver people transformation agenda.

We will have constructive relationships with our trade unions, working together in partnership to continually improve our services and working arrangements with our staff.

We will have a supportive, inclusive and innovative culture so that we can be as healthy as possible as an organisation, and as individuals, so staff can feel positive and proud to work for NIAS.



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We will be strongly committed to our statutory and policy obligations around promoting equality, non-discrimination and human rights to bring strong values into the heart of all our decision-making and actions.

We will continue to ensure effective management and oversight arrangements of delegated budget to deliver breakeven position in support of overall organisational financial responsibilities.



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## Key Outcome 4 Quality Improvement

### Objective

We will continue to ensure delivery of appropriate infrastructure, training and protection of staff for the Hazardous Area Response Team (HART).

We will develop the appropriate assurance framework and governance within the Department of Clinical Education to ensure we optimise staff development.

We will develop a clinical audit framework to evidence safe and effective practices

We will improve our governance and assurance arrangements for our medication and controlled drugs to safeguard patient safety.

We will implement the Quality and Safety strategy focussing on continual improvement, measuring and evidencing the quality of our services for our patients.

We will continue to implement a robust quality improvement (QI) methodology and increase our QI capabilities.

We will continue to implement an improvement plan to develop our processes in Safeguarding, in partnership, with social care services across HSC to protect vulnerable service users.

We will continue to improve our response to calls related to falls who are aged over 65.

We will continue to maintain high standards of vehicle and station cleanliness



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## Key Outcome 5 Digital Enablers

### Objective

We will continue to implement Electronic Patient Record Form (EPFR) technology to facilitate integrated care and enable clinicians to share patient records across care providers.

We will complete the implementation of a new Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) system within Emergency and Non- Emergency Ambulance Control.

We will implement an online booking system within our Non-Emergency control to optimise resources for patients.

We will continue to develop capacity and capability in our analytics team to enhance service decision making.

We will develop an assurance framework within the information governance team to evidence all aspects of Data Protection and ensure UK GDPR has been implemented within the organisation.

We will continue to consolidate and modernise our technology infrastructure to maintain the service, reduce risk and improve business and service resilience.

We will continue to explore the use of digital solutions to support and enhance the delivery of our services.



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## Key Outcome 6 Our Infrastructure

### Objective

We will develop Trust Estates Strategy

We will develop a Sustainability strategy for the organisation.

We will continue to develop plans for the maintenance and upgrade of the current NIAS Estate to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

We will continue to deliver our capital estates projects to enhance our facilities

We will continue to ensure we get value for money from our commercial leases.

We will continue to ensure the right type of vehicle to support the responses we provide.

We will continue to plan for the introduction of more sustainable fleet throughout our organisation.

## Key Outcome 7 Communication and Engagement

### Objective

We will continue to develop the range of ways service users can give us feedback and be involved in service development and co-production.

We will implement our Communications Strategy to ensure effective staff engagement, feedback and collaboration; encouraging staff to feel positive and proud to work for NIAS.

We will continue to ensure an ongoing effective programme of engagement with staff across the organisation.



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