Question 29 (Deputy Louise O’Reilly)
To ask the Minister for Health to advise what steps he intends taking to address the wholly inadequate ambulance provision in the Cavan Monaghan area and to advise the criteria employed in determining at ambulance control what ambulance and from what centre would be deployed in any given situation.

HSE Response:

The Ambulance Service for the Cavan Monaghan area operates from locations in Cavan Town, Monaghan Town, Castleblayney and Virginia. Ambulance resources from neighbouring counties e.g. by Meath, Louth and Westmeath can also be dispatched to calls in these counties depending on the closest resources to the call at any point in time. This dispatch approach also includes the use of air assets if necessary as a primary or secondary response.

The NAS Emergency Operations Centre dynamically deploys resources to areas where cover is required or to respond to incidents as they arise to ensure the nearest available ambulance responds to emergencies. Care begins immediately from when the emergency call is received, where lifesaving pre-arrival assistance is given by the emergency call takers directly to the patient or any third party that is available to assist. This pre-arrival care can include the delivery of medications, CPR, use of defibrillator, haemorrhage control, childbirth and many other emergencies that present.

This care is then transferred to the arriving paramedics, where it is followed through to the safe transportation and handover of the patient to the clinical team at the receiving hospital. NEOC utilises an Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) which utilises international standards in triaging and prioritising emergency calls. This system ensures that life threatening calls receive an immediate and appropriate response, while lower acuity calls may have to wait until resources become available.

These arrangements are seeking to ensure that timely and safe patient care is being delivered in this area, similar to other parts of the country, as far as possible within the resources available.

The National Ambulance Service capacity review undertaken in 2016 identified a number of key areas for development which include:

The continuous monitoring of service delivery and the transition of communications from analogue to digital (voice and data).
- The implementation of the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS).
- The establishment of 3 clinical layers of care delivery, (EMT’s, Paramedics and Advanced Paramedics) and the continuous upskilling of all three grades.
- The introduction of an Intermediate Care Service to provide for inter facility transfers.
- The introduction of the Emergency Aeromedical service.
- The development of the Community First responder Scheme.

Substantial progress has been made in relation to these key service enhancements in the period since 2016. The Strategic plan for Ambulance Service (published in 2017) is also informing the development programme
for the Ambulance Service at local and national level.