

Company Secretary Information Pack 2025



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Welcome



Thank you for your interest in becoming our Company Secretary for Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC).

I joined GWAAC as the Chair of Trustees in 2024, after being a supporter of the charity for several years. I was delighted that my mixture of aviation, healthcare and governance experience was what the Board of Trustees was looking for, as it has been a pleasure to learn more and get further involved with GWAAC.

When you volunteer at Board level, you can sometimes feel removed from the day-to-day operations of a charity, but at GWAAC there is always the opportunity to hear from former patients who bring the work of our clinical crew to life, vividly. People who have the time and motivation to do other forms of volunteering are very welcome, so you can see how the team is functioning on the ground. Of course, our lifesaving mission is clear, and nothing could be more motivating than helping a local charity save lives in our own community.

With GWAAC I am always learning something new, even at this stage in my career! Whilst many of the issues that face the charity are common to many organisations, such as balancing income and expenditure and dealing with people, the specialist nature of what our operational team do, the breadth of our fundraising activity and the constant evolution of the charity means there is always something fresh and interesting going on. However, our Board is focused on governance. This means that whilst Trustees are ultimately responsible for GWAAC we are not running the organisation – we leave this to our professional management team.





GWAAC is called to over six incidents a day on average; all of which are expected to be life threatening or life changing for the person involved. Our team brings critical care skills to the scene of an accident or medical incident, and, with our specialist equipment and drugs, we improve outcomes for patients. Sometimes this means saving a life, sometimes it means preventing further harm or disability for the patient, but sadly sometimes we cannot save the person's life. This is the reality of what our teams deal with, day in, day out.

To support them in their roles they need many things. They need a charity which funds their salaries and their training, and supplies the equipment and drugs they need. They need a helicopter as well as critical care cars. They need managers who support them and develop their practice. They need good working relationships with other organisations. They need a safe base from which to operate, and ideally one that supports their wellbeing. Finally they need strong governance to ensure that GWAAC is working effectively, maintaining high standards in everything it does and striving to improve.

This is where you come in, together with the Board of Trustees. Maybe you can help? If so, then we hope to hear from you soon.



Jason Holt
Chair, Board of
Trustees

Our Purpose

Why do we exist?

Because a life-changing illness or injury could happen to you, anywhere, any time, and you deserve the best care, as soon as possible.

Why are we the ones to help?

Because we have amazing people with extraordinary skills, all committed to saving lives in our local communities, who can help you when you need us.

Why can we do what we do?

Because, just as GWAAC's people care for our communities, you care for them - your generosity keeps GWAAC flying, and keeps us saving lives.

Our Values



Compassionate



Dedicated



Curious



Collaborative



Our board of Trustees needs to help us achieve our 2024 – 2028 Strategy...

Our Ambitions, 2024 to 2028

1. Deliver clinical and operational excellence

This is the core of what we do, but we know we can do even better. We plan to invest in the development of our clinicians and the people they work with to provide the best care for patients. We want to make sure we are dispatched to the patients who can benefit most from our expertise, get more involved in research and become more evidence and data driven, so we know what we do really makes an impact. We want to be there for anyone who needs us, and make sure that everyone can benefit equitably from our expertise.

2. Our team is the best it can be

Our people are our greatest resource – we rely on them to deliver our service, raise the funds we need and run the charity, and we need to support them to do this. We want to improve the wellbeing support available to our team, formalise development pathways so people can enhance their skills and help our doctors to balance working with GWAAC with their other commitments. We also want to review our recruitment processes and develop our culture so we can attract and retain the best people, be genuinely inclusive and remove the barriers between our clinical and non-clinical teams.

3. Be socially and environmentally responsible

Our team and our supporters rightly expect that we behave ethically in everything we do. We pride ourselves on our Great Western Hearts CPR and Defib projects, but want to expand their reach, and we are making good progress towards being more environmentally sustainable, but there is still a long way to go. We want to engage all our people in helping us reach our aims in these areas, by removing barriers that diverse groups might experience when in contact with us and by enhancing the support we offer to former patients and bereaved families.



