**PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**First two weeks of 2024 busiest on record for air ambulance, and 2023 was its second-busiest year**

The crew of Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) had a busy start to the New Year with 90 call-outs to people in urgent need of critical care in the first two weeks of January. This was a third more call-outs than for the same period last year and the busiest first two weeks recorded by the Charity.

The busy start comes straight off the back of GWAAC experiencing its second busiest year on record in 2023.

Last year, the specialist team of Critical Care Doctors, Advanced Practitioners and Specialist Paramedics in Critical Care and Pilots rushed to help 1,979 people experiencing their worst day and potentially needing immediate lifesaving care.

In 2023 GWAAC’s crew was tasked to more children and teenagers in urgent need of critical care than ever before. Two years ago, despatches to children and teenagers doubled for the charity, from 7% in preceding years to 14%. Numbers remained high in 2022, but in 2023 they reached a new level when the crew was called to help 289 young people under 18 years old (15% of GWAAC’s total call-outs.)

Luckily the team is well-equipped to deal with the increasing number of young patients. GWAAC has crew members that specialize in paediatric and neonatal critical care, and when a call comes in for a young patient, the team responds with the specialist kit bags set up to treat children and babies.

*“We’re very lucky to have access to manikins of all paediatric sizes for training purposes, from pre-term infant to school age. Equally important, we also carry a wide range of sizes of equipment allowing us to resuscitate and treat this vulnerable group.”*

Dr James Tooley, Critical Care Doctor, Great Western Air Ambulance Charity

**Do you know the most likely reason someone would need GWAAC’s air ambulance crew?**

Cardiac arrests remained the most common type of incident for GWAAC in 2023. The crew was called to 503 people in cardiac arrest (25% of all missions), followed by 377 people (19%) who needed GWAAC’s help after a road traffic collision. 62% of GWAAC’s patients were male and 32% were female.

Overall, serious medical-related incidents accounted for 51% of GWAAC’s total missions in 2023, while trauma-related injuries accounted for 49% of missions.

Across its region of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and parts of Wiltshire, GWAAC’s crew responded to 73% of call-outs in one of the charity’s fully-equipped critical care cars and 27% in its blue and bright green helicopter.

Gloucestershire, for the second year in a row, was the charity’s busiest region, with 573 people needing the skills of GWAAC’s specialist team (29% of GWAAC’s total call-outs). The next busiest was Bristol with 537 call-outs, followed by South Gloucestershire with 290, then North Somerset with 262, Wiltshire with 112, and Bath and North East Somerset with 101. The crew responded to 104 incidents out of GWAAC’s region.

*“With our mission numbers steadily rising year on year it’s more important than ever that we continue to receive the support of people in our communities. As a charity, we receive no direct government funding and rely on the kindness of people donating their time and money. Costs are rising too and we need to raise over £4 million every year just to stay operational.”*

Anna Perry, Chief Executive Officer, Great Western Air Ambulance Charity

**ENDS**

**Notes for editors**

1. GWAAC provides the critical care and air ambulance service for 2.1 million people across Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and parts of Wiltshire.
2. The GWAAC Critical Care Team consists of highly trained and experienced Critical Care Doctors, Advanced Practitioners and Specialist Paramedics in Critical Care, who bring the skill and expertise of a hospital emergency department to the patient.
3. In 2023 GWAAC was called to help 1,979 people in urgent need. The Critical Care Team is needed by an average of five patients a day, and rushes to treat them by helicopter or critical care car. On average each mission costs around £2,000 to attend.
4. The charity needs to raise over £4 million a year in order to remain operational yet receives no day-to-day funding from the Government or National Lottery.

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