



Unannounced Infection Prevention/Hygiene Inspection

Ballymena Ambulance Station
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
13 February 2019

www.rqia.org.uk

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1.0 Profile of Service

On 13 February 2019, an unannounced inspection was undertaken to Ballymena Ambulance Station. Ballymena Ambulance station is a new purpose built facility, which has been operational since April 2016, to serve the population of Ballymena and surrounding areas (Picture 1).

Ballymena Ambulance Station houses 43 staff, five emergency ambulances, a rapid response vehicle and three non-emergency patient care vehicles. The station contains administrative facilities, district headquarters, training and clinical support facilities, garaging and car parking on a green field site between Ballee Road West and the Antrim Road in Ballymena.



Picture 1: Ballymena Ambulance Station

This unannounced inspection to Ballymena Ambulance Station has been assessed and scored using a bespoke audit tool based on the Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards developed in collaboration with NIAS staff.

Background

During 2018 RQIA carried out a number of hygiene, cleanliness and infection prevention and control (IPC) monitoring visits to NIAS divisions and stations across Northern Ireland. These visits were to assess adherence to best practice guidance and organisational governance and assurance processes in relation to hygiene, cleanliness and IPC. As part of these monitoring visits Ballymena Ambulance Station was visited in February and November 2018.

During these visits, we identified some areas for focused improvement in relation to the station environment, vehicle and equipment cleaning, and staff knowledge of IPC practices.

We also identified issues regarding internal monitoring and assurance mechanisms relating to hygiene, cleanliness and IPC within the station. These were highlighted to the Station Officer for action. They were also raised with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Chief Executive and senior staff during a NIAS Review Meeting held on 17 December 2018. As a result a decision was made to carry out a fully scored inspection to Ballymena Station to assess the implementation and adherence to best practice guidance in relation to hygiene, cleanliness and IPC.

Service Details

Responsible Person: Mr. Michael Bloomfield	Position: Chief Executive Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
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What We Look for

Our inspection standards are intended to assess healthcare hygiene, general cleanliness and state of repair of the ambulance station and vehicles and include aspects of infection prevention and control.

Our inspection tool includes the following sections:

- General Environment
- Patient Linen
- Waste and Sharps
- Patient Equipment
- Hygiene Factors/ Cleaning Practices
- Hygiene Practices/ Staff Questions

Guided by our inspection tool our Inspectors gather information from observations in functional areas (including direct questioning and observation of clinical practice) and, where appropriate, review of relevant documentation.

Our inspection tool is available on our website at www.rqia.org.uk

2.0 Inspection Summary

This inspection team consisted of two inspectors from RQIA's Health and Social Care (HSC) Healthcare Team. Details of our inspection team and NIAS representatives who participated in a local feedback session delivered in Ballymena Ambulance Station on 13 February 2019 can be found in Section 4.0.

The table below summarises the overall compliance levels achieved in relation to each section of the inspection tool. Scores are allocated a level of compliance using the categories described below.

Level of Compliance

Compliant:	85% or above
Partial Compliance:	76% to 84%
Minimal Compliance:	75% or below

Areas inspected	
General environment	96
Patient linen	89
Waste	90
Sharps	100
Equipment	98
Hygiene factors	96
Hygiene practices	91
Average Score	94

Standard: General Environment

To comply with this standard, organisations must provide an environment, which is well maintained, visibly clean, and free from dust and debris.

General environment	
General Environment	98
Vehicles 1 (Internal)	100
Vehicles 2 (Internal)	100
Dirty utility room/ Garage	98
Domestic store	93
Equipment / Stock store	86
General information	100
Average Score	96

Standard: Patient Linen

For organisations to comply with this standard, patient linen should be clean, free of damage, handled safely and stored in a clean and tidy environment.

Patient linen	
Storage of clean and used linen (Merged)	89

Standard: Waste and Sharps

To comply with this standard, organisations must ensure that waste is managed in accordance with HTM07-01 and Hazardous Waste (Northern Ireland) Regulations (2005).

