Report of
DUBLIN
AMBULANCE SERVICE

May 1981
REPORT

on

DUBLIN AMBULANCE SERVICES

EXISTING SITUATION

Introduction

The ambulance and patient transport services in Dublin City and County are provided directly by the Board and on an agency basis by the Dublin Corporation and Dun Laoghaire Corporation. The two Corporations cater mainly for the accident and emergency calls in their respective areas.

The Board operates from two bases in Dublin – 1, James's Street and St. Columcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown, while the Dublin Corporation provides one ambulance at each of the seven Fire Stations around the city and the Dun Laoghaire Corporation provides just one ambulance.

The present level of Service has remained static for many years despite the numerous changes in demand which have resulted from:

1. A considerable increase in population
2. A considerable increase in road traffic density giving slower turn around times.
3. Increased journey times because new houses are being built further and further away from the city centre.
4. Availability of more sophisticated services at major hospitals with particular medical specialities being developed at individual hospitals.
5. Greater affluence with resultant increase in accidental injuries and emergencies.
6. A specialised Cardiac service.
In addition both the medical profession and the general public demand a more effective service which involves having well equipped ambulances on duty, staffed with trained personnel, at all times to respond to all calls which may be received. Coupled to this is the reduced annual working hours of each of the staff involved following on the extra holidays and other benefits.

Within the greater Dublin area the Board runs a service from two bases at this stage as already stated.

**St. James's Base.**

The type of ambulance work which is done from this base is as follows:

1. Cardiac Ambulance Service with special equipment in the ambulances.

2. Home to hospital and inter hospital transfer cases*

3. Infectious diseases with some staff/and ambulances especially prepared for the handling of small pox cases in any part of the country.

4. Maternity calls.

5. Back up service to Dublin Fire Brigade for accident and emergency calls.

6. Home to Day Hospitals and Day Centres of non ambulant patients (using ambulances) and ambulant (using mini-buses) and outpatient transport to major city hospitals.
This base covers all Dublin City and County with the exception of Dun Laoghaire Corporation area and South County Dublin and the level of service provided varies from 11 ambulances and 6 drivers on duty during the normal hour week to 2 ambulances on duty from mid-night to 8 a.m. each day. The staff complement and vehicles involved at this base are:

**Staff**

- Ambulance Drivers 18
- Ambulance Attendants 18
- Minibus Drivers 8
- Mechanic
- Washer
- Supervisor
- Radio Telephone Operators - 6

**Vehicles**

- Ambulances 20
- Minibuses 12
St. Coluracille’s Hospital

The type of ambulance work which is done from this base is all embracing except for the specialised cardiac work, which has been sanctioned and will be introduced gradually and the facility for small pox fever calls.

The area covered extends over all South County Dublin and North East Wicklow including the Dun Laoghaire Fire Brigade operating area and the level of service provided ranges form 3 ambulances and 1 minibus on duty during the normal forty hour week to 2 ambulances from mid-night to 8 a.m. all nights except Thursday when this is reduced to 1 ambulance because of rostering arrangements. The staff complement and vehicles involved are:–

Staff

Ambulance Drivers – 9

Ambulance Attendants – 8

Supervisor – 1 (based at Wicklow with responsibility for that base as well).

Radio Telephone Operator – 0 (work done by hospital telephonist but dispute at present, *

Vehicles

Ambulances
Dublin Corporation.

The Dublin Fire Brigade operates the Accident and Emergency Service in Dublin City and County with the exception of Dun Laoghaire and South County Dublin. The Board recoups the Corporation on an agreed basis annually for this service. The ambulance work is confined to accident and emergency calls including maternity calls.

This service is operated out of seven Fire Stations at different locations around the city.

1. North Strand
2. Kilbarrack
3. Finglas
4. Tara Street
5. Rathmines
6. Dolphin's Barn
7. Buckingham Street

Each Station operates on the basis of one ambulance on duty at all times manned by a crew of two. Front line supervision is provided by the Fire Station Officer on duty and the radio control is operated by a fully manned control centre at Tara Street to which all "999" calls are directed.
Dun Laoghaire Corporation.
The Dun Laoghaire Fire Brigade operates an Accident and Emergency Service from the Fire Station at Georges Place for Dun Laoghaire and South County Dublin. This service does not cater for fever, home, nor maternity calls and this together with the limited area served "results in higher costs per call than those in our own service or in the Dublin Fire Brigade. The Board recoups the Corporation on a basis proposed and accepted in 1963 but since then in dispute as the Corporation are of the opinion that they are not being adequately compensated. There is one ambulance on duty which involves a staff complement of 10 to 11 men but if the full quota of men are not on duty on any shift the Fire Services take precedence and the ambulance is not manned. The Board has issued notice to the Corporation of the intention to terminate this arrangement on the 31st December next. The proposal is to increase the staff at St. Columcille's Hospital to meet the current demands by the addition of one extra vehicle on duty at all times, financed by the monies now paid to this Corporation.

Supervision and Administration.
Assigned specifically to this service are the following:-

**Supervision**
- Chief Ambulance Officer
- Transport Officer

**Supervisor**
- Dublin
- Part-time Supervisor
- St. Columcille's Hospital

**Administration**
- Assistant Section Officer
- Clerical Officer
- Clerk/Typist

Involved in administration for whole region.

