

Winter/Spring 2022

# GREAT NORTH NEWS

[www.gnaas.com](http://www.gnaas.com)



2002 - 2022

## 20 YEARS OF HEROES

**Charity funded,  
world-class  
critical care.**

20 YEARS

## OF SAVING LIVES

On the day the Great North Air Ambulance Service was formally founded in May 2002, the first Spider-Man film was at the top of the UK box office, and just like the world's favourite web-slinger, our journey since then has been full of ups and downs (but mostly ups).

Such a lot has changed since then but one thing that has remained constant is our commitment to providing the best possible standard of patient care.

Everything we do revolves around this, but some particular highlights include:

### Our fleet

We've treasured every one of our helicopters but are not afraid to say that our current aircraft are by far the best we've ever had and allow us to reach more patients than ever before.

### Our team

We added doctors to the team, a crucial move that has since been mirrored on air ambulances around the country.

### Our methods

We were one of the first air ambulances in the world to carry blood on our missions. This project alone has saved many lives and continues to make a difference to some of the most seriously injured patients in our region.



This service must not be taken for granted. We remain independent of the NHS.

Most strikingly, since 2002, we have responded more than 23,500 times across the North East, North Yorkshire and Cumbria. The number is vast but please don't be blinded by the quantity - every single case was a person in crisis.

In many of these instances, we were able to ease the patient's suffering. In many, we were able to save their lives.

We never fully know what to expect when we arrive on scene, but with you behind us we are as prepared as we can be. You have equipped us with the right team, the right kit and the right training to allow us to deliver the most effective treatment for each individual patient.

With all this said, it's hard to imagine the region without an air ambulance service.

But the reality is that unless the public continues to donate around £6.7m a year, this is exactly what could happen.

We don't receive Government funding. We must challenge the assumption that we will always be there to respond. Public apathy or indifference to our cause are the biggest dangers we face.

The pages that follow are full of examples of how important our service is to the communities we serve. As a supporter, you should share our pride in these achievements. Please take it in, spread the word, and as you have done over the years, please continue to do what you can to enable our work.

With your help, we fly on for another 20 years and hopefully beyond!

David Stockton  
Chief Executive





20 YEARS

## IN THE MAKING

We officially became a charity and registered with the Charity Commission.

The charity's headquarters in Grange Road, Darlington, is opened and the G-PASH aircraft is the first to be based at Teesside International Airport.



In partnership with James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough, we are one of the first air ambulances in the country to carry doctors on board.

This is a significant progression in the standard of pre-hospital care.

MAY  
2002

JULY  
2003

SEPTEMBER  
2003



Our fundraising recycling operation begins, collecting and recycling pre-loved items such as clothes, books, mobile phones and ink cartridges.



JUNE  
2004

AUGUST  
2004

2010

Our prestigious training course, the 'Helicopter Emergency Medicine Crew Course' enrolls its first students. Developed in partnership with London Air Ambulance, the course is the only one aimed at medical air ambulance crew members.

The course has evolved and adapted and in 2015 it was renamed the 'Pre-Hospital Emergency Medicine Crew Course'.



Cumbria's first dedicated air ambulance is unveiled, meaning that 80 per cent of the county is now within ten minutes of our air ambulance cover.



The first of three new aircraft is delivered to the charity. The three Dauphin helicopters are bought, rather than leased, giving us valuable assets that will help safeguard our financial position in years to come.





## IN THE MAKING

We became one of the first air ambulances in the UK to carry blood on our aircraft. The Blood on Board project means blood transfusions can be delivered to patients outside of hospital. The following year, fresh frozen plasma was introduced to further improve patients' chances.



Our critical care team perform a successful thoracotomy when a man is stabbed and left for dead in Horden, County Durham. The footage of this surgery is the first time a pre-hospital thoracotomy has been recorded in the world, and becomes a vital training aid for our teams as well as other pre-hospital clinicians.



The critical care team based at Teesside International Airport are relocated to GNAAS' new headquarters near Eaglescliffe, Stockton. The previous year, our administrative and fundraising staff moved from offices in Darlington and Newton Aycliffe to the new site. Finally, all together under one roof.

