

SKY'S THE LIMIT

newsletter



**NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
AIR AMBULANCE**

ISSUE 7

Welcome from Oli
Big Bases Appeal
Patient Story

WELCOME FROM OLI

When I joined The Air Ambulance Service as the Director of Fundraising earlier this year, people kept asking me the same question: "What made you want to work for an air ambulance charity?" The honest answer is simple. This service matters to me personally.

I grew up in Warwickshire. Like many of you reading this, the sight and sound of the helicopter overhead has always meant something. It is reassuring. It means that somewhere nearby, in what may be the worst moment of someone's life, extraordinary people are on their way. Over the years, three people close to me have needed the help of the Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance.

Thankfully, in those moments of crisis, this charity was there for them. As a parent myself, I find it deeply comforting knowing that if the unthinkable ever happened, my daughter could benefit from the National Children's Air Ambulance.



That is why this role feels so important to me. It is not just another fundraising job. It is personal.

What has struck me most since joining is the sheer commitment of the people behind this charity. Our clinicians, crew, volunteers, shop teams, fundraisers, lottery players, donors, corporate partners and supporters all pull in the same direction. There is a real sense of family here, and I already feel incredibly proud to be part of it.

Warm regards

Oli Hiscoe

Director of Fundraising

THE IMPACT YOU MAKE

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



1,284
Total
Missions*



£5,700
Mission
Cost



2
Specialist
Aircraft



11 NHS
Clinical
Partner Teams



2 Airbases
National
Coverage



4x
Faster Than
Road

* These figures reflect our missions from inception in 2013 - April 2026. Visit our website for updates.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN AIRDESK COORDINATOR



MEET BEN

My journey with The Air Ambulance Service began with the National Children's Air Ambulance, as an Airdesk Coordinator, during spring 2025. In this edition of **Sky's The Limit**, my colleague Jess and I are going to share an insight into the work undertaken by an Airdesk Coordinator.



MEET JESS

I've been an Airdesk Coordinator since January. This vital role sits at the heart of every mission we undertake. We have to anticipate potential challenges before they even arise, so it's a balancing act between being reactive in the moment and proactive for what might come next.

"Our bases provide nationwide coverage for our 365-day service. However, unlike The Air Ambulance Service's HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Services) operations, our crews are not dispatched by NHS ambulance service controllers. Instead, our service co-ordinates its own response to requests for service."

Within the National Children's Air Ambulance (NCAA), we have two operational airbases. Currently, our crews operate from our south base at London Oxford Airport and our north base at Retford Gamston Airport.

We are a small and dedicated team. Every day involves some lone working to deliver our service from 07:00-22:00. The focus of our role is to coordinate NCAA missions from start to finish, making sure we get our patients and our NHS clinical partner teams where they need to be and our crews back to base safely.

The airdesk ensures that our missions run as smoothly as possible. With minimal delays, NCAA can offer little patients life - changing transfer times, compared to undertaking a long journey by road. Precision is essential. From the moment a call comes in, time becomes precious. We obtain all the required information and dispatch the most appropriate aircrew.

Aircrews immediately begin to plan the mission, whilst the airdesk communicates with all requested helicopter landing sites and; all teams and organisations involved. Following this, the airdesk completes an out brief with our aircrew before they depart. Each call requires calm decision-making under pressure.

During each mission, the airdesk solves problems, maintains communication with all teams, and monitors factors affecting success. Key challenges include changing weather, pilot duty limits, and possible diversions for higher-priority HEMS flights.

Night use is restricted to certain sites, while others are daylight - only, requiring careful planning. Timings are tracked closely and protocols followed to act neither too early nor too late. Despite being desk-based, missions can last up to 10 hours. Afterward, we gather NHS feedback, debrief crews, analyse time saved, and keep site details current. Each mission supports families in difficult times, making our role a responsibility and a privilege.



CAIDEN'S STORY

"After everything we had been through, we just wanted to get back home. When we found out that the National Children's Air Ambulance was coming to pick up Caiden and take him back to the hospital where he was born, we couldn't believe it."

- Emily Mum

For Emily Milton, those words capture the overwhelming relief she felt at the end of what she calls "the hardest ten days of my life." Standing beside a specially designed baby pod, watching her tiny son Caiden being prepared for flight, Emily was "overwhelmed with gratitude" to everyone who had helped him survive.

Caiden's fight for life began moments after he was born by emergency caesarean section at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton. Four weeks early, he had been starved of oxygen during a traumatic birth and urgently needed cooling therapy, also known as therapeutic hypothermia, to reduce the risk of severe brain damage. That treatment wasn't available in Taunton.



Just four hours later, Caiden was rushed 75 miles by land ambulance to Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, accompanied by his dad, James. Emily, still recovering from surgery, was left behind.

"I didn't know if he was going to be OK," she says. "I had only seen him for five minutes. It was so hard and I was very emotional."

Emily joined James and Caiden the next day, driven there by her mother. For ten long days, they stayed by their newborn's side while he received specialist care. Back at home, their older son Noah, who was nearly two, was cared for by friends and relatives as the family's life was turned upside down.

"We knew Caiden was in safe hands and being transferred the quickest way possible."

Slowly, there was hope. Caiden responded well to the cooling therapy and, after eight days, was strong enough to come off the ventilator. Two days later, despite still being tube-fed, doctors decided he could be transferred back to Taunton.

"When we found out the National Children's Air Ambulance was coming for Caiden, we were amazed," says Emily.