4. Be the charity that local people choose to support

Put simply, we need more money so we can be there for anyone experiencing a life-changing or life-threatening event, to train more people in CPR, to provide more defibrillators, to support former patients and bereaved families and to continue providing the best available clinical care. We need people to know who we are and why we need their support, to raise more funds through legacies, regular gifts and our lottery, and to benefit from time given by more volunteers. We will replace our database with a modern system to help us manage our external relationships, increase our visibility, review our fundraising activities, generate more money from commercial activities and make sure we are providing real value to local communities.



5. Be an excellent organisation

Our supporters trust us with their donations, and we need to make sure we continue to use them effectively and efficiently to provide our service and generate additional funds. We want to increase our focus on using evidence and evaluation to inform and improve our work, continue to professionalise our supporting systems and use new technology where appropriate. We also want to collaborate more with other air ambulances and relevant organisations, so we can use our resources jointly to have a bigger impact. We plan to recruit new Trustees to our Board, bringing in different experiences and skills to improve our governance.

6. Create a Mission Support Centre

Underpinning our Ambitions is the creation of a Mission Support Centre at our airbase. This will be crucial in helping us to improve our people's wellbeing, join our clinical and non-clinical teams together, enhance our support for former patients and bereaved families, deliver CPR and clinical training to the public and other stakeholders and provide a hub for our ever-increasing fundraising and engagement activities.



How GWAAC serves the community

When Lily fell off her pony she was dragged around the arena twice before her foot was released from the stirrup when her pony went over a jump. With a broken femur and in severe pain, Critical Care Doctor, Chris Arrowsmith and Specialist Paramedic in Critical Care, Matt Robinson jumped in the helicopter, reaching her in 10 minutes. They pulled her leg back into place, administered painkillers and kept Lily comfortable and at ease while they travelled with her to hospital.

"I can't thank the whole team enough for how they helped Lily, we are honoured to have these lovely people to attend trauma and life-threatening situations."

– Fiona, Lily's mum.



Part-time teacher and grandmother, Ann suffered a cardiac arrest at home in Cheltenham. She received immediate CPR from her daughter and postman, followed by CPR and defibrillation from an ambulance crew. On arrival, Specialist Paramedic in Critical Care, Callum Sutton set up the Lucas Machine for automatic CPR and administered sedation, analgesia, and put Ann in an induced coma and on a ventilator. He provided further treatment on route to hospital. Ann arrived in a stable condition, ready for an immediate operation and ongoing care.

"..if it weren't for your quick-timing, knowledge and perseverance, Nonna would have either died or had severe brain damage..."

– Alaria, Ann's 12-year-old Granddaughter

Following a serious road traffic collision near Cirencester, Critical Care Doctor Lou and Specialist Paramedics Pete and Jack rushed to help Simon by car. The team anaesthetised Simon, gave several blood transfusions and performed a thoracostomy. They took him to Southmead Hospital, bypassing closer hospitals, because it was the best hospital for his needs. They managed drugs and blood en route, making sure he got there alive and stable.

"Everything they did for me, is usually done in a hospital. They did it on the side of the road, in the dark, in the wet... I kept them busy the whole time!"

– Simon, former patient



Who we are looking for

We are looking for a new Company Secretary who shares our Values and who will work with the board of Trustees and the leadership team to make a positive difference to patients.

Our Company Secretary will have the time needed to carry out the role, be willing to challenge, ask difficult questions, offer clear advice even when it might be unpopular, and to learn from others. We want someone who is dedicated to our cause, curious about how we can do better, compassionate towards our people and collaborative in their approach. They will help us develop and maintain a culture of high performance but which is genuinely inclusive.

In common with much of the charity sector, we strive for greater diversity of experience, background, age and culture on our Board and in the senior leadership team. We actively welcome applications from groups who are under-represented at a senior level in UK charities, as we believe a more diverse group makes better decisions.

We also particularly welcome applicants who have had personal experience of our service, or another air ambulance, as a patient or a friend or family member of a patient.

Finally, previous Trustee or Company Secretary experience will be beneficial.