The same day as the relocation, a new helicopter called the Guardian of the North II begins work at the base.



JANUARY  
2015



APRIL  
2015



2017



We teamed up with North East Ambulance Service to provide a paramedic and doctor team on Friday and Saturday nights, known as the Medical Emergency Response Incident Team (MERIT). Hundreds of patients are treated in the first 12 months, and the service is expanded from two nights to four nights in 2018.



2018



2020



2021

We become one of the first emergency services in the UK to utilise the GoodSAM app in its deployment decisions. The app allows our team to see the scene through a bystander's camera phone, simply by sending them a text message. This means the team are able to make more informed decisions before deploying the aircraft to an incident.



A night-time service similar to the one in the North East is launched in Cumbria to cover 24 hours a day on both Friday and Saturday. A new helicopter called the Pride of Cumbria II also starts work at the base in Langwathby, Penrith and attends ten incidents during its first weekend in operation.





## Steve's Snaps

Paramedic Steve Miles is a busy man. When he's not rebuilding vintage Land Rovers or caring for patients, he occasionally finds the time to capture photos of his working day. Here he shares some of his favourites from the past few months.



We had transported a patient to the RVI hospital in Newcastle and left after dark. This was the view over Newcastle as we returned to base. A nice view of the city after we had just helped one unwell patient whilst thousands went about their business below us completely unaware.



This is one of my favourites. When Progress House opened and the new helicopter arrived, we didn't have a tractor to move it into the hangar as it was still in use at our former base, so I offered to use my more than 45-year-old lightweight Land Rover. It's an ex-military Land Rover which I rebuilt, it has tow winches at the front and back, and many years ago may have been this close to an aircraft in its military days, although the military have a bit of a habit of throwing this type of vehicle out of aircraft with parachutes attached!



This was the team returning to base at Progress House at sunset. The colours in the sky looked interesting. The views we get from up there are breathtaking, so whilst helping move the helicopter into the hangar I snapped this photo.



This was the first proper snowfall at Progress House. I wasn't on this mission and was stood at the hangar as the team took off. Although it's a good photo I did get covered in snow when they took off!



I took this photo one evening at our old base at Teesside International Airport. It was a hot summer's day, and the sun was just starting to set making the mixture of colours in the sky. As a bit of an engineering nerd I love having a look at the little details around the helicopter like the rotor head, we depend on those bolts so much!



Taken not too long after the Volvo XC90 rapid response car arrived. It allows us to respond in times of bad weather or darkness when the aircraft can't fly so it's a vital part of our service. I loved the way the car could be seen through the tail rotor of the helicopter, the two modes of transport provide air and ground options for our teams.







## “Not all heroes wear capes. Terry wears his GNAAS uniform.”

Two-year-old Ava Pearson was given just hours to live when the car she was in collided with a tanker on the A66 near Cockermouth.

Our paramedic Terry Sharpe, alongside a doctor and pilot, flew to the scene and assessed and treated both Ava and her father before they were airlifted to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle.

Such was the extent of her injuries, Ava had to have the left side of her skull removed to relieve pressure on her brain. Her intensive treatment was only the start of a long journey to recovery.

Her mother Amy Shaw said: “Ava’s injuries from that day have meant her life will face ups and downs and she will be limited as she gets older, but we take the positives with the negatives and are forever thankful for all the hard work the emergency services provided that day, as we brought Ava home and that’s all that matters.”

Despite many setbacks, the invasive treatments and the time spent in hospital, Ava has remained strong and determined.

Amy, of Maryport, West Cumbria, said: “She attends mainstream primary school and takes part in horse riding and hydrotherapy as part of her rehabilitation. Ava is a very lively and bubbly little girl.

“She regularly gets described as a ‘whole lot of sass’. She’s generally very happy and strong willed and stubborn but given everything she’s been through I’m certain that played a huge part in her recovery.”



