



SAVING MORE LIVES TOGETHER

2024 General Election Manifesto

*** All air ambulance charities are independent with differing operational model(s) and so figures/data within this report are averages. The cost of mission varies depending on geography, patient need, clinical and operational models of the local air ambulance charity. All data is based on the year of 2023. ***

INTRODUCTION

There are 21 independent air ambulance charities that operate across the UK.

Air ambulance crews bring the Emergency Department to patients who have suffered a life threatening or life changing trauma or medical emergency; providing advanced critical care to save lives.

Anyone, anywhere can become a patient at any time. On average an air ambulance can reach someone in urgent need within 16 minutes. Air ambulance charities are collectively dispatched to an average of 126 lifesaving missions each day across the UK; each mission is funded almost entirely by the generosity of local communities. **

In 2021, air ambulances across the UK collectively attended over 30,100 missions. In contrast to 2023, the collective number of missions surged to over 46,000, reflecting a 53% increase in the number of lifesaving missions undertaken. **

Moreover, in 2021, the average cost of an air ambulance helicopter mission in the UK was £3,962. By 2023, this figure increased by 4%, with the average UK air ambulance helicopter mission costing £4,110. **

In light of the rising demand and cost for the UK's air ambulances, Air Ambulances UK, in collaboration with Air Ambulances UK Member Charities, urges all UK political parties and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) to commit to supporting Air Ambulances UK's four policy pledges in anticipation of the forthcoming General Election.

The four pledges serve as strategic recommendations, each dedicated to supporting the UK air ambulance sector to address key challenges, ultimately enabling them to save even more lives every day.



POLICY PLEDGE 1:

Hospital Helipads and Community Landing Sites

Pledge to ensure that all new and existing UK Major Trauma Centres and specialist hospitals (such as cardiac centres) have 24/7 accessible on-site primary hospital helipads.

Assist Local Planning Authorities in developing a specialised safeguarding process to protect UK-wide hospital helipads against adverse effects from planning and developments.

Establish an efficient consultation pathway to proactively engage Air Ambulances UK and air ambulance charities in strategic planning discussions, concerning hospital helipads and community landing sites in the UK.

The Challenge

There are 33 Major Trauma Centres in the UK, however, not all have on-site primary hospital helipads. Only 17 have an on-site primary hospital helipad available during the night but not all of the 17 are in operation 24/7 due to planning constraints. Approximately, 60% of Major Trauma Centres in the UK do not enable 24/7 hospital helipad operations.

24/7 access to an on-site primary hospital helipad at a Major Trauma Centre and/or specialist hospital, negates secondary land transfers, ensuring that critically ill patients receive optimum speed to treatment, day or night. For many seriously ill patients, 24/7 access to an on-site primary hospital helipad at a Major Trauma Centre or specialist hospital could represent the difference between life and death.

Almost all hospital helipads are classified as unlicensed heliports and aerodromes. Consequently, no formal safeguards are in place as there is no requirement for statutory consultation concerning hospital helipads and coinciding planning and developments.

Air Ambulances UK (nationally) and air ambulance charities (locally) are not listed as consultees to engage in strategic planning conversations with NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, HSC in Northern Ireland, NHS Trusts and Boards, and Local Authorities, concerning hospital helipads and community landing sites in the UK. This exclusion makes it a challenge for the air ambulance community to stay informed and actively participate in the decision-making process; to enable early conversations about the impact on lifesaving critical care.

We are calling all UK political parties and PPCs to:

- (1) By the end of 2025, ensure that the Department of Health and Social Care, along with UK-wide NHS authorities, develop a SMART project pathway plan, ensuring all UK Major Trauma Centres and specialist hospitals have 24/7 accessible on-site primary hospital helipads by 2030, aligning with the Health Infrastructure Plan.
- (2) By the end of 2025, ensure the Department for Transport and the UK Civil Aviation Authority advocate for all UK Local Planning Authorities to engage with regional air ambulance charities and/or helicopter operators to establish a specialised safeguarding pathway for hospital helipads in the UK, and for retrospective consultation, in decisions affecting hospital helipads and/or community landing sites; aligned with DfT Circular 2002 and CAP 738 'non-official safeguarding maps'.

POLICY PLEDGE 2:

Patient Data

Pledge to secure safe access to NHS patient data for air ambulance charities to enable them to gain further insight into the full patient pathway and ultimately the patient outcome.

The Challenge

Air ambulance charities prioritise delivering the highest level of patient care. It is crucial for air ambulance charities to have access to patient data once they leave air ambulance care and transfer to NHS services. A seamless transition of this data would help air ambulance charities to gain further insight into the full patient pathway to inform and take learning from patient outcomes, and enhance aftercare support.

