

## Explanation of Current Civil Defence and PHECC Issue

Civil Defence is a volunteer based organisation of approximately 3,500 volunteers who give generously of their time and expertise for their community and in support of the Principal Response Agencies. They are managed within each Local Authority by a Civil Defence Officer (CDO) and/or an Assistant Civil Defence Officer (ACDO).

Civil Defence is multi skilled organisation with the provision of emergency medical services cover to sporting events and community activities constituting a large part of the operations of the organisation. In 2018, Civil Defence undertook a total of 2,795 operations. In terms of numbers, currently Civil Defence have approximately 2,000 Cardiac First Responders (CFR), 1,000 First Aid Responders (FAR), 500 Emergency First Responders (EFR), 280 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), 52 Paramedics (P) and 24 Advanced Paramedics (AP) volunteering for Civil Defence.

The 2015 Government White Paper on Defence <https://www.civildefence.ie/department-of-defence-white-paper-chapter-9-civil-defence/> outlines that the Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence is responsible for the strategic management and development of Civil Defence at a national level. It provides grant aid, policy advice and training to support local Civil Defence units.

The White Paper recognises the important role of Local Government in the management of Civil Defence. The CDO and/or ACDO, who is an employee of the Local Authority, is responsible for the day-to-day management of Civil Defence in their Local Authority area.

In terms of the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC), they are the regulator for emergency medical services (EMS) in Ireland and their role is to protect the public. PHECC require organisations who wish to be operational, to apply to PHECC for an annual licence to operate. As part of the application process for Civil Defence to have a “licence to operate” and thus provide an emergency medical service up to Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) level, the Department of Defence previously signed the statutory declaration required by PHECC.

Civil Defence’s current licence was due to expire at the end of November 2018. In advance of the renewal process, the Department of Defence reviewed the statutory declaration. That review identified that some assurances and details required as part of the licensing process are not within the control or remit of the Department of Defence as responsibility for operations rests with local authorities as set out in the 2015 Government White Paper on Defence.

An example of one of the assurance (section M) required as part of the declaration is

*“The applicant has medications and equipment for the administration of pre-hospital emergency care available, when providing a pre hospital emergency care service in a vehicle, an aircraft, maritime craft or a first aid/medical post which are appropriate to the clinical levels as outlined in the current PHECC medications and skills matrix”*

The Department of Defence is currently working with all relevant parties to ensure it can reach a position, whereby it can provide the assurances required as part of the licensing process.

PHECC agreed to extend Civil Defence’s current licence up to the 30 July 2019. This was to allow relevant parties to engage to try resolve the issue. Engagement has been ongoing with PHECC and with representatives of the Local Authorities through the County and City Managers Association since earlier this year.

Everyone wants to see a satisfactory resolution to this matter to ensure there is no diminution of the service provided by Civil Defence.

Further engagement will take place next week with all relevant parties.

ENDs