## “As a mother, to face that situation, it was horrendous.”

Eight-year-old Gracie Bartleson was enjoying a sunny day in June 2021 with her family in Hartlepool when she had a freak accident and impaled her arm on a fence post.

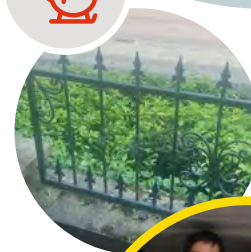
Recalling what happened, her mother Carly Snowball said: “I’d only just turned my back to get some ice lollies when Gracie leant over the metal railings to pick up a dropped lip gloss. Her foot slipped and her arm fell onto the railings, which impaled her.”

Cleveland Fire Brigade cut off the top of the railing to release Gracie and her injury was assessed and treated by the North East Ambulance Service and our critical care team, including Dr Mike Harrison.

Carly said: “I just remember GNAAS doctor Mike keeping me calm and letting me know with a calming voice that she wouldn’t remember anything.” After administering pain relief, Gracie was carried to the air ambulance and was airlifted with her mother to James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

Carly said: “It was peak traffic so it probably would have taken up to an hour by road. It only took five minutes to fly her to hospital.” Gracie underwent surgery on her arm and stayed in hospital for two nights before returning home.

Since the incident Carly has raised £500 for our charity and organised clothing collections with our recycling team to raise even further funds for us.



# All Gunns Blazing

35-year-old Jake Gunn, from Durham, joined our critical care team just a few weeks ago as the latest paramedic recruit. We interviewed him to find out more about the new opportunity that he says he's been waiting a lifetime for.



## Jake, how does it feel to be part of the team?

It feels unbelievable and I really couldn't be happier to be here. I still find myself smiling on my way to work and every time I pull up outside and see the GNAAS sign I can't get my head around the fact that I work here.

## What was the interview process like?

It really was a gruelling day. I came away feeling like I didn't really do well enough to get the job so I kind of thought that I would treat it as an educational experience. Everything I have done in my paramedic career has been to be here, so I was gutted.

## Talk us through the call when you found out you were successful?

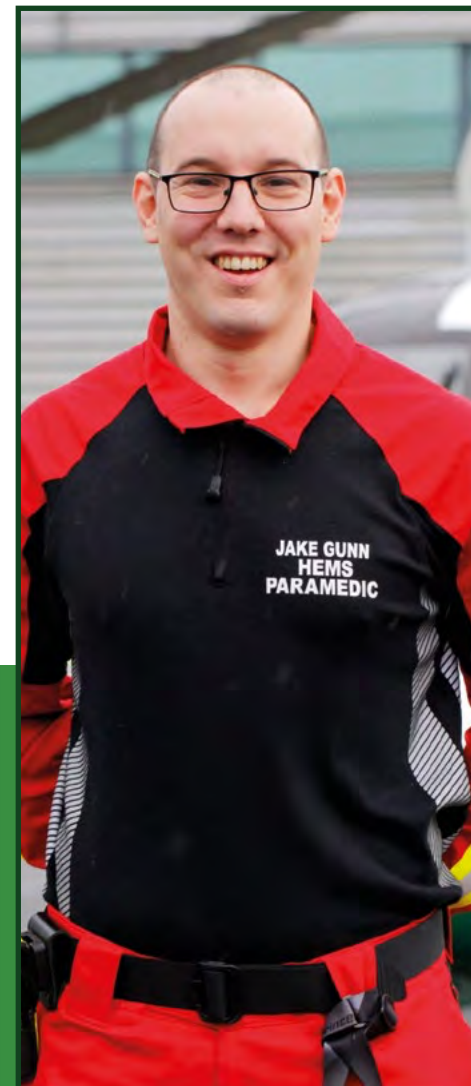
I had been feeling down about it all for a few days, so my wife invited my friend over to cheer me up and we were enjoying some pizza and beers in the garden. The phone went and it was Andy Mawson (GNAAS Director of Operations). He said I had smashed the interview. It was fair to say there were extra beers and hugs all round.

## How was your first flight in the helicopter?

I was totally trying to hide the fact I was fanboying. I kept having to remember to focus and take it all in, but I was grinning from ear to ear the whole time.

