

SKY'S THE LIMIT

Your National
Children's
Air Ambulance
Newsletter.
Straight from
the heart of
the mission

Issue 6



**NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
AIR AMBULANCE**

A WARM WELCOME



"My journey with the National Children's Air Ambulance (NCAA) began nearly three years ago as a Crew Member, following a decade on the frontline with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

That experience shaped my understanding of the challenges and rewards of delivering and supporting care in dynamic environments and deepened my respect for our incredible Clinical Partner Teams (CPTs). Now, as Education and Development Lead, I'm proud to support the growth of my operational team of crew members, air desk coordinators, and our CPTs - bridging the gap between clinical practice and operational excellence.

My focus is to ensure that everyone has the skills, confidence, and knowledge they need to deliver outstanding care in an aviation setting.

A highlight of my role is facilitating our Gold Training and Familiarisation Days. These collaborative sessions use realistic simulations to strengthen teamwork, decision-making, and an understanding of our procedures. CPTs also gain valuable insight into our aircraft operations, helipad etiquette, and the complexities of our bespoke airborne intensive care unit, building confidence and cohesion across teams.

At the heart of our work is a commitment to excellence, compassion, and continuous learning. The NCAA is more than a service; it's a lifeline for many families in their most vulnerable moments.

I'm honoured to be part of this amazing green family, helping shape the training that supports our mission."

Warm regards

Nichole Cawthorn

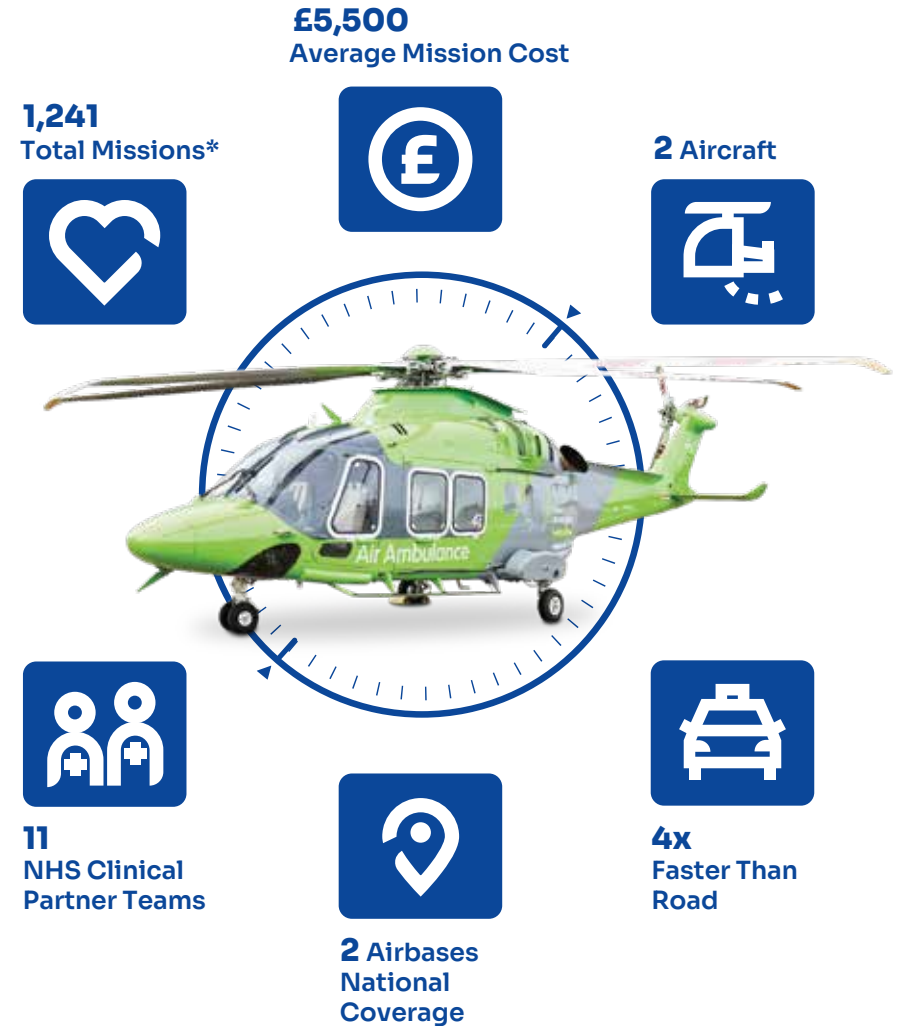
Education and Development Lead



COMPASSION | COURAGE | CREATIVITY

MISSION STATS

Our aircraft provides a flying intensive care unit for transferring babies and children between hospitals for specialist care.



* These figures reflect our missions from inception in 2013 - Dec 2025. Visit our website for updates.

FUNDRAISING GALLOPS AHEAD



The National Children's Air Ambulance (NCAA) is celebrating another outstanding milestone following the tremendous success of its annual Doncaster Race Day. This year raising an impressive £38,000 to support the lifesaving transfers of critically ill babies and children across the country.