Waste and sharps	
Handling, segregation, storage, waste	90
Availability, use, storage of sharps	100

Standard: Patient Equipment

To comply with this standard, organisations must ensure that patient equipment is appropriately decontaminated.

Patient equipment	
Vehicle 1 & 2	98

Standard: Hygiene Factors/Cleaning Practices

To comply with this standard, organisations must ensure that a range of fixtures, fittings and equipment is available so that hygiene practices can be carried out effectively.

Hygiene factors	
Availability and cleanliness of wash hand basin and consumables	100
Availability of alcohol rub	100
Availability of PPE	100
Materials and equipment for cleaning	83
Average Score	96

Standard: Hygiene Practices

To comply with this standard, organisations must ensure that appropriate healthcare hygiene practices are embedded into the delivery of care and related services.

Hygiene practices	
Effective hand hygiene procedures	100
Safe handling and disposal of sharps	100
Effective use of PPE	100
Management of ANTT	50
Effective cleaning of station, vehicles and equipment	100
Staff uniform and work wear	100
Training and Audit	88
Average Score	91

*Clinical practice not observed. Result obtained through observation and staff questioning.

This has been a positive inspection; staff are commended for achieving good compliance with all sections of the audit tool.

Ballymena Ambulance Station is a modern purpose built facility. Maintenance and cleanliness throughout the station was excellent. We observed effective cleaning of ambulance vehicle internal surfaces and equipment, with good attention to detail.

IPC information posters were clearly displayed throughout the station. We observed good practices in relation to the management of linen, waste and sharps. Hand washing facilities and a range of hand hygiene consumables for example hand soap and hand towels were readily available to encourage staff use and more effective hand hygiene practices. All staff questioned had an excellent knowledge of standard IPC precautions.

We identified that improvement is required to ensure domestic cleaning equipment is clean and fit for purpose, single use patient equipment and disinfectant chemicals are used within their expiry date and reorganisation and decluttering of equipment stores.

This unannounced inspection of Ballymena Ambulance Station has resulted in four actions for improvement.

Escalation procedures were not required for this inspection. The escalation policies and procedures are available on the RQIA website.

RQIA would like to thank NIAS and in particular staff at the Ballymena Ambulance Station for their assistance during this inspection.

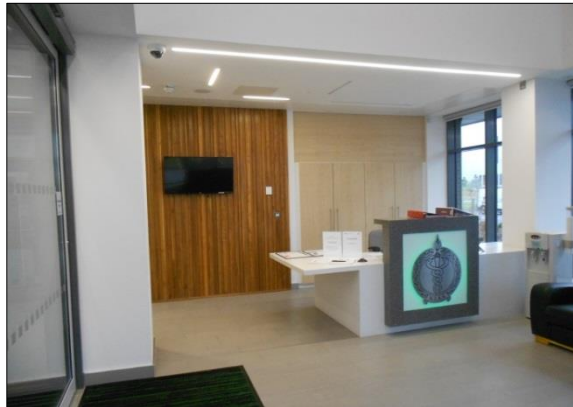
This inspection report and improvement plan will be available on the RQIA website. When required, reports and action plans may be part of discussion with and subsequent performance management by the Health and Social Care Board and/or the Department of Health.

3.0 Inspection Findings

General Environment - Maintenance and Cleanliness

Areas of Good Practice

- The station environment was bright, calm and welcoming for visitors. The environmental cleanliness of the station was of an excellent standard (Picture 2).



Picture 2: Ballymena Station Entrance Foyer

- Ballymena Ambulance Station is a new purpose built facility, which has been operational since April 2016. The fabric of the building and its fixtures, fittings and furnishing are modern and finished to a high standard. It is evident that IPC had been considered and incorporated into the layout and design of this station. The station has a separate dirty utility room, clean storage areas and internal and external vehicle wash areas; these have allowed for a clean to dirty workflow.
- We inspected two emergency ambulance vehicles. We observed effective cleaning of all internal surfaces (Picture 3). The employment of vehicle cleaning operatives has had a positive effect on the standard of vehicle cleanliness. Itemised vehicle cleaning check lists/certificates are signed off on the completion of each vehicle deep clean. Station supervisors carry out routine inspections of vehicles to assure the standard of vehicle cleaning is maintained.



