



## THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

National Health Service in Scotland  
Management Executive

NHS  
MEL(1993)47

St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague

### PATIENT AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE

#### Summary

1. This letter gives details of the new contract(s) and arrangements made by the Scottish Ambulance Service for the provision of the Patient Air Transport Service to run for 5 years from 1 April 1993.

#### Action

2. General Managers, Chief Executives and Chief Executives Designate are asked to ensure that all NHS staff affected by the new arrangements for Patient Air Transport Services note the information contained in the Annex to this letter and in the booklet 'Your Guide to Patient Air Transport in Scotland' which has been issued by the Scottish Ambulance Service to all GPs and other relevant staff. Staff should familiarise themselves with the range of services available and the procedures for making arrangements for the transport of patients by air.

3. To be copied to Unit General Managers for action.

Yours sincerely

G W TUCKER

30 March 1993

#### Addressees

For action:  
General Managers,  
Health Boards

Chief Executives,  
NHS Trusts

General Manager,  
Common Services Agency

For information  
Chief Executives  
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NHS Trusts

General Manager,  
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To be copied to Unit  
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**ANNEX A**

**Background**

1. Following the recommendations of a review of Patient Air Transport in Scotland, the Scottish Ambulance Service has decided that:-

1.1 There are significant potential advantages in the greater use of helicopters, particularly in more remote areas.

1.2 A central 'air desk' should co-ordinate the deployment of all the resources available for patient transport by air throughout Scotland.

**New Contract Arrangements**

2. After a competitive tendering exercise, contracts were awarded by the Scottish Ambulance Service to Loganair and Bond Helicopters. Details of the contracts and types of aircraft involved are set out below:-

<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Aircraft</b>	<b>Contractor</b>
Lerwick	BN Islander (Fixed wing)	Loganair
Kirkwall	BN Islander (Fixed wing)	Loganair
Aberdeen	King Air (Fixed wing)	Bond
Inverness	Bolkow 105 DBS (Helicopter)	Bond
Plockton	SA 365C (Helicopter)	Bond
Prestwick	Bolkow 105 DBS (Helicopter)	Bond
Aberdeen	Other back-up aircraft	Bond

**Improvements to existing Service**

3. The new Air Ambulance arrangements will provide an increased range of ambulance options in Scotland, including the following improvements:-

3.1 A 24 hour a day AIR DESK in Aberdeen to co-ordinate the deployment of air ambulances in the most effective way and in the best interests of patient care.

3.2 The ability to provide a long distance service for high dependency patients in a fast and comfortable aircraft with improved levels of patient care.

3.3 A back-up service for aircraft away on other missions where currently there is none.

3.4 A large increase in the number and type of aircraft on which call can be made, particularly in the Western Isles.

3.5 The availability of a total of 3 helicopters (at least 2 of which will always be crewed by Paramedics) which are able to land at sites away from designated airfields.

#### **In Orkney and Shetland**

3.6 A dedicated, fully equipped Air Ambulance aircraft in Orkney not dependent upon its release from inter island schedules and with higher levels of patient care equipment.

3.7 Provision for back-up aircraft from the mainland if either the Kirkwall or Lerwick based Islander is deployed. This is likely to be the King Air from Aberdeen.

3.8 The provision, when appropriate, of Scottish Ambulance Service personnel based in either Orkney or Aberdeen as escorts on board Air Ambulances.

#### **Arrangements for the new service**

4. The Scottish Ambulance Service has appointed Mr Andrew Marsden, a consultant in A & E medicine as its Consultant Medical Director with responsibility for improving the quality of clinical care provided by the SAS.

5. Guidelines on ordering procedures, categorisation of patients and other useful information are contained in 'Your Guide to Patient Air Transport in Scotland' which is being distributed by the Scottish Ambulance Service. General practitioners and others affected by these changes should receive a copy of 'Your guide to Patient Air Transport in Scotland' by 1 April 1993.

The main points to be considered are:-

5.1 All Air Ambulance Services will be deployed by the Air Desk in Aberdeen, including Coastguard and MoD Helicopters (when used for patient transport services) which must not be ordered directly by GPs.

5.2 The Clinician choosing to arrange for air, rather than ground transport is responsible for this decision. Air assets are very costly and aimed at priority cases. A clinical audit will be conducted by the Consultant Medical Director on all patient journeys. In any cases of concern to the ambulance service he will be available to discuss these with the doctor or service user involved. Inappropriate use of air ambulance services may result in a charge being levied on the Health Board.

5.3 For the transport of high dependency patients outwith Scotland, costs will continue to fall, as at present to Health Boards or Trusts. Such patients will normally be carried by the King Air based in Aberdeen which has appropriate facilities. Full details of the procedures are available from Mr A Marsden, Consultant Medical Director, Scottish Ambulance Service.

5.4 Scheduled air services for NHS patients will continue to be ordered through local Ambulance Controls.