

LIFT OFF

MAGAZINE

#75, JULY 2026

CAMBRIDGE AIR BASE APPEAL

Thank you - we're one
step closer



East Anglian
Air Ambulance

Together we save lives



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Crew with former patients and family launch our urgent appeal

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WELCOME TO LIFT OFF #75

Hi, I'm Mia – partner of Drew and Mum of two beautiful little boys, Shaun and Clayton. My youngest, Clayton, was born at just 26 weeks in January 2025 and needed lifesaving care from a crew from East Anglian Air Ambulance. Dr Liam Neale and Critical Care Paramedic Jon Locke worked so hard to keep him alive. Clayton wouldn't be here today without them. In that moment I was terrified, but because of people like you, my little boy is alive.

I am so excited to be an ambassador and do my bit to support the momentous appeal for a new air base. In April, Clayton and I helped to launch the appeal to the local media. I spoke with newspapers, TV and radio stations. It was quite the experience, but I wanted to do whatever I could to support the charity who helped to keep my family together.

So that's why I'm asking for your continued support for the Cambridge Air Base Appeal. A huge thank you to those who have already made a donation since the launch. The relocation and build of the new base is so much more than a building – it's about the lives, like Clayton's, that can be saved as a result of having a crew located in the right place; a base from where they can get to people who need them, fast – by helicopter or critical care car – and

to the kind of medical emergencies where the doctors and critical care paramedics can make the biggest difference.

You can read Clayton's full story on pages 6-8 in this issue of Lift Off, but you only have to look at him now to understand the true impact of what is possible thanks to your generous donations. He's such a content, happy boy, and thanks to people like you, we're a family of four and Shaun has his little brother. I can't describe what that feels like, so thank you to everybody who acted quickly and has already donated to the Cambridge Air Base Appeal. Your generosity will save lives well into the future.

Warmest wishes,

Mia

Mia
 Cambridge Air Base Appeal Ambassador and Mum to Clayton



Critical Care Paramedic Jon Locke, Mia, Clayton and Dr Liam Neale

YOUR IMPACT SO FAR

Our urgent appeal progress

Cambridge Airport will be closing, so our current base situated at the airport is no longer a long-term option. We must relocate and build a new home for our Anglia Two (Cambridge) operations to protect up to 1,000 lives every year – and that's why, in April, we launched an urgent Cambridge Air Base Appeal to raise £8.2m.

You have responded in your thousands so far, getting the appeal off to a really positive start. A heartfelt thank you to everybody who, on receiving the last copy of Lift Off, seeing our appeal mailing, or hearing about the appeal in the local media, responded quickly and donated what you could to help us take these first steps.

Every donation, regardless of size, represents the trust you place in our teams to be there when somebody has the worst day of their lives. We promise you that we never take this for granted; we are truly thankful for every single pound donated, for your kindness and for every message

of support. Collectively, you have raised £2.6m so far*. This generosity will help to safeguard critical care in our region for future generations.

There is a long way to go.

Our fundraising appeal continues – because it must. The need remains urgent, but the build is dependent on the funds being raised. There is still a significant way to go until the vision of a new Cambridge Air Base becomes a reality.

Our Anglia Two crew doesn't just serve Cambridgeshire; it serves all of us. If we lose our Cambridge base, the impact would be felt across the whole region. Hundreds of people could face longer waits for critical care, in the very moments when every second counts. We simply can't let that happen.

You may remember in the last issue of Lift Off we explained that we've been working hard in the background to secure some of the funds needed, including a private fundraising phase

and committing money from our own reserves. Now, each donation we receive from you will bring us closer to turning the approved plans into a fully operational base that will help save lives across the region – and that's an extraordinary thing to do together.

Please, donate what you can and together we won't just build a new base; we'll save lives and build a more resilient future for the communities we serve every single day.



Planning permission update

In November 2025, we submitted plans to build a new base just outside Fulbourn in Cambridgeshire.

On 8 April this year, just as the Spring edition of Lift Off landed, we were delighted to receive planning approval from South Cambridgeshire District Council to create a purpose built air ambulance base at New Shardelows Farm on Balsham Road. This moment was a really important first step towards securing our future in the county and surrounding areas.

CLAYTON'S FIGHT FOR LIFE

In January 2025, 20-year-old Mia Cornelius from Haverhill received some unexpected news – she was pregnant with her second baby.