Role Description

This is an exciting opportunity to contribute at a strategic level to a charity dedicated to saving lives in our local communities. Our Company Secretary will need to:

- Keep informed about the charity's activities and relevant local and national issues
- Use knowledge or experience to help the Board reach sound decisions
- Attend Board meetings, prepared to contribute effectively and to take professional notes
- Guide and assist the Trustees to ensure that GWAAC complies with all aspects of its governance, relevant legislation, and statutory guidance, including its own Articles of Association
- Assist in Board administration including maintaining the forward plan of agenda items, coordinating meetings and agendas and keeping the Charity Commission and Companies House information up to date
- Work with the Head of Finance and IT to ensure all regulatory returns are completed on time and to a high standard
- Participate in other tasks from time to time, e.g. promoting the charity's public profile
- Help set the culture of the charity, explicitly demonstrating our Values in action
- Develop and maintain productive relationships with Trustees, the CEO and Head of Finance and IT
- Declare any conflict of interest at Board meetings or at any other time if they become apparent



The Company Secretary will also guide and advise the Trustees in fulfilling their duties to:

- Ensure that the charity applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of the objectives in its Memorandum of Association
- Ensure that the charity complies with all aspects of its Memorandum of Association, Articles of Association, charity law and all other relevant legislation and statutory guidance
- Ensure that the charity conducts its business in accordance with its Values
- Safeguard the reputation of the charity
- Declare any conflict of interest at Board meetings or at any other time if they become apparent while carrying out Trustee duties
- Be collectively responsible for Board decisions and all aspects of the charity's business
- Ensure the efficient and effective administration of the charity's affairs
- Ensure the financial stability of the charity
- Protect and properly manage the charity's assets and ensure prudent investment of its funds
- Ensure that the charity is adequately insured against all reasonably foreseeable liabilities
- Be guided by the Nolan Principles and our Values in all they do



Person specification

Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate the following experience, skills and attributes:

Essential

- Understanding of the governance obligations and responsibilities of UK charitable companies and their Trustees
- Ability to absorb complex information, including financial information, assimilate this with their knowledge and critically analyse it
- Understanding of the boundaries between Company Secretary, Trustees and management teams
- Ability to build effective relationships with Trustees, the CEO and senior managers
- Good team working and communication skills, including the ability to ask questions and challenge and advise others appropriately
- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Be reliable, organised and meet deadlines without prompting
- A commitment to safeguarding, equality, diversity, sustainability and social responsibility
- Sound ICT skills, including email and common Microsoft Office applications
- Free from conflicts of interest which would prevent you carrying out this role objectively
- Ability to attend regular Board meetings, usually quarterly, and other ad hoc events

Desirable

- Experience as a Company Secretary, Trustee or Company Director
- Understanding of the health sector and/or emergency services
- Knowledge of the area and communities covered by GWAAC (Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire and parts of Wiltshire)

The requirements of company directors will be used as a guide to determine with a candidate is and remains suitable for the role. For example, the person should not be prohibited from being a company director in the UK and their position with GWAAC should not create reputational risk for the charity.



Guidance and Support

The new Company Secretary will be expected to attend orientation meetings, which will likely include:

- A visit to the charity's main office, meeting staff
- A visit and tour of the airbase, meeting the Operations Officer, Medical Director, clinical crew and pilot
- Individual meeting with the CEO
- Meeting with the Chair
- Meeting with the charity's other senior managers
- Meeting with the Supporter Engagement Coordinator for the Company Secretary's home area

If you are appointed you will be provided with a series of documents which will give context and explanation regarding the charity's current position, live issues and future plans. You will also be asked to confirm that you have read and understood key policies.

You will be provided with links to general resources for charity boards, such as those available on the Charity Commission website.

VOSCUR provide guidance, support and training for the voluntary sector in our area. They run regular training courses for Trustees and GWAAC Trustees are encouraged to take advantage of these. Further information can be found at: <https://www.voscur.org/>

However, we also expect you to be proactive in identifying what you need to know and either finding it out or asking for support in doing so.



Frequently asked questions

How much time is required?

The Board meets quarterly, usually on a weekday afternoon for 3 hours. There will be papers to be read in advance of these meetings, which could be anything from 30 to 100 pages, depending on the agenda. These are usually circulated a week in advance.

We do not currently have sub-committees, but if we add them in future you would be expected to assist with their coordination and administration.

You will be expected to attend some key events from time to time, acting as an ambassador for GWAAC.

In addition, you will be expected to keep up to date with changes in the expectations for UK charity boards and maintain a general awareness of what is happening in our sector and local area.

In general you can expect to fulfil everything asked of you in an average of one hour per week, although this will be very variable through the year.

How long do I need to commit to the role for?

We ask that you feel able to carry out the role for three years when you apply. However, we know that things might change, and you can resign anytime.



What skills do I need?