The much-anticipated event took place on Saturday 8th November 2025 at Doncaster Racecourse and once again united loyal supporters, long standing corporate partners, and new friends of the charity for a memorable day defined by generosity, compassion, and community spirit. Throughout the afternoon, guests were treated to an engaging programme of entertainment and fundraising activity. A lively mix of silent and live auctions, an exciting raffle, and the ever-popular heads and tails game ensured there was something for everyone to enjoy. The commitment of the event's dedicated volunteers played a vital role in the day's achievements. Their enthusiasm could be clearly seen when all 2,000 raffle tickets sold out within just a few hours, a testament to their hard work and to the generosity of our guests.

The event was expertly compered by comedian Gary Marshall, whose humour and warmth kept the atmosphere buzzing between races. But alongside the fun, there were also deeply poignant moments that underscored the importance of the day. Chief Executive Officer, Peta Wilkinson, addressed the crowd and highlighted the charity's mission and impact. This was followed by an emotional account from baby Mila's Mum Emily Arnott, who shared the story of baby Mila's transfer, an inspiring reminder of how vital the NCAA's service is for families across the country.

CREW IMPACT STORY

**WHAT DUTY LEAVES BEHIND...
BY PETER JACKSON
CREW MEMBER H81**

"I am a Crew member for the National Children's Air Ambulance. Previously, I worked as a Technician with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, then three and a half years ago, I began a six month secondment as the first Crew member on the AW109 helicopter.



After a year, I was fortunate to receive a full-time position working on the new AW169. The variety and complexity of my responsibilities make it difficult to describe a typical day. Primarily it's to ensure that the aircraft is fully prepared to transport an NHS paediatric or neonatal specialist transport team from any location within the UK to designated specialist paediatric hospitals. My primary role is to ensure safe, reliable and time saving patient transfers, allowing NHS teams to deliver uninterrupted care from the referring hospital's intensive care bed to the receiving hospital, with no change in treatment.

We transport patients with a wide range of conditions, from heart transplants to ventilated patients or ECMO treatment (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation.) Personally, I find moving end-of-life patients especially memorable-helping families during such difficult times and enabling them to be where they need to be is deeply rewarding.

One transfer that stands out involved relocating a specialist team from Liverpool Alder Hey Hospital to facilitate the movement of an end-of-life patient from Great Ormond Street Hospital in London back to Liverpool. This allowed their extended family the opportunity to spend precious time together. Throughout the mission, we held numerous challenging and emotional discussions regarding the possibility of the patient passing away during the ambulance or helicopter journey. Despite this, the NHS transport team, the pilots, and I maintained our commitment to facilitating a successful transfer for both the patient and their family. I was particularly moved by the composure of the parent accompanying us, who had never previously flown in a helicopter and demonstrated remarkable strength given the circumstances. That day, I realised the charity not only states its values but also upholds them."

"I'm proud to be a part of this small but dedicated team."

ASPEN'S STORY



When doctors at Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate had done all they could for Ramsgate toddler Aspen, who was on a ventilator after struggling to breathe, it became critical that she be transferred to a specialist Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) as quickly as possible.

Aspen's parents, Anneka and Paul, were no strangers to such emergencies. Born prematurely at 25 weeks in July 2017, Aspen developed chronic lung disease and swallowing difficulties that caused her to aspirate liquids or food, often leading to severe lung infections and pneumonia.

On 23rd March 2020, just as the UK entered its first Covid-19 lockdown, Anneka and Paul rushed Aspen to the Margate hospital when her breathing worsened after a few days of coughing. "We had been trying to treat her at home because of Covid, but we could see in her eyes that she was tired and just not herself," recalls Anneka.

After two days in isolation, during which Aspen tested negative for Covid-19, her breathing deteriorated despite oxygen support. Doctors decided to anaesthetise her and place her on a ventilator. Because the local hospital could not support a child on a ventilator, she needed to be transferred urgently to a hospital with a PICU.



That's when the National Children's Air Ambulance stepped in. The helicopter flew from its Oxford base to Battersea Heliport in London to collect a specialist paediatric team from the South Thames Retrieval Service (STRS), then continued to Margate to collect Aspen.

"When we were told she had to go to London, I was terrified about how she'd be kept stable" says Anneka. "Driving would take hours. When they said she'd travel by helicopter and that I could travel too, I was relieved but nervous. I don't like flying."

Her fears quickly eased. "The pilots were amazing and reassured me it was a perfect day to fly. The STRS team were wonderful, and I was surprised how fast everything happened."

The flight from Margate to London took just 31 minutes, compared to a two-hour drive. Aspen was admitted to the Evelina London Children's Hospital PICU, where doctors diagnosed aspiration pneumonia.

She spent five days on a ventilator, followed by four more in intensive care and several more on a ward for observation. Because of Covid restrictions, only one parent was allowed in the hospital. Anneka stayed with Aspen while Paul and their older daughter Adison, kept in touch via phone and video calls.

After 12 nights, Aspen was discharged on 6 April 2020. Paul and Adison made the two-hour trip to London to bring them home.