Over/
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

The ambulance man is no longer a mere carrier of sick people to hospital, he is now a trained person capable of diagnosing injuries and illnesses and treating same in such a manner as to keep the patient in as stable a condition as possible during the transportation process. Thus the ambulance as a vehicle is no longer a sort of human refuse freighter it is now a mini mobile hospital. The people involved in this service must thus be trained not only as at present, but must receive refresher courses and advanced training. This of necessity suggests that as time goes on the ambulance man will be expected to specialise more and more. And so I think it behoves this Board to seriously consider the operation of the Accident and Emergency Service directly by our own staff thus ceasing the involvement with the Fire Services as at present. Firemen do preform a very important and valuable service to the Community and like the ambulance man their service is one which requires more and more specialisation to keep pace with the developments in technology and social life patterns and the consequences of these developments. These men have given good service in Dublin City and Dun Laoghaire, but I think the time has come when we must consider whether that service can continue in the form in which it is now being delivered.

In planning for the future we thus have to consider not only the increased demands on our present service but also our proposals for the planned phased cessation of the involvement of the Fire Services and the take over of these directly by the Board. In addition to the increased specialisation of ambulance work, the operation of the total service i.e. Accident Emergency, Cardiac, Home to Hospital, Infectious Diseases etc. by the one service
will provide a greater return in terms of cost benefit than at present. To cater for the whole Dublin City and County Region will require a number of Bases at strategic locations.

The Dublin Fire Brigade as already stated operate from 7 stations with three to four new ones at planning stage. In view of the mobility of the ambulance as compared to a fire tender and the relatively small staff complement involved I would envisage the development of four Bases in all, each with a number of sub-bases. The locations for the Bases and sub-bases would be:

1. 1, James's Street – Cherry Orchard and Ringsend
2. St. Columcille's Hospital – York Road
4. Tallaght – Blanchardstown and Ballyboden

This approach should get over the response delays associated with concentrating all the resources in a small number of locations and at the other extreme developing very small employing units for a 2k hour service with the consequent manning difficulties associated with annual/sick leave etc. Each sub-base, would be a satellite of the Base concerned and for convenience associated with an existing Health Centre or Hostel as appropriate: this would provide the facility for a quick response particularly during the high traffic density times. Each Base would have the necessary number of Accident/Emergency Ambulances on duty around the clock, with extra ambulances and mini buses available for the home to hospital, day hospital, out-patients and clinic work.
Regionalised Control Centre.

New equipment has been installed at 1, James's Street for the radio control of all ambulances and other patient transport vehicles in the entire Region. The operation of this equipment will be introduced on a phased basis once agreement is reached with the radio/telephone operators. Extra staff will of course be required to cater for the increased volume of work which will naturally result when the new system is fully operational.

Service Proposals

This envisages the establishment of two new Bases and the extension of the existing ones at 1, James's Street and St. Columcille's Hospital. This development is necessary for two reasons:

(a) extension of our existing services and

(b) the provision of a full service provided direct by the Board incorporating the Accident and Emergency Services in addition to the existing work.

A. Existing Services

The present staff level at 1, James's Street is not capable of meeting the ever increasing demands. In addition the number employed here is sufficiently large to provide for effective manpower management. I would thus recommend that when badly needed extra employments are created a new Base be established at St. Clare's Home and the new staff employed there. If you agree to this proposal I would further recommend that the siting of this new Base within the St. Clare's complex be agreed to immediately.

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B. Total Service.

In our letter of termination to the Dun Laoghaire Borough we indicated that it was our intention to cease the maintenance of indefinite links with the local fire brigades. I thus recommend that we inform the Dublin Corporation immediately that we will provide the Accident and Emergency ambulance services directly in Tallaght, Blanchardstown, Swords etc. where they are building or planning for new Fire Stations as well as the phased take over of the existing ambulance services. If this recommendation is adopted then we would have to consider the establishment of the necessary new Bases and sub-bases without further delay.

Proposed Supervision and Administration.

Our existing supervision is totally inadequate for a service operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have only minimum supervision available during the normal 40 hours working week leaving 128 hours of every week with at least 8 ambulances and 16 staff on duty all unsupervised. In comparison each Fire Station in Dublin has a minimum complement of 9 staff on at all times, two of whom are supervisory and in addition a higher officer is "on-call". The two basic supervisory grades are paid 11% and 5% higher than the basic firemen's rate. An adequate supervisory staff complement is of paramount importance if we are to provide and control a fully effective and responsive service. The longer we put off the introduction of this level of supervision the more difficult it could become to introduce it and following introduction "bad habits" may be hard to correct.

The administrative back up is also inadequate with an Assistant Section Officer, a Clerical Officer and Clerk/Typist at present for a total employment complement of 137 for a service operating
right around the clock. I recommend that this staff be immediately increased with the appointment of a Section Officer at Headquarters and an extra Clerk/Typist as well. This extra staff would of course be involved also in the organisation and running of the National Ambulance Training School and the rotas for the Dublin Emergency Hospitals and Cardiac Units. In addition the employment of clerical assistance at St. Columcille's Hospital Base for pay and similar returns is also urgently required. In addition because of the volume and value of the stocks of spare parts and petrol held at the various locations a Supplies Officer of at least Grade 111 standard is essential.

Overall Staffing Proposals.
Thus the total staff required for a comprehensive service is of the order of 285 which is made up as follows:

1. Existing staff including supervisory and administrative
   75

2. Extra staff to meet increased demands on existing work including cardiac calls
   24

3. Extra staff to cater for termination of Dun Laoghaire Fire Brigade involvement
   12

4. Extra staff to cater for termination of Dublin Corporation involvement at existing 7 stations
   84

5. Extra staff for extension of Accident and Emergency to new areas i.e. 4 new stations
   48

6. Extra staff for Regional Radio Telephone Control
   4
7. Extra supervisory staff 26

8. Extra administrative staff 5

9. Extra stores and Maintenance staff 7

The cost of the increased numbers will be borne in large measure by the annual payments being made at present to the two Corporations.