Just three days later, her joy turned to fear when she went into premature labour, and her baby needed urgent help.

It was a normal Sunday morning when Mia – at around 26 weeks pregnant – started feeling stomach pains. At first, she thought it might pass, but when it didn't, she sought medical advice. It was that evening when she realised something was very wrong, and she was actually in premature labour.

Her partner, Drew, called 999 while Mia's mum phoned her midwife. Minutes later, at 8:30pm, Mia gave birth in her bedroom.

"I looked down and saw a tiny baby boy gasping for air," Mia recalls.

A road ambulance arrived quickly to help Mia's baby, Clayton. At the same time, our Anglia Two crew, Dr Liam Neale and Critical Care Paramedic (CCP) Jon Locke, were dispatched by critical care car from our Cambridge base.

When someone needs us, it's usually the worst moment of their

life, and their family's. That's why our specialist doctors, critical care paramedics and pilots bring the advanced skills, equipment and medicine directly to the patient's side in the fastest time possible, providing a level of treatment and care normally only found in a hospital.

The equipment carried by our helicopters and critical care cars enables enhanced care to be delivered at the incident scene – when the patient needs it most – such as blood transfusions, advanced pain relief, sedation and anaesthesia, and surgical interventions. This, combined with quick onward transfer to the most appropriate hospital, gives every patient the best possible chance of surviving and recovering from a life-threatening emergency.

When Dr Liam and CCP Jon arrived, Clayton was alive but extremely unwell. CCP Jon checked on Mia, who was receiving excellent care from the ambulance service, before assisting Dr Liam with baby Clayton. Weighing just 775g, Clayton was in a critical condition; his heart rate was dangerously low at just 60 beats per minute, when the norm for a full-term newborn is 100–160, and his oxygen levels were only 68%. He was blue and cold; it was a race against time.

Taking baby Clayton to the back of a heated road ambulance, Dr Liam and CCP Jon began treating Clayton immediately, providing critical care in the moments he needed it most.





Dr Liam Neale

Dr Liam explains, “Babies born this prematurely struggle to adapt to the outside world and often need help with their breathing. Even in a hospital setting, children this premature are at risk of dying. Being born at home increases this risk. The odds really were against Clayton, and we needed to do all we could to help him.”

Clayton’s tiny body was fighting really hard, but he was barely breathing, so Dr Liam and CCP Jon inserted a breathing tube so they could inflate his lungs.

Dr Liam continues. “He was so small he could fit in the palm of my hand. It was a real test of our equipment and skills on somebody so tiny. We got him breathing again, then supported this until he reached the hospital specialists. It was one of the most challenging jobs I’ve ever been to.”

“They worked so hard to keep Clayton alive,” Mia says. “Jon also comforted my mum and Drew – and helped me feel safe.”

Dr Liam and CCP Jon accompanied Clayton during a transfer by land ambulance for specialist care at Addenbrooke’s Hospital, where it was confirmed Clayton was born at 26 weeks. He was in hospital for several months but, against all odds, he survived.

“Everyone put in 100% and look at the outcome; they had the skills and knowledge to do that, and this makes me hopeful for other medical situations,” Mia says.



Mia and Clayton

HOW TO DONATE

URGENT APPEAL

Your support will make a real difference. If you’d like to contribute to our Cambridge Air Base Appeal, we’ve outlined the easiest ways to donate.

£30

Help keep our crews ready to respond when every second matters.

£75

Support lifesaving care from a new Cambridge base.

£100

Keep our helicopter and crews mission ready.

£175

Fly with us on every mission

For donations of **£175 or more** we would like to celebrate your support by adding your name or the name of a loved one to our helicopter. Please visit eaaa.org.uk/name for more information.



Donate by post

Send your donations to
FREEPOST EAAA



Donate online

eaaa.org.uk/base
Fast, simple and secure - donate online today.



Donate by text

Text BASE followed by your donation amount to 70480 to give that amount.

To give **£10** text BASE10

To give **£15** text BASE15

To give **£20** text BASE20

*Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message, and you’ll be opting in to hearing more from us. If you would like to donate but don’t wish to hear more from us, please text BASENOINFO instead.



