



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



National Ambulance Service (NAS)

National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Procedure

**With-Holding Care for individuals who are violent or Abusive
(Aged 18 and above)**

Document reference number	<i>NASCC013</i>	Document developed by	NAS Medical Directorate
Revision number	5	Document approved by	NAS Leadership Team
Approval date	14th December 2012	Responsibility for implementation	Each NEOC Manager
Revision date	31st December 2019	Responsibility for review and audit	Control & Performance Manager

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1.0 POLICY

- 1.1 The National Ambulance Service (NAS) has a duty to provide a safe and secure environment for patients, staff and visitors. Violent or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and decisive action will be taken to protect staff, patients and visitors.
- 1.2 NAS acknowledges that there has been an increase in recent years in the level of violence and abuse faced by staff and patients within the HSE as a whole. Incidents have included significant injury to staff, damage to vital equipment and extreme verbal abuse and threats. Sadly, some of the perpetrators of violence and abuse are well known to staff and have persisted in these behaviours during repeated calls for our services. There is widespread recognition throughout the HSE of the need to tackle such behaviour effectively and a belief that the fear of violence is affecting morale and may affect our ability to retain and recruit staff.
- 1.3 NAS has a statutory obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for its staff and others as well as a moral duty to take all reasonable steps to protect and support its staff. NAS staff members are entitled to a safe working environment, and the NAS acknowledges that such incidents may have differing impacts on individual staff members.
- 1.4 This Procedure has been introduced in the context of the HSE's initiative against violence and it must be applied effectively in all appropriate situations.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 To support the implementation of Policy – NASWS020 – Managing Violence and Aggression towards Staff
- 2.2 To provide an important step in improving the NAS's ability to tackle incidents involving violence and abuse.
- 2.3 To detail the behaviours which are unacceptable and the sanctions available in the face of such behaviour, including a mechanism whereby patients who are extreme or persistent in their unacceptable behaviour can, as a last resort, be excluded from the services offered by the NAS.

3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 This Procedure applies to all members of staff within the NAS.
- 3.2 The use of this Procedure will only apply to violent or abusive patients and others **who are aged 18 and over.**
- 3.3 Those patients who, in the professional judgment of the relevant Practitioner do not have capacity will not be subject to this Procedure e.g. an individual who becomes abusive as a result of an illness or injury.

4.0 LEGISLATION/OTHER RELATED POLICIES

- A. Policy – NASWS020 – Managing Violence and Aggression towards Staff
- B. National Ambulance Service Parent Safety Statement
- C. Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003
- D. Mental Health Act 2001

5.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 The withholding of care refers to the delay imposed while awaiting the arrival of the Gardai.
- 5.2 For definitions of Violence or Abuse, please see Policy – NASWS020 – Managing Violence and Aggression towards Staff.
- 5.3 Persistent unacceptable behaviour refers to behaviour over a number of separate attendances within the period of sanction normally 12 months.

Unacceptable Standards of Behaviour :

- 5.4 The following are examples of behaviour not acceptable to NAS staff, visitors and patients:
 - A. Excessive noise, e.g. loud or intrusive conversation or shouting
 - B. Threatening or abusive language involving excessive swearing or offensive remarks
 - C. Derogatory racial or sexual remarks
 - D. Malicious allegations relating to members of staff, other patients or visitors

- E. Offensive sexual gestures or behaviours
- F. Willful damage to Service property
- G. Theft
- H. Threats or threatening behaviour (including that arising from
- I. drugs or alcohol abuse)
- J. Violence

6.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 NEOC Managers are responsible for ensuring that their Supervisors and Staff are aware of this Procedure.
- 6.2 Each respective NEOC Supervisor is responsible for ensuring Staff member compliance with this Procedure.
- 6.3 Each respective NEOC Staff member is responsible for personal compliance with this Procedure.
- 6.4 Quality, Safety and Risk Managers are responsible for reviewing any related Incident/Near Miss Report.
- 6.5 NEOC Managers are responsible for the maintenance and security of the High Risk Register

7.0 PROCEDURES

7.1 ADULT PATIENTS (age 18 or over)

- 7.1.1 Following any incident, the relevant member of staff will, if possible and appropriate, explain to the patient, in a calm, collected manner that his / her behaviour is unacceptable and describe the expected standards that must be observed.
- 7.1.2 If the behaviour continues, the responsible member of staff will give an informal warning about the possible consequences of further repetition, including that treatment may be delayed if the behaviour continues.
- 7.1.3 Failure to subsequently desist may result in the activation of the Procedure for With-Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive
- 7.1.4 The application of the Procedure for With-Holding Care is divided into two sections and for simplicity is referred to as the Yellow Card and the Red Card.