Picture 3: Clean Ambulance Surfaces and Equipment

- Information posters and pictorial aides were clearly displayed throughout the station to guide staff in the implementation of standard IPC practices.

Area for Improvement

- The station is fortunate to have a number of large dedicated equipment storerooms. However, we observed these rooms were cluttered and equipment storage was not organised. In order to promote effective cleaning practices and facilitate easy access to equipment, these rooms require decluttering and reorganisation. Improving storage systems (shelving, cupboards) will help maximise space.

Action for Improvement

- 1. Equipment storerooms should be decluttered and equipment reorganised to allow effective cleaning practices and easy access to equipment.**

Patient Linen

Areas of Good Practice

- Clean linen was observed stored appropriately packaged and on shelving within a designated clean linen storeroom.
- Staff were knowledgeable in the management of soiled linen.

Area for Improvement

- The used linen skip was rusted, dirty and needs to be replaced. The skip should be relocated within the dirty utility room (Picture 4).



Picture 4: Rusted Linen Skip

Waste and Sharps

Areas of Good Practice

- Waste receivers within ambulances were clean and well maintained. Waste bins within the station were clean and we observed correct segregation of waste.
- Sharps containers in ambulances were clean, assembled correctly, the temporary closure mechanisms were in place and the containers were secure.

Area for Improvement

- We observed that non-sharps waste for example paper packaging had at times been placed within sharps containers.

Equipment

Areas of Good Practice

- Reusable patient equipment within vehicles was clean, well maintained and itemised on a cleaning schedule. Equipment cleaning schedules were fully completed, providing assurance of routine cleaning.

- Stored patient equipment was clean and in a good state of repair.

Area for Improvement

- On most occasions we observed that single use equipment was stored correctly, with evidence of good stock rotation. However, we observed equipment (50ml syringes) in the equipment store and in an ambulance passed their expiry date.

Hygiene Factors/Cleaning Practices

Areas of Good Practice

- Cleaning disinfectant chemicals were stored in a locked cabinet, in line with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) guidance.
- We observed that hand washing facilities and a range of consumables for example hand soap and paper towels were available to enable hand hygiene practices to be carried out effectively.

Areas for Improvement

- There was no station-cleaning schedule available for cleaning staff. We were provided with a draft copy of the Trust wide NIAS Stations Cleaning schedule. It is important that this schedule is implemented to ensure cleaning staff are fully aware of their daily cleaning responsibilities throughout the station.
- New reusable domestic cleaning equipment is required. We observed cleaning equipment including; vacuum head floor brush and a dust sweeper mop that were dirty and fit for purpose.
- We observed a number of tubs of chlorine disinfectant had passed their expiry date, therefore no longer effective for decontamination.

Actions for Improvement

- 2. All cleaning equipment should be clean and fit for purpose. Robust processes should be introduced to assure the decontamination and replacement of cleaning equipment.**

- 3. All staff should ensure that single use equipment and cleaning disinfectant products are used within their expiry date.**

Hygiene Practices/Staff Questions

Area of Good Practice

- All staff who engaged with inspectors had received IPC refresher training. Their knowledge of standard IPC precautions, which included hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the management of sharps and waste was excellent.

Area for Improvement

- We found no evidence of the formal assessment of staff adherence to aseptic non–touch technique (ANTT) practice when performing invasive procedures.

Action for Improvement

- 4. All ambulance staff involved in performing invasive procedures should have ongoing formal assessments of adherence to ANTT.**

4.0 Key Personnel and Information

Members of the RQIA inspection team

Mr T Hughes	Inspector, Healthcare Team
Ms J Gilmour	Inspector, Healthcare Team

Trust representatives attending the feedback session on 13 February 2019

The key findings of the inspection were outlined to the following trust representatives:

Mr G Tumelty	Northern Division Area Manager
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