
CASE STUDY

How accreditation has helped to ensure a growing ambulance company continues to deliver high quality care

BACKGROUND Lifeline Ambulance was established in 1998 and is the largest private ambulance operator in Ireland; the second largest ambulance service after the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Ambulance Service (NAS). It primarily engages in routine ambulance transfers between medical facilities nationwide, for both public and private patients, and also provides routine and emergency transport for organ retrieval teams from the three national transplantation centres. Lifeline also has an overseas repatriation service, as well as providing standby medical cover at corporate, charity and sporting events.



CHKS
Insight for better healthcare

““ Accreditation helped to ensure that day-to-day processes such as waste management were all covered by the relevant policies. Throughout the process, a CHKS client manager was on hand to offer guidance. ”

- **Michelle Quill**, Accreditation Compliance Supervisor, Lifeline Ambulance

Michelle Quill, Accreditation Compliance Supervisor, Lifeline Ambulance believes that accreditation has played an important role in ensuring the company continues to improve the quality of its services. “We have been accredited for four years and have been through the process twice. It has given us a framework for structuring the business and for improvement. In order to grow and develop we needed greater accountability and we also needed to have these structures in place,” she says.

THE ACCREDITATION JOURNEY

Lifeline Ambulance started the accreditation journey in 2013. It did have some policies and procedures in place, but soon discovered inconsistencies across the company. “Our policies had been written as and when required and we realised there were some gaps. The same was true of governance where issues were dealt with as they arose,” says Michelle.

“It was a steep learning curve for us. In some cases, there were internal memos, but not a written policy and then we found out that, on occasion, some people in the company were being inadvertently left out of the loop. At the same time, we weren’t having regular scheduled meetings with a set agenda so it felt as though we were being more reactive.”

Accreditation helped to ensure that day-to-day processes such as waste management were all covered by the relevant policies. Throughout the process, a CHKS client manager was on hand to offer guidance. Michelle says having access to someone with knowledge and experience was a great help.

For example, as an ambulance service patients do not remain in its care long enough to develop pressure ulcers and at first sight we thought a policy was not needed. “However, our client manager helped us to see how transporting patients with existing ulcers would need a policy to make sure the hospital treating the patient would inform our crews on handover so that we could provide appropriate continuing care. So, it is not always as straightforward as it seems.”

“The second time around was a great deal easier and our focus was on reviewing policies. We were also checking that the policy matched what was happening in practice and making sure that formal performance reviews were taking place.”

One important factor throughout the accreditation process has been the support of senior management. “No one really likes top down change and you are always going to get some pushback, so you have to get senior-level buy in,” she says.

THE BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

As a growing company with most staff not based in an office environment, accreditation has helped to support the HR function as it has become more complex.

There has also been a change in mindset within the company about how it approaches policies and procedure which Michelle refers to as a “cultural shift”.

“For distributed staff having written policies that are clearly defined and relevant gives them confidence in what they are doing,” says Michelle.

TO FIND OUT MORE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH:

T: + 44 (0)333 241 2432

or E: info@chks.co.uk

or visit chks.co.uk
