

# Case Study

## Promoting safer manual and patient handling in the National Ambulance Service

This case study demonstrates how an in-depth risk assessment of patient and manual handling activities led to the development of bespoke training and supports for ambulance personnel

### **Organisation:**

National Ambulance Service  
Health Service Executive

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# Background

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) provides pre-hospital care to the people of Ireland. Due to uncontrolled working environments, the NAS acknowledged that there is an increased manual handling risk to staff when delivering its services. It was identified that the standard Manual Handling and People Handling QQI training programme did not adequately meet the needs of the pre-hospital care workforce.

## Steps taken

To address the issue, a working group was formed with membership from the NAS, the HSE's National Health and Safety Function and a specialist ergonomist.

This working group:

- reviewed the NAS manual handling and people handling incident data
- reviewed current training programme
- risk assessed complex techniques using MAC, RAPP, RIBA and RULA tools
- consulted with staff representatives and instructors
- carried out a gap analysis and training needs analysis
- piloted the draft Manual Handling Training programme to NAS instructors and staff, feedback was sought
- developed an SOP for each technique, with supporting photos/videos of the techniques being performed correctly.

## Outcome

The outcome has been that the standard level six QQI Manual Handling and People Handling programme has been enhanced with the addition of a NAS-specific two-day programme. This is taught by the contracted QQI instructor with senior NAS Manual Handling and People Handling Paramedicine Tutors supporting the two-day NAS-specific element.

In light of the risk profile of NAS, approval was granted manual handling training to provide at a two-yearly interval rather than the standard three-yearly interval to all NAS frontline staff.

In addition to the training, staff will be supported with a booklet of SOPs for NAS specific activities.

To support the overarching governance, a documented process has been developed for Manual Handling and People Handling training within NAS.

72 NAS Manual Handling and People Handling instructors have been trained or recertified in the NAS-specific programme, with ongoing instructor engagement to evaluate the effective delivery of the programme. All frontline staff have now been trained in the new programme.

An evaluation survey of instructors indicated that:

- 85% preferred the new programme
- 90% found the new programme more practical and relevant and
- 90% believed the training has promoted a better safety culture within the NAS.

## Challenges in implementing solutions

The main challenges in implementing solutions have been the balancing the rights of NAS staff to a safe system of work and the rights of our patients to safe and effective care, even in emergency situations and changing the culture from what was the traditional approach to Manual Handling and People Handling.

## Critical Success Factors

The critical success factors include:

- Support of senior NAS management throughout the process
- Access to the contracted ergonomist
- Empowering staff to make a risk-based decision through conducting both a mobility assessment and a clinical assessment for patients, allowing patients to self-mobilise where clinically appropriate
- Remaining aligned with the HSEs Manual Handling and People Handling Policy
- Joining the HSEs Manual Handling and People Handling subject matter expert group, allowing access to expertise and support.