East Anglian
Air Ambulance

MEMORIAL SERVICE

To remember loved ones
following an incident attended
by our crews

Norwich Cathedral

Date to be confirmed



Scan the QR code to register your
interest, or email aftercare@eaaa.org.uk

100 EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE, ONE EXTRAORDINARY MISSION.



Photo (L-R): Jonathan and Wendy Willis, Michael Sly

The impending closure of Cambridge Airport, and with it, our Cambridge base, places our service in jeopardy. We simply cannot respond rapidly across East Anglia from one base alone.

Creating a new home is the toughest challenge the charity has ever had to face – but our service shows that amazing things can happen when people come together to save lives.

We are inviting 100 visionary individuals, businesses, groups and trusts to each pledge £50,000 and join Navigators 100 – a community contributing £5m to help fund a new, permanent home for life saving in the region. Navigators 100 will receive special recognition in the new base, access to exclusive updates and events, and a chance to build a meaningful connection with the work you're making possible.

Gifts can be spread over three years and with tax efficient giving, can cost as little as £9,000 per year.

Navigator 1: Michael Sly is a farmer, Chairman of the Cambridge Air Base Appeal Committee and proud founding member of Navigators 100. He was inspired to support after his friend Jonathan Willis was horrifically impaired by a forklift tine on his farm in Wisbech. In Michael's words, "East Anglian Air Ambulance's Cambridge crew undoubtedly saved his life."

Navigator 4: Abel Homes, founded by Tony and Maggie Abel, pledged to become a Navigators as part of their long-term support for the charity. Tony said, "When we heard there was a risk to half the service, we simply had to act."

Will you be extraordinary and join Navigators 100? Contact Holly Marshall, Philanthropy Manager, to talk more.

07939 072866
holly.marshall@eaaa.org.uk

LITTLE DOESN'T MEAN LESS

How we care for babies and children



Former patient, Albie

Baby Clayton's story (see page 6) demonstrates that anyone of any age can need urgent treatment and care from our crews. In 2025, 151 of the 1,845 people who received urgent treatment and care from our doctors and critical care paramedics were children.

Dr Brendan Fletcher, Consultant in Paediatric Emergency Medicine with East Anglian Air Ambulance, explains more about our considerations when we're called to attend a child or baby.

When we're tasked

It's important for the crew to know the age of the young person as soon as possible. This is because there are considerations and variables when it comes to the doses of medications and fluids that can be administered and the equipment that should be used. But it's not a time for maths and

calculators; the crew all carry 'Page for Age' cards – guides that give correct dosages for the age of the child.

We pace ourselves and make sure we do the essentials really well, such as monitoring and managing a child's blood sugar and temperature.

Emotions at the scene

An emergency where the patient is a baby or child is often an emotional environment. In those moments, we do everything we can to bring calm to what is a very frightening situation for children and their loved ones. While our priority is providing the child with the best possible care, we also make sure someone from our team supports and reassures their parents or caregivers, when possible. And we think about the bigger picture too – are there other children nearby? Who will look after them when we

transport their sibling to hospital? Safeguarding Children is an important element of the medical care we provide; it is about ensuring the child and the family around them get any additional support that they may need.

Specialist equipment

Our kit bags are packed with everything we need to care for the smallest patients. Some of the equipment we use needs to be different due to the size difference between adults and children – but little doesn't mean less. Equipment like a laryngoscope – used to help manage the airway when we need to intubate – comes in tiny sizes so we can give the right care at the right time to little ones. Having to do this in children of this age is thankfully rare.

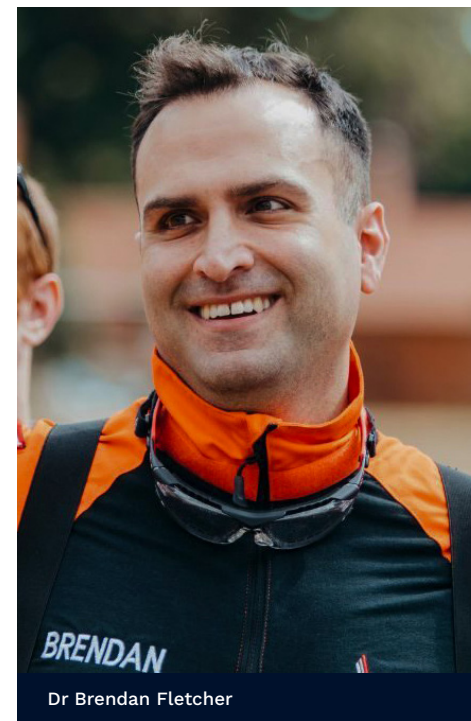
We also carry special neonatal harnesses to keep babies safe during a flight, and warming mats to protect them from losing heat, which happens much faster for children than in adults. Every detail matters when it comes to giving children the best chance.