## What has the team been like so far?

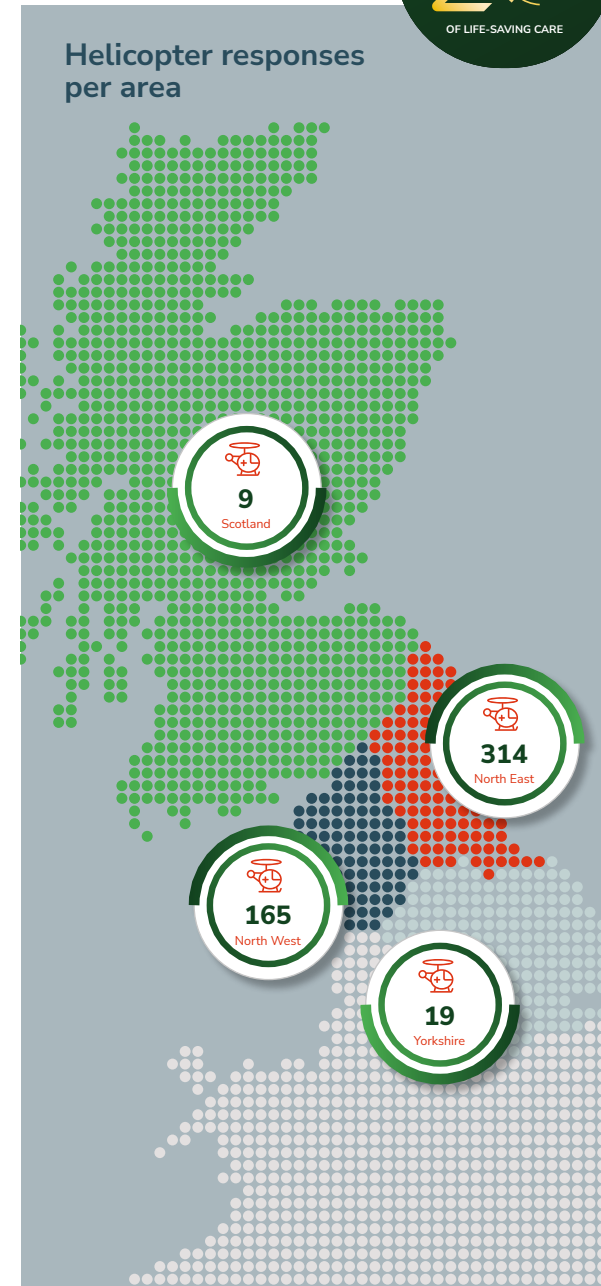
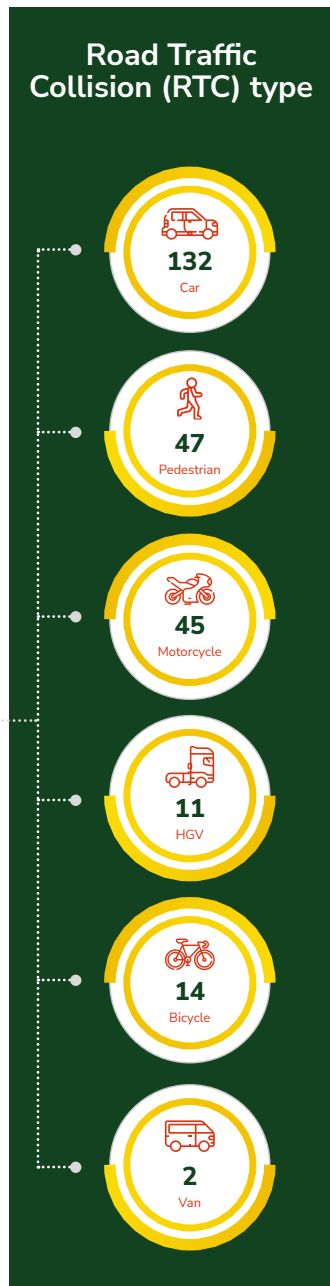