The National Children's Air Ambulance flew from Oxford to collect the SONAR Team, a specialist neonatal transport service from University Hospital Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, before heading to Plymouth. The return flight to Musgrove Park Hospital took just 26 minutes, compared with a 90-minute journey by road.

During the flight, the SONAR team sent photos and regular text updates, reassuring the anxious parents every step of the way.

Just over an hour later, Emily and James arrived back in Taunton. Their son was asleep in the Special Care Baby Unit, only ten minutes from home, where they were reunited with Noah. Two days later, Caiden was feeding well from a bottle and was finally able to leave hospital.

"We are so grateful to the National Children's Air Ambulance and the SONAR team for getting Caiden back safely and quickly. It's incredible that donations from people we don't even know paid to fly our son home. We want to give something back, so we're going to fundraise to help another child reach the care they need."



SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

At the start of 2026, we launched our most ambitious campaign yet – the Big Bases Appeal.

This vital appeal will fund the development of two new operational bases, forming the heart of every lifesaving mission for decades to come. The first of which will be in the centre of England. It is a fantastic opportunity for the charity, and also driven by the fact the National Children's Air Ambulance currently operates from London Oxford Airport, where ongoing operational restrictions limit future planning.

The new base will also be home to our sister service, Your Local Air Ambulance, which is called to medical emergencies in Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Rutland. By bringing the two services together under one roof, we will be able to take advantage of efficiencies and resources to



Artist impression

revolutionise the care both provide to our patients.

This is about far more than relocating. These modern facilities will give our specialist crews the space, equipment and operational resilience they need to prepare, train and mobilise faster, helping them reach patients sooner. Emergencies don't keep office hours, and neither do we.

To bring this vision to life, we are seeking £9 million in public and philanthropic donations to fund the project. As a charity, we receive no government or NHS funding – every mission we fly is powered by people like you.

To find out more please visit bigbases.uk/home



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£1,000 weekly draw



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GO TOGETHER EVENTS

Amazon BHX4

By uniting teams in our signature colours, running themed activities, and encouraging donations, our corporate partners showed the power of simple, creative ideas.

"It was a pleasure to Go Green Together and involve the whole team in such a meaningful cause. We loved the energy and enthusiasm from colleagues at Amazon Coventry from wearing green to taking part in the guess the name of the teddy, creating a real sense of fun and togetherness. Having Jenny from TAAS join us made the day even more special, and knowing each green outfit supported a donation made it truly rewarding. We'd highly recommend it, simple, enjoyable and impactful."



**Join the fun
This October!**
ncaa.uk/wearitgreen

RAFFLE UPDATES

**THANK YOU FOR MAKING
OUR 2026 SPRING RAFFLE
A HUGE SUCCESS!**

We're thrilled to share what you helped raise in our Spring Raffle. Every ticket and every donation has made a real difference - thank you so much for your kindness and generosity.



TOTAL RAISED £415,000!

"I was more than happy to take part in the raffle to do my little bit to help. You never know when you might need their services."

James, Spring Raffle 2026 winner



SUMMER RAFFLE NOW LIVE!

Follow our updates on social media or buy tickets online at ncaa.uk/summerraffle



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FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO COMMUNITY CARE

My name is Wendy. I've volunteered for the National Children's Air Ambulance since October 2021 and I love it.

I joined the Royal Air Force in 1978 as a medical assistant. The training was intense, covering nursing duties such as wound care, taking blood, and assisting doctors. I also worked in an operational unit supporting flying emergencies alongside the fire service under air traffic control. While in the RAF, I met my husband and we married in 1981.

My role was varied and challenging. I trained as a Flight Nursing Assistant, flying from an RAF base in Oxfordshire to escort sick and injured personnel back to the UK and transfer them to military hospitals. As an aero medic, I flew all over the world.

In January 1991, during the first Gulf War, I was stationed in Cyprus for a large medical evacuation, preparing for mass casualties, though the war ended quickly and our services weren't needed.



I left the RAF after 17 years and 5 months. In May 1996, I joined Stamford & Rutland Hospital's pathology department. I then transferred to Peterborough City Hospital until retiring in 2016. I later worked for 5 years in the Phlebotomy department at Stamford Hospital, including through the Covid pandemic.

Wanting to stay active, I enquired about volunteering at the Stamford Children's Air Ambulance shop and from then on, the rest is history. I was drawn to the charity's lifesaving work and the shop's welcoming feel, but most of all, the people. It's a wonderful place to volunteer.

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





SUPPORTER VOICE

We love hearing from our supporters, and that's why I'm excited to introduce Supporter Voice – a new way for you to have a more active say in how we grow and develop.

By joining, you'll be invited to take part in short, regular surveys on topics like our communications, campaigns, and fundraising initiatives. From time to time, there may also be opportunities to join one-to-one or small group discussions for deeper feedback.

Your input will be shared across the organisation and will help guide our decisions. There's no need for special experience or long-term commitment – just your honest perspective. Whether you've supported us for years or are new to our work, your voice matters. If you'd like to play a more active role and feel even more connected to our mission, I'd love for you to join Supporter Voice. Thank you, as always, for your support.

Billy Sharps

Supporter Journey Manager

To register visit: airamb.uk/voice

SCAN TO DONATE



We receive no government funding, so we rely on your generosity to keep this vital service ready to respond. Scan to donate, visit us ncaa.uk/donate or return the enclosed donation form.

STAY IN TOUCH



www.ncaa.uk/sky



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**NATIONAL
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