Relationships with other emergency services and specialist hospitals

We're also aware that emergencies with children and babies who require critical care are emotive for our emergency service colleagues too. They do an excellent job in challenging situations. While we provide

enhanced care, such as advanced airway support and vascular access, having multiple people at the scene means we can delegate – and our colleagues from other emergency services are incredible at helping us.

We also have an excellent working relationship with the regional Paediatric Intensive Care Unit in Cambridge – where some of our doctors have trained. All our doctors and paramedics are trained to treat children in the most serious of medical emergencies, and some of us are specialists in paediatric care. This ensures the entire crew is ready to respond to any patient of any age whenever they need us most.



Dr Brendan Fletcher

A SHARED COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

We're here for people across our region, no matter where they live or work. That includes our rural communities and those working in farming and agriculture, often in places that can be hard to reach.

We know that when accidents happen on farmland, getting help quickly isn't always easy by road. That's why our crews can fly directly to the scene, bringing specialist care, equipment and medication with them. Even in the most remote locations, we're able to deliver advanced treatment fast - so people can get the help they need, when they need it most.

Ed Wombwell, from The Wandering Herd at New Shardelowes Farm in Fulbourn, is next door to the location for the new Cambridge base. The Wandering Herd is a small family farm, using native breed

livestock to create truly beautiful and biodiverse habitats in our local landscape with an emphasis on nature-friendly farming, sustainable and regenerative farming – and Ed is very aware of the risks that farmers can face.

"Farming is a high-risk industry. I've heard stories from other farmers about what can happen," Ed says. "During our work we can be alone, often miles away from help with limited road access, so it's hugely reassuring to know East Anglian Air Ambulance is there should the farming community ever need them – and we feel that connection; it's like having a guardian angel in the sky."

One of The Wandering Herd's missions is to bring people together, and Ed acknowledges our shared values of



Ed Wombwell

community and care, and our new air base is a future he's looking forward to.

"As a kid, I would look up to the sky and see the air ambulance helicopter flying. Even now, I still wave to them when they fly over! To know East Anglian Air Ambulance will have a safe future, thanks to a new location to operate from next door, for years to come is great."

Poignantly he adds, "The land being used for the base was my late Uncle's farm. While it's emotional that it's leaving our family, we feel so proud that it's for such a good cause – and we're sure he would too."

VIEWS FROM YOUR CREWS



Flying over the site for our new base, Dr Thomas



Ely countryside, CCP Liam Sagi



Overhead at Addenbrooke's Hospital, CCP Gary Spitzer



Returning to the aircraft at Addenbrooke's Hospital, CCP Gary Spitzer.



Landing on the beach, Captain Henrietta Davies



Gold at the end of the rainbow, Captain Henrietta Davies

STUART'S RIDE FOR THE SKIES

With the Cambridge Air Base Appeal underway, it's never been more important for communities to come together and individuals to do what they can to save lives.

We're always amazed by the incredible and innovative fundraising ideas of our supporters. The dedication of people like you - helping to keep us flying and responding to the most serious medical emergencies in our region - never fails

to leave us humbled. So, when we heard from Stuart Howlett about his Ride for the Skies cycling challenge, we were excited to hear more.

Ride for the Skies will see Stuart cycle solo across Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, visiting the major hospitals and Helimed House, our Norwich base. It's a route that will push him physically and mentally, but Stuart is up for the challenge!



"Yes, I know at the age of 60 I could be putting my feet up, but instead I'm choosing to show what's still possible," Stuart says. "If East Anglian Air Ambulance crews can give everything every day, I can give everything for one big ride."

Stuart is Hub Coordinator at King's Lynn Ambulance Station and completed his first long endurance ride for charity last year to support colleagues through good and bad days. And now he wants to do even more to support emergency services. He knows some of our crew through his role and he often sees our helicopter in the sky.