7.2 GENERAL NOTE

- 7.2.1 All staff are empowered to make the decision to withdraw from the scene of an incident if they feel that the safety of themselves, their colleagues or NAS property is at risk from the violent or abusive actions of a person or persons at the scene of an incident.

- 7.2.2 Where treatment is in progress, or where a patient is in transit and it is not possible to withdraw from an incident, the member of staff will contact NEOC and request urgent Garda assistance stating that the **“STAFF ARE AT RISK”**. NEOC will then contact the Gardai immediately and request Emergency assistance.

7.3 **YELLOW CARD**

- 7.3.1 Where a patient (or other) has behaved in a violent or abusive manner (as described in the policy document) the affected member of staff will complete an Incident/Near Miss Report form and notify the relevant Operations Resource Manager that the incident has occurred.
- 7.3.2 The relevant Operations Resource Manager will complete an assessment.
- 7.3.3 The completed form will be delivered to a Quality, Safety and Risk Manager
- 7.3.4 The relevant Quality, Safety and Risk Manager will review the Incident/Near Miss Report form. If the risk rating is assessed as being of a high risk, a temporary record will be made on the NEOC system to advise that a violent or abusive incident has occurred and that an investigation is in progress. This temporary record will be removed after 28 calendar days from entry.
- 7.3.5 During this 28-day period an investigation of the incident will be conducted, normally by a Quality, Safety and Risk Manager. Where possible the incident investigation will be completed within five working days of the incident occurring. The outcome will be reviewed by the Operational Support and Resilience Manager and the relevant Quality, Safety and Risk Manager. If it is considered appropriate, a letter will be sent to the offending individual, their GP (if known), relevant Director of Nursing and the Divisional Nurse Manager, Emergency Departments.

They will be advised that the patient's behaviour was not acceptable and that recurrence may result in delayed treatment by the NAS

- 7.3.6 A formal entry would then be made on the NEOC system detailing the name and address of the patient, the nature of the non-acceptable conduct and any special action to be taken. A valid until date will also be entered. A formal review of the entry will be made 12 months after the date of entry and if no recurrence has happened the entry would normally be removed.
- 7.3.7 For cases of actual assault or more serious cases of verbal abuse, the Operational Support and Resilience Manager and the relevant Quality, Safety and Risk Manager may instigate the Red Card.

7.4 RED CARD

- 7.4.1 At no time will the dispatch of a resource to the scene be withheld. The withholding of care refers to the delay imposed while awaiting the arrival of the Gardai.
- 7.4.2 Where an individual assaults a member of staff or following repeated verbal threats (on more than one occasion) consideration will be given to the application of a Red Card. This sanction will mean that a resource will be dispatched to the scene of an incident but that the resource will not approach the patient until arrangements are in place for the Gardai to also be in attendance.
- 7.4.3 In the event of a known "Red Card" individual presenting himself/herself at the scene of an incident, the staff member(s) will immediately notify NEOC. NEOC will immediately contact the Gardai and advise them of the circumstances and request urgent attendance at the scene of the incident.
- 7.4.4 Where transportation of a "Red Card" patient is necessary, a Garda will be requested to accompany the patient in the ambulance.
- 7.4.5 Staff may also decline to allow a member of the public (e.g. relative or friend of the patient) to travel with the patient if it is felt that person might constitute a risk to staff.
- 7.4.6 Where a staff member recommends that a Red Card be applied to a patient an investigation (fact finding) will be conducted, normally by a Quality, Safety and Risk Manager. This investigation will be presented to a Review Board that will comprise of the Area Operations Manager, Operational Support and Resilience Manager, relevant Operations Resource Manager and the relevant Quality, Safety and Risk Manager. The Review Board will decide if an exclusion (Red Card) should be applied, the conditions of the sanction and the period of enforcement. All decisions made will be clearly documented, with records being maintained on a central register held by a NEOC Manager.

7.5 OTHERS (anyone who is not a patient or staff member)

- 7.5.1 Visitors to NAS property or persons present at the scene of the incident that display any of the above behaviours, will be asked to refrain and will be offered the opportunity to explain their actions.
- 7.5.2 Continued failure to comply with the required standard of behaviour will result in the offending individual(s) being asked to leave NAS property or asked to leave the scene of the incident.

7.5.3 Any visitor behaving in an unlawful manner will be reported to the Gardai and the NAS will seek the application of the maximum penalties available in law. The NAS will actively seek the prosecution of all perpetrators of crime on or against NAS Staff, property and assets.

7.5.4 The relevant Operations Officer may decide to continue to exclude any individual removed from NAS premises. Exclusion from the scene of an incident is obviously not possible to achieve.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

8.1 This Procedure will be circulated electronically to all Managers, all Supervisors and Staff

8.2 This Procedure will be available in electronic format in each Ambulance Station and NEOC for ease of retrieval and reference

8.3 Each Operational Support and Resilience Manager will ensure that the Manager/Supervisor responsible for updating Policies and Procedures will return the Confirmation Form to NAS Headquarters to confirm document circulation to all staff.