We are calling all UK political parties and PPCs to:

- (1) By the end of 2025, support Air Ambulances UK with engagement and collaboration with NHS England to secure safe access to patient data for air ambulance charities.
- (2) By the end of 2025, support Air Ambulances UK to ensure that air ambulance charities have a seat at their Integrated Care System Board; to be involved in conversations about the system response to patient need in their local communities and to ultimately provide the right care in the right place.



POLICY PLEDGE 3:

Increased Demand and Cost

Pledge to support the air ambulance community to enhance methods of income generation through distribution of UK-wide grants and capital funding, ensuring that air ambulance charities can operate effectively with equitable service provision to continue to meet the surge in demand and increased operational costs.

The Challenge

Air ambulance charities in the UK have continued to provide specialist critical care to patients in need of urgent treatment and care, amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing NHS challenges, including the repeated public sector staff strikes and the continued pressures on land ambulance trusts.

Air ambulance crews have worked tirelessly to safely adapt their services to meet patient need. Air ambulances are facing an increase in dispatches to patients, together with the reality of being hit with fundraising challenges due to former lockdown implications and the cost-of living crisis.

Air ambulance lifesaving services are not immune to the rise in costs of, for example, fuel and other necessary equipment such as medical monitors.

- In 2021, the UK's air ambulances collectively attended approximately 30,100 missions, and in 2023, 46,000 missions, evidencing a 53% increase. **
- The average cost of an air ambulance helicopter mission increased from £3,962 in 2021 to £4,110 in 2023, highlighting a 4% rise. **

We are calling all UK political parties and PPCs to:

(1) Within each consecutive financial year, urge the Department of Health and Social Care to support the air ambulance community to identify and obtain UK-wide government grants and capital funding for equitable distribution.

Respective funding would enhance UK air ambulance charities' lifesaving services to meet the increasing demand and cost, whilst ensuring that air ambulances can operate from modern, fit for purpose airbases which provide a professional environment for crew, a safe and welcoming space for bereaved families and former patients, and facilities for fundraising activities and visits from supporters.

POLICY PLEDGE 4:

Statutory Levy

Pledge to oppose the proposed statutory levy of 0.1% of 'gross gambling yield' (GGY) on lotteries. Advocate for a zero rate of statutory levy for lotteries and a continuation of the current system of voluntary contributions, in recognition of the unique contribution lotteries make to charitable causes, such as air ambulances.

The Challenge

The government has proposed to impose a statutory levy of 0.1% of “gross gambling yield” (GGY) on all lotteries. Recognising that lotteries, unlike the rest of the gambling sector, are required to contribute all of their profits (which must be a minimum of 20% – air ambulances average 77%) to good causes, government proposed that GGY for lotteries should be defined as proceeds minus prizes minus good causes. As lottery proceeds may only be used for prizes, good causes and reasonable running costs, any increase in costs can only come from reducing prizes (with probable consequent effects on proceeds) or reducing the sum available for good causes.

In addition, however, the government has proposed that External Lottery Managers also pay the same levy, although it is less clear on what that will be based on. What is clear is that it will mean a further increase in costs for lotteries, with a further consequent reduction in sums available for good causes.

Unlike all other forms of gambling, lotteries have no “yield” – all of the money raised after paying prizes and costs goes to the good cause. In addition, the rates of gambling harm caused by lotteries is significantly lower than those other forms of gambling.

We are calling all UK political parties and PPCs to:

(1) By the end of 2025, urge the Department for Culture, Media & Sport to agree to a zero rate of statutory levy for lotteries and a continuation of the current voluntary contributions.

Lotteries, which allocate all profits to good causes, should not be burdened with additional costs that would ultimately reduce funds available for wider meaningful causes. Instead, advocate for a fair and tailored approach to regulation that supports the important work of organisations, such as air ambulance charities, ensuring that resources are maximised for the benefit of society.

INSIGHTS INTO OPERATIONS AND IMPACT

2023 Data of the UK Air Ambulance Sector **



OVER

23,000

Helicopter Missions

Increased by 51% from 2021



OVER

7,500

Cardiac-Related Incidents Attended

Increased by 24% from 2021



OVER

22,500

Critical Care Car Missions

Increased by 54% from 2021



ON AVERAGE

126

Missions Attended Per Day

Increased by 24% from 2021



OVER

7,200

Road Traffic Collision Incidents Attended

Increased by 12% from 2021



ON AVERAGE

£4,110

Helicopter Mission Cost

Increased by 4% from 2021



OVER

7,800

Missions Attended At Night

(19:00 - 07:00)

Increased by 7% from 2021



OVER

20,500

Adults Treated

Increased by 17% from 2021

ABOUT AIR AMBULANCES UK

Air Ambulances UK is the national charity supporting the lifesaving work of the UK's air ambulance charities.