"Whenever I see the East Anglian Air Ambulance helicopter, I think about the person who needs them. I read the survival stories which have been made possible thanks to the charity's

fast response and skills at the scene of emergencies - so it's worth my time to keep the rotors turning. It will be a real test, but it will focus my mind as well as build my resilience and organisational skills to pull it all together."

The ride will be at least 200 miles. Although he cycles a lot, Stuart is preparing for a longer time in the saddle by undertaking indoor riding on a training bike, competing in virtual challenges against people around the world. He also recently completed a training ride in his local supermarket, collecting some donations along the way. He's aiming to raise £4,500 - just over the average cost of a tasking. He's already raised more than £2,000 and has been inspired by the support and words of encouragement he's received for the ride, which he thinks will take between 14-15 hours.

"The time will go fast," Stuart adds, "and of course I'll need to find some good cafes to stop at during the ride!"

At the time of going to print, Stuart was preparing for his challenge at the end of June so, by the time you read this, we hope he will be having a well-deserved rest!



THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY!



Phoebe

A huge thank you to eight-year-old Phoebe who took on a 25-mile cycle challenge in aid of East Anglian Air Ambulance in May. Phoebe, from West Suffolk was inspired to fundraise after she heard about our Cambridge Air Base Appeal.

Phoebe's Dad, Paul, said, "The cycling challenge was all her idea. She heard about the charity's fundraising appeal for a new base, so she wanted to raise some money."

At the time of writing, Phoebe has surpassed her target of £250. Thank you, Phoebe for your incredible pedal powered support!

Big LEAAAP

Well done and thank you to the brave fundraisers who took part in the Big Leaaap in May. They took part in skydives at Beccles and Peterborough Airfields to collectively raise over £8,000. We're doing it all again in October so if you've always wanted to do a skydive and raise money at 13,000 feet, now's your chance! Visit our website to learn more.



Malcolm



Malcolm Duffey from West Norfolk has supported local and national charities for the last 15 years through coffee mornings and lunches. A recent coffee morning raised £50 for East Anglian Air Ambulance. Malcolm, who has a friend who was helped by our crews, has themed his next lunch 'McDuffey's' – his own take on a certain fast-food restaurant. He says, "Raising money is great fun!"

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS A QUIZMASTER?

Get your BIG QUIZ pack!

If you're looking for a fun way to get involved, we have just launched The Big Quiz! These ready-made quiz packs, complete with questions and answer sheets, are waiting for your fundraising quiz night with family, friends or colleagues. It's an easy way to enjoy a fun activity and raise money to save lives.

Building a new air base, effectively a mini airport, needs lots of great fundraisers. We need many more incredible individuals, community groups and businesses to rally with us to fundraise. Every pound raised by your Big Quiz event will make a difference.

**CAMBRIDGE
AIR BASE APPEAL**
BRING US IN TO LAND



Visit our website or scan the QR code to get your Big Quiz pack!

ENJOY DRONES SAFELY



Last year, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) saw an increase in reports of drones disrupting air ambulance missions on emergency flights across the UK. While most people fly drones safely and responsibly, a small minority continue to fly in a way that puts our aircraft at risk – jeopardising both our crew's safety and the lifesaving care we can provide. That's why we're supporting the CAA's and Air Ambulances UK's recent initiative to educate and provide clear advice on how to operate drones safely. Only earlier this year our crews were alerted to a drone flying near the helipad at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, which could have disrupted a landing.

Drones have amazing potential and they're much more accessible now than they used to be; it's easy to purchase a drone at a relatively low price. They can be really fun to use – we've all seen amazing images and videos which

have been captured by drone, and they can help people to develop a passion for aviation (which we wholeheartedly support) – but people must fly them safely and follow the rules.

You should never fly a drone near an emergency situation, such as a road accident or a fire. Emergency services' helicopters including air ambulances need to be able to safely use the area to help those in need.

Flying a drone without care or awareness can have very real and serious consequences, such as grounding an air ambulance, delaying vital treatment, and placing added strain and distress on families already facing a critical situation. Then of course there is the possibility of contact between an air ambulance and a drone. At best, it could take a helicopter offline while repairs and maintenance are carried out. A mid-air collision could also

be catastrophic and delaying a helicopter could have a significant effect on those needing the critical care air ambulance crews provide.