9.0 Revision History:

(This captures any changes that are made to a SOP when it has been revised. This may be placed at the back or close to the front of the document according to local preference.)

No	Revision No	Date	Section Amended	Approved by
1	5	03/01/17	Ambulance Control changed to NEOC. Control Manger changed to NEOC Manager.	NEOC Managers

10.0 APPENDICES:

- **Appendix I** – Yellow Card letter –GP
- **Appendix II** – Yellow Card letter – Patient
- **Appendix III** – Yellow Card letter – DON-DNM
- **Appendix IV** – Red Card letter –GP
- **Appendix V** – Red Card letter – Patient
- **Appendix VI** – Red Card letter – DON-DNM
- **Appendix VII** – Procedure Acknowledgement Form

11.0 Signatures of Approval



National Control Operations Manager
On Behalf of the National Ambulance Service

Date: 3rd January 2017



National Ambulance Service Director
On Behalf of the National Ambulance Service

Date: 3rd January 2017

APPENDIX I

Sample Letter to Patient's General Practitioner Yellow Card

Private and Confidential

GP's Name and Address
Date

Dear Dr.XXXXX

Re: Patient's Name, Address, D.O.B. (if known)

The above individual had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) on XXXXX at XXXXX hours.

Whilst our staff were attempting to attend to XXXXX he / she was violent or abusive to our staff. We consider that the extent of this behaviour constitutes a serious risk to our staff and as a means of protecting them have instigated the Service's Procedure for With- Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive.

At this time the NAS has applied the first stage of the Procedure (Yellow Card) which serves as a warning against a repeat of their unacceptable behaviour. Such a repeat may result in the application of the second level (Red Card) where the use of the National Ambulance Service will be withheld until such time as An Garda Siochána can be in attendance before our staff attend the patient.

You are receiving this confidential letter as a safety precaution when dealing with Mr. XXXXX. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Area Operations Manager

APPENDIX II

Sample Letter to Patient Yellow Card

Private and Confidential

Patient's name and address

Date

Dear XXXXX,

Re: Violent or Abusive Behaviour to Ambulance Service Staff

On XXXXX at XXXXX hours you had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS).

We are extremely concerned at your standard of behaviour where you XXXXXXXXXX. We believe this to be totally unacceptable.

NAS Staff play a vital role in the community and violent or abusive behaviour from patients or others will not be tolerated. Such behaviour is a crime and this Service will assist An Garda Síochána in pushing for the maximum possible penalty for those who are violent or abusive to our staff.

We have authorised a warning to be placed on our computer system that will alert our staff that you were violent or abusive to them on the above date. This warning will be removed after one year if a repeat of similar behaviour does not occur. Should you on any occasion in the future, display violent or abusive behaviour to NAS staff you will become subject to the second stage of the Service's Procedure for With-Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive. This will involve your immediate exclusion from the response of an ambulance crew until An Garda Síochána can be present.

Such exclusion is necessary to protect our staff and may result in a delay in you receiving emergency care whilst arrangements are put in place for An Garda Síochána to be present.

The information stored on our system will be treated in a manner consistent with your rights and entitlements under the Data Protection Act 1988 and 2003

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so by writing to the undersigned in the first instance.

Yours Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Area Operations Manager

APPENDIX III

Sample Letter to Director of Nursing / Divisional Nurse Manager Yellow Card

Private and Confidential

Hospital Name and Address

Date

Dear. XXXXX

Re: Patient's Name, Address, D.O.B. (if known)

The above individual had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) on XXXXX at XXXXX hours.

Whilst our staff were attempting to attend to XXXXX he / she was violent or abusive to our staff. We consider that the extent of this behaviour constitutes a serious risk to our staff, and as a means of protecting them, have instigated the Service's Procedure for With- Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive.

At this time the NAS has applied the first stage of the Procedure (Yellow Card) which serves as a warning against a repeat of their unacceptable behaviour. Such a repeat may result in the application of the second level (Red Card) where the use of the National Ambulance Service will be withheld until such time as An Garda Siochana can be in attendance before our staff attends the patient.

You are receiving this confidential letter as a safety precaution when dealing with Mr. XXXXX. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Area Operations Manager

APPENDIX IV

Sample Letter to Patient's General Practitioner Red Card

Private and Confidential

GP's Name and Address

Date

Dear Dr.XXXXX

Re: Patient's Name, Address, D.O.B. (if known)

The above individual had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) on XXXXX at XXXXX hours and on XXXXX at XXXXX hours.

On both occasions XXXXX he / she was violent or abusive to our staff. We consider that the extent of this behaviour constitutes a serious risk to our staff and as a means of protecting them have instigated the Service's Procedure for With-Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive.