Our vision is that together we will ensure the best possible chance of survival and patient outcome for everyone in need of lifesaving pre-hospital care.

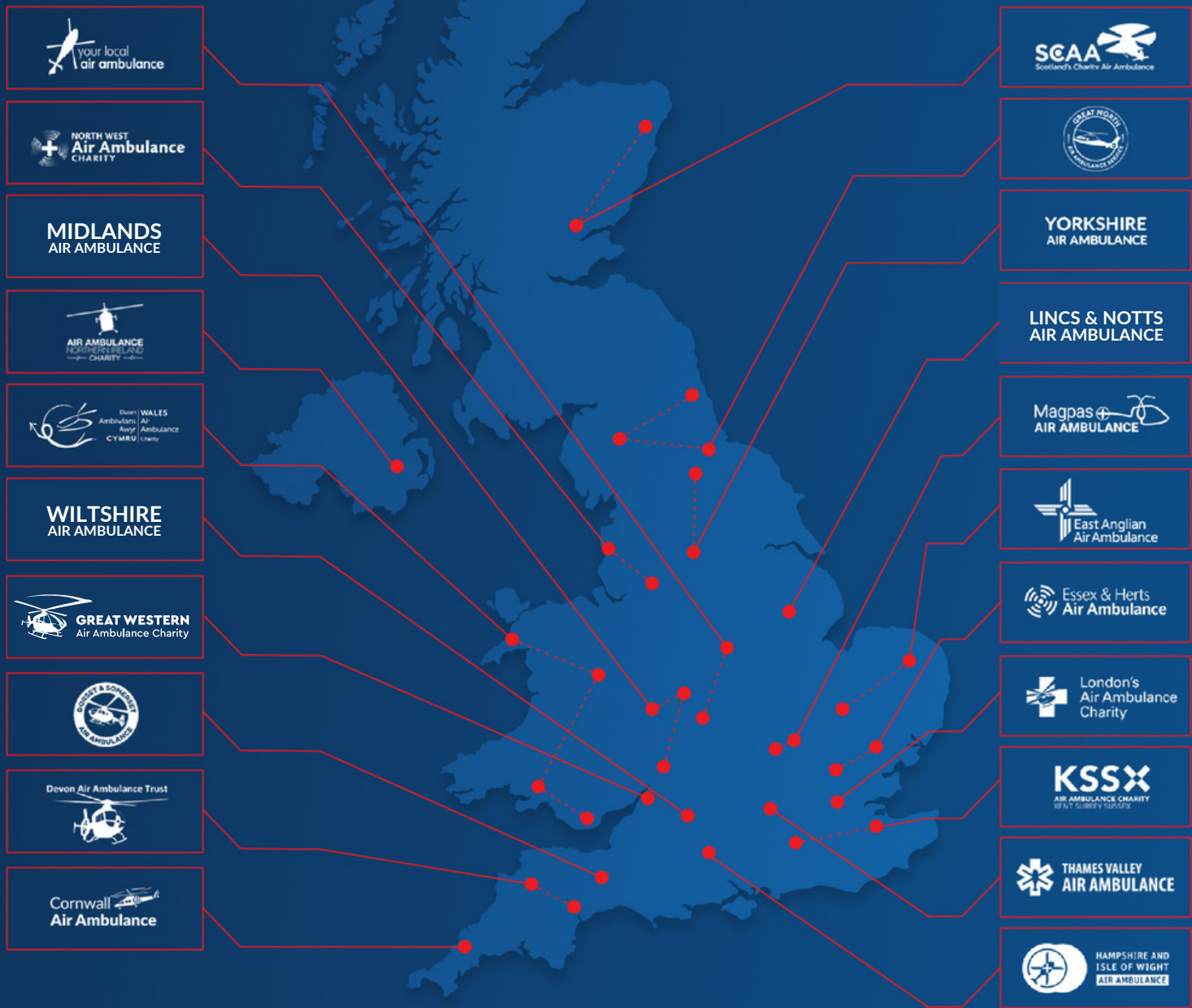
We continually strive towards this by providing vital national funding to air ambulance charities, increasing awareness of their lifesaving work, advocating on key issues and policies affecting the delivery of their services, helping to enable advancements in patient care, providing a collective voice and enabling the exchange of information and knowledge across the air ambulance sector.

We are achieving this in collaboration with our members, generous individuals, corporate partners and grant donors as well as our strategic partnerships.

Together, we are making a real difference by enabling air ambulance charities to save even more lives and remain at the forefront of pre-hospital care, helping to reduce loss of life in people with life-threatening injuries or a medical emergency.

This General Election Manifesto is supported by Air Ambulances UK Member Charities







AIR AMBULANCES UK

SUPPORTING AIR AMBULANCE CHARITIES

For more information, please contact info@airambulancesuk.org



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