Richard Hindson, Director of Operations and Infrastructure at East Anglian Air Ambulance, says, "It's also about having empathy and respect for the people and families involved in a medical emergency and not taking video footage or photos – because at the heart of every tasking is a person in need of critical care who is experiencing some of the worst and most vulnerable moments of their lives."

If you see or hear a helicopter or other aircraft near to you when flying your drone, please land it until the other aircraft has safely passed. Anyone flying a drone over 100g needs to visit website at caa.co.uk/drones and take their free Flyer ID test – it helps you understand the rules and fly safely. As well as the

Flyer ID test, most people responsible for a drone need to register as an operator on the CAA website.

Richard adds, "It's not about stopping people enjoying drones, but about ensuring responsible and safe drone operations, while having compassion for the people we're called to help, their loved ones and everybody affected by a medical emergency."



Richard Hindson, Director of Operations and Infrastructure

TOGETHER AT TREK



In April, Richard Budd took part in Trek 24 – Suffolk after hearing about the event at our Norwich Base Open Day earlier in the year. The walking event, which took place along the Suffolk coast and countryside, became a family affair when his partner, Leigh and daughter, Rachel decided to also support the event as volunteers.

Richard, from Sudbury, completed the 24-mile route. He was inspired to take part after seeing the helicopter and learning more about our lifesaving work. He couldn't resist signing up for Trek 24 to lend his fundraising support.

"I loved the challenge of Trek, and the training gave me something to work towards," Richard explains. "On the day, I walked solo for the most part so I could

go at my own pace, but I chatted with people at the start line – where there was a great buzz – and along the way. I ended up raising £250 in aid of East Anglian Air Ambulance."

The route passed through the Suffolk coast and countryside, including Southwold. Richard and his family are regular visitors to the town so he made sure he stopped off at a few of his favourite places along the way.

Six and a half hours and 24 miles after his start, Richard approached the end point at the Sotterley Estate, where he knew Leigh and Rachel would be there to cheer him over the finish line – not just as his supporters, but as volunteers for East Anglian Air Ambulance. The event wouldn't be able to take place without the incredible support of people who can give their time to help, and it's especially lovely to have family members joining forces to lend their support.

"My feet were getting sore towards the end, so I was glad to see the finish!" Richard continues. "There was a lovely, friendly atmosphere and, when I crossed the line, Leigh and Rachel were holding the ribbon."

Leigh says, "Rachel was home from university that weekend and it was lovely and wholesome to be able to volunteer together."

"We were based at the finish line – in charge of cheers and the bubble machine – and we got to meet other volunteers. It was an amazing experience."

Leigh and Rachel had been tracking Richard's progress on their phones so they could be sure to hold the finish tape for him as he crossed the line. "It was really quite emotional, and we were so proud of him," Leigh says. "Everyone was cheering the Trekkers as they finished. It was great to volunteer – we got so much back from it. I was on a high!"

Trek 24 – Cambridgeshire will take place on Sunday 6 September, and registration is open for the 24-mile, 24km and 2.4-mile routes. Visit eaaa.org.uk to book. If you're not able to take part but would still like to support the event, please speak to us about other ways you can get involved.

Leigh adds, "If you can't take part in Trek but you still want to make a difference, volunteering at the event is just as inspirational."

A huge thank you for Richard, Leigh and Rachel for their wonderful support.



Rachel, Richard and Leigh

NANNY IS GOING TO BE OK....



Liz in the back of our helicopter

Liz tells her story - made possible by you.

"Yes, I'd seen the East Anglian Air Ambulance helicopter flying over my Thetford home on many occasions and briefly wondered who, what, where, but it was only when I needed urgent care that I could fully appreciate how lucky

we are and what a fantastic service is provided by such a dedicated team.

I have lived with an irregular heart rhythm, atrial fibrillation, for 14 years and just kept popping the pills and happily getting on with my life until early one morning in March this year when something was definitely amiss. My heart was beating very fast, I was

feeling very dizzy and finding it hard to breath if I moved. A 999 call brought two fantastic paramedics who quickly did an assessment and decided medical back up was essential.