Anneka concludes "Aspen has gone from strength to strength. She loves playing with her sister. I'm so thankful for the National Children's Air Ambulance. They got us to the hospital quickly and brought me such peace of mind knowing Aspen was in the safest hands."



ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT



KINDNESS THAT COUNTS

When a child's life hangs in the balance, speed and specialist care can make all the difference. The National Children's Air Ambulance (NCAA) exists to ensure critically ill children can be flown quickly and safely to the hospitals that can provide the urgent treatment they need. But behind every mission is a network of extraordinary volunteers whose dedication keeps our aircraft flying. Every coffee morning, every sponsored walk, every raffle ticket sold contributes to saving lives.

Volunteers are not only raising funds; they are raising hope. Their efforts mean that families facing the most frightening moments of their lives can rely on the air ambulance to deliver their child safely to the specialist care they need. For many volunteers, the motivation is deeply personal. They know that every pound raised could mean the difference between life and death for a child.

HERE'S WHAT SOME OF OUR VOLUNTEERS SHARED WITH US:

"I am passionate to see that children are afforded the best chance of getting specialist medical assistance using the air ambulance aircraft, which is funded by this charity. They receive no government funding."

"I volunteer with the NCAA. I love the ethos of the charity and the partnership we've forged. Part of my value system is to give back, and the NCAA resonated with me. I love the people I work alongside."

It's not just about raising money; it's about being part of a community united by compassion. If you've ever wondered how you can make a difference, volunteering is a powerful way to do so. Together, we can ensure that every child has the best chance of survival, no matter where they are.

To find out more visit our website ncaa.uk/volunteer

BEHIND THE ROTORS

The National Children's Air Ambulance work with 11 NHS Clinical Partner teams each playing a vital role in saving young lives. This edition of Behind the Rotors features the South Thames Retrieval Service (STRS), because what they do is extraordinary.



STRS are an intensive care service that transports critically ill children from local hospitals to Paediatric Intensive Care Units (PICUs).

The team is made up of doctors and nurses from Evelina London's Intensive Care Unit, and they're specially trained in stabilising and transferring children who are seriously unwell. Before they even arrive, they're already supporting staff at district general hospitals with advice. Once they're on site, they provide intensive care to the child before leaving the hospital and continue that care throughout the journey, whether it's by ambulance, helicopter, or plane. The team then hands over care to the unit staff, making sure everything is safe and seamless.

There are two teams available around the clock, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When they're not out on transfers, they're working within Evelina London's Intensive Care Unit.

Families like Aspen's who are featured in our patient story, remind us that the journey to intensive care is never just about medical treatment, it's about compassion, reassurance, and dignity at every step. By offering comfort packs, cuddly companions, and clear guidance for parents who cannot travel in the ambulance or helicopter, the STRS ensures that families are never left feeling uncertain or alone. Their thoughtful approach makes the transition to the PICU not only safer, but also gentler, so children and parents alike can focus on what matters most, being together.

**TODAY'S ADVANCES
save TOMORROW'S LIVES**



WINTERFUL RESULTS



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN OUR CHRISTMAS RAFFLE!

Your generosity and festive spirit raised a truly magical amount. Every £1 supports our lifesaving work, keeping our helicopters in the sky and our crews ready to respond at a moment's notice. We're deeply grateful to each and every one of our raffle supporters. Together, we WILL save lives.

**TOTAL RAISED
£494,914!**

£1
a ticket

OUR SPRING RAFFLE GOES LIVE ON 3/3/26

Look out for your raffle pack landing soon, follow our updates on social media or buy tickets online here: ncaa.uk/springaffle. You can also scan the QR Code or call 0300 3047 682. Every ticket you buy brings hope and help to those who need it most and you might just win £5,000 in the process. Closing date: 01/05/2026. Draw date: 08/05/2026.



YOU COULD BE OUR NEXT WINNER!



18+

LOTTERY WINNERS

JOIN **our** LIFESAVING LOTTERY

£1,000 weekly draw

3



Did you know that you can support and win with us by playing our weekly lottery? Your £1 per week will help keep us flying, and the £1,000 jackpot could be yours! Scan the QR code below to enter or visit ncaa.uk/lottery

“I cannot believe I’ve won. I’m going to take my family out and treat them to a nice meal” Rhoda (winner September 2025)

8

“I’m really surprised, I never win anything. I’m thinking of booking a holiday” Melanie (winner January 2025)

5



18+ GambleAware

FR FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Responsible person: Peta Wilkinson, CEO. Promoter: The Air Ambulance Service Limited. Licensed by the Gambling Commission gamblingcommission.gov.uk. Fundraising responsibility begambleaware.org. View our T&C's, learn how the lottery supports our work, raise a concern or view the odds of winning, visit airamb.co/LotteryTAAS

YOUR SUPPORT SAVES LIVES

DONATE

We receive no government funding, so we rely entirely on your generosity to keep this vital service running. Please scan to donate or visit ncaa.uk/donate



THANK YOU

Our team have been able to provide crucial transportation services to critically ill babies and children across the country thanks to our incredible supporters. Together we are truly making a difference, one flight at a time!

STAY IN TOUCH



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