At this time the NAS has applied the second stage of the Procedure (Red Card) which means that the services of the National Ambulance Service will be withheld until such time as An Garda Siochana can be in attendance before our staff attends the patient.

You are receiving this confidential letter to notify you of possible delays when requesting emergency assistance for XXXXX and also as a safety precaution when dealing with XXXXX. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Area Operations Manager

APPENDIXV

Sample Letter to Patient Red Card

Private and Confidential

Patient's name and address

Date

DearXXXXX,

Re: Violent or Abusive Behaviour to Ambulance Service Staff

On XXXXX at XXXXX hours and on XXXXX at XXXXX hours you had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS).

We are extremely concerned at your standard of behaviour of both occasions where you XXXXXXXXXX. We believe this to be totally unacceptable.

NAS Staff play a vital role in the community and violent or abusive behaviour from patients or others will not be tolerated. Such behaviour is a crime and this Service will assist An Garda Siochana in pushing for the maximum possible penalty for those who are violent or abusive to our staff.

We have authorised a warning to be placed on our computer system that will alert our staff that you were violent or abusive to them on the above dates. You are now subject to the Service's Procedure for With-Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive. This will involve your immediate exclusion from the response of our staff until An Garda Siochana can be present.

This warning will be removed after one year if a repeat of similar behaviour does not occur. The information stored on our system will be treated in a manner consistent with your rights and entitlements under the Data protection Act 1988 and 2003.

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so by writing to the undersigned in the first instance.

YoursSincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Area Operations Manager

APPENDIXVI

**Sample Letter to Director of Nursing/Divisional Nurse Manager
Red Card**

Private and Confidential

Hospital Name and Address

Date

Dear.XXXXX

Re: Patient's Name, Address, D.O.B. (if known)

The above individual had cause to use the services of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) on XXXXX at XXXXX hours and on XXXXX at XXXXXhours.

On both occasions XXXXX he / she was violent or abusive to our staff. We consider that the extent of this behaviour constitutes a serious risk to our staff and as a means of protecting them have instigated the Service's Procedure for With-Holding Care of Individuals who are Violent or Abusive.

At this time the NAS has applied the second stage of the Procedure (Red Card) which means that the services of the National Ambulance Service will be withheld until such time as An Garda Siochana can be in attendance before our staff attends the patient.

You are receiving this confidential letter as a safety precaution when dealing with XXXXX. If you have any queries please do nothesitate to contact our office.

YoursSincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Area Operations Manager

Appendix VII

Document Control No. 1 (to be attached to Master Copy)

NASCC013 With-Holding Care for Individuals who are Violent or Abusive (Aged 18 and above)

Reviewer: The purpose of this statement is to ensure that a Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline (PPPG) proposed for implementation in the HSE is circulated to a peer reviewer (internal or external), in advance of approval of the PPPG. You are asked to sign this form to confirm to the committee developing this Policy or Procedure or Protocol or Guideline that you have reviewed and agreed the content and recommend the approval of the following Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

Title of Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

NASCC013 With-Holding Care for Individuals who are Violent or Abusive (Aged 18 and above)

I acknowledge the following:

- I have been provided with a copy of the Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline described above.
- I have read Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline document.
- I agree with the Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline and recommend its approval by the committee developing the PPPG.

Name

Signature (Block Capitals)

Date

Please return this completed form to:

Name: Niamh Murphy
Contact Details: Corporate Office
National Ambulance Service
Rivers Building
Tallaght Cross
Dublin 24
email niamhf.murphy1@hse.ie

Document Control No. 2 (to be attached to Master Copy)

**Key Stakeholders Review of Policy, Procedure, Protocol or
Guidance Reviewer Statement**

Reviewer: The purpose of this statement is to ensure that a Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline (PPPG) proposed for implementation in the HSE is circulated to Managers of Employees who have a stake in the PPPG, in advance of approval of the PPPG. You are asked to sign this form to confirm to the committee developing this Policy or Procedure or Protocol or Guideline that you have seen and agree to the following Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

Title of Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

NASCC013 With-Holding Care for Individuals who are Violent or Abusive (Aged 18 and above)

I acknowledge the following:

- I have been provided with a copy of the Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline described above.
- I have read Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline document.
- I agree with the Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline and recommend its approval by the committee developing the PPPG.

Name

Signature (Block Capitals)

Date

Please return this completed form to:

Name: Niamh Murphy
Contact Details: Corporate Office
National Ambulance Service
Rivers Building
Tallaght Cross
Dublin 24
email niamhf.murphy1@hse.ie

Document Control No. 3 Signature Sheet:
(to be attached to Master Copy)

Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

NASCC013 With-Holding Care for Individuals who are Violent or Abusive (Aged 18 and above)

I have read, understand and agree to adhere to the attached Policy, Procedure, Protocol or Guideline:

Print Name	Signature	Area of Work	Date