You need to be able to absorb information that is presented in writing, electronically and in person. You must be able to combine this new information with any existing knowledge you have of the topic, do any further research you feel you need, weigh up the information critically, ask searching questions and provide appropriate advice and guidance.

You must be able to think strategically. When working at Board level not everything is clear cut – decisions may need to be made without full information and there may be differences of opinion.

Team working skills are important. The Board acts collectively and in general will discuss issues until there is an agreement on the best way forward. You must have good listening skills, value the contributions of Trustees and wider team, and behave appropriately, according to the situation. In general, we describe our approach at GWAAC as being highly professional, but very warm, and you will be able to model this.

GWAAC is there for everyone in our communities, whatever their age, gender identity, income, health needs, ethnicity, background or sexual orientation. We actively seek to become part of our local communities, part of the fabric of people's lives, thought about in the same way as people think of the NHS and hospices – worthy of their support and in turn there to support them. We need to get better at ensuring we have people in our staff team, our crew, our Board and volunteer ground crew who are representative of these communities. As our Company Secretary you will need to be cognisant of this, champion diversity and inclusion and challenge us to do things differently in order to do things better. We believe the key attributes you will need for these are self-awareness, humility, curiosity and dedication to improving things.

You will also be expected to act as an ambassador for GWAAC. The charity depends on local networks of individuals and organisations to support us and fundraise for us. You will be expected to speak positively about the charity and the work we do with your networks, making appropriate introductions and helping charity staff to make new contacts.

What are the risks to me personally?

GWAAC is a professional organisation and takes its responsibilities seriously. We are registered with such bodies as the Information Commissioners Office and the Fundraising Regulator.

It's extremely rare, but not impossible, for charity Trustees and Company Secretaries to be held personally liable:

- to their charity, if they cause a financial loss by acting improperly
- to a third party that has a legal claim against the charity which the charity can't meet

Understanding potential liabilities will help you to protect yourself and your charity by taking action to reduce the risk. This includes complying with your duties.

GWAAC is a limited company, and therefore the liability of each individual Trustee and Company Secretary cannot exceed £1.

Do I need insurance?

GWAAC takes out Legal Liability, Employment Practices Liability and Directors Liability insurance coverage for all Trustees and the Company Secretary. This protects the Board and charity as a whole against liability arising from a wrongful act by a Trustee or Company Secretary.



Can I claim expenses?

If you wish to you can claim certain out of pocket expenses that you may incur when carrying out your role, such as mileage or car parking. We will fund certain training courses. The Company Sectuary is not paid; this is a voluntary role. Volunteers are the life-blood of GWAAC, and we could not function without them.

Where can I find out more about being a Trustee?

We suggest that anyone interested in becoming a Trustee spends some time examining the guidance on the following websites:

- [Home — Charity Governance Code](#)
- [The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do \(CC3\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission
- www.voscur.org/

Where can I find out more about GWAAC?

You can find general information about our charity on our website:
www.gwaac.com

You can also read our annual reports here: [Register of Charities – The Charity Commission](#)

We are active on social media, so please find and Like or Follow us at:

- [Facebook](#)
- [X \(Twitter\)](#)
- [Linkedin](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)



What happens next?

If you are interested, then you may wish to contact our Chief Executive, Anna Perry, for an informal discussion. She can be contacted on 0303 4444 999.

No agencies please, unless formally representing a group that is traditionally underrepresented at Board level.

To apply, we require a CV along with a covering letter, combined no more than eight sides of A4. These should be sent to jobs@gwaac.com by 9:00 on Monday 6 October.

An existing Trustee and the Chief Executive will shortlist the applicants, based on the Person Specification. The Board of Trustees will be invited to comment on the recommended shortlist.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview with a Trustee, the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance and IT.

Candidates who are successful at interview will be invited to attend a relevant event or location, such as a visit to our airbase, to meet more of our team.

If there are no concerns and we consider you that you will be a good fit for our team and that you will be able to contribute to our work, you will be invited to the next Board meeting. This is an opportunity for you to meet the full Board of Trustees and to demonstrate how you contribute to a meeting.

Following your successful fulfilment of the Company Secretary role over the next six months, we will formally appoint you as Company Secretary.





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🖱 www.gwaac.com

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**GREAT
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Air Ambulance Charity

Registered charity number: 1121300