Thanks to many years of yoga practice, I managed to stay very calm even though I thought I might die. I remember looking up at the trees and sky and thinking, "Well, it's been really lovely living here surrounded by nature..." I felt very grateful.

I was sitting wired to an ECG machine when I saw a helicopter in the sky flying over my home and realised that it was coming for me! When the land ambulance team said they were calling for some back up, I didn't realise it would be an air ambulance. I recall asking where it was going to land as I didn't want the crew to have to walk too far with all their kit bags. It landed not far away and a doctor and two critical care paramedics with all their equipment came to my rescue. While they were taking care of me, my husband packed a hospital bag and reassured my grandson, who was with us, that Nanny was going to be ok.

Fortunately, after the East Anglian Air Ambulance crew gave me an injection, things calmed down considerably. My heart rate didn't go back to normal, but it stopped the fast beat. The decision was made to transfer me by air to West Suffolk Hospital. I later learned that I could have had a cardiac arrest if I hadn't been treated so promptly, efficiently and with such amazing care.

When I was in the back of the helicopter, Dr Bruce Liu from the air ambulance team, took a photo of me on my phone. I had a big grin on my face – it was the relief that I was safe and in such good hands. Once we'd landed at the West Suffolk Hospital and I was being lifted out of the helicopter, someone – possibly Dr Bruce – said, "You've got a welcome committee!" I saw a group of nursery children behind the fence wearing their hi-vis jackets and waving like mad. So naturally I waved back and felt like a VIP!

East Anglian Air Ambulance is an invaluable service that sometimes we take for granted, but as a charity it needs funding. Even after the emergency itself, I was in contact with the charity's Aftercare team and it was lovely to 'offload' onto somebody who understood.

My rescue cost over £4,000, and much more is now needed as Cambridge Airport is closing, resulting in the need for East Anglian Air Ambulance to relocate and build a vital new base. It's so important to support them because it's something we all need to think about before we need their help. Rest assured I'll be holding the collection buckets at every available opportunity."

Liz Mantle

Supporter and former patient

THE SOUNDS OF A PILOT'S SHIFT

From the red phone ringing, to starting the helicopter engine, it's a role like no other. Captain Eduardo Prato, Babcock International Group (Babcock) pilot, shares some of the unique sounds of a shift as part of the Anglia Two (Cambridge) crew.

Inside the crew room

When I arrive on shift at Cambridge, I greet the rest of the crew, my co-pilot and a doctor and paramedic. We're a close-knit team and the welcome is always warm. The chat soon gives way to quiet while we all concentrate on the essential elements at the start of every shift. I'll often hear a gentle tap of fingers on laptop keyboards as the doctor and paramedic log on, and it's occasionally punctuated by somebody making a tea or coffee, with the sound of a teaspoon stirring in a mug.

We'll methodically run through our aircraft checklist. There will be the clicks of locks and the sliding of cabin doors as every detail is checked thoroughly.



While we're doing this, the clinical crew check their kit bags. They run through their own checklists, calmly, methodically but never complacently because these bags contain the equipment and medication that somebody's life today will depend on.

When we're tasked

The red phone ringing cuts through everything and we all stop what we're doing. From the crew room to the office, to the base meeting rooms, we hear it throughout the building – and that's deliberate. It's not just something that readies us, alerts us, activates us. It's a stark reminder for everybody in the base at that moment that someone's day has just been turned upside down.

The H145 helicopter is quieter and smoother than some other aircraft. There are different frequencies when the engines start and the rotors turn; the engines and gear box make distinctive high frequency sounds, the main rotor produces a low frequency sound, while the tail rotor's one is a bit higher. As we lift, these sounds also become vibrations that we feel in our bodies.

We have a sterile cockpit while we're lifting; this means only aviation matters are discussed during this critical time. In our headsets, we'll hear the constant voices of air traffic control. We also pay attention for our callsign, 'Helimed 88 Alpha' if we're on our way to an emergency tasking – this gives us priority in the airspace – and 'Helimed 88 Echo' if we're returning to base.

Landing

The RPMs of the engines' increase as we come into land; we need high power to hover. As we monitor the engine parameters in our cockpit displays, we get the familiar increase in frequency of the engine's sounds as we approach our chosen landing site. After landing, we hear conversations between emergency services, the handover to our crew, and checklists that are carried out – more moments when communication and paying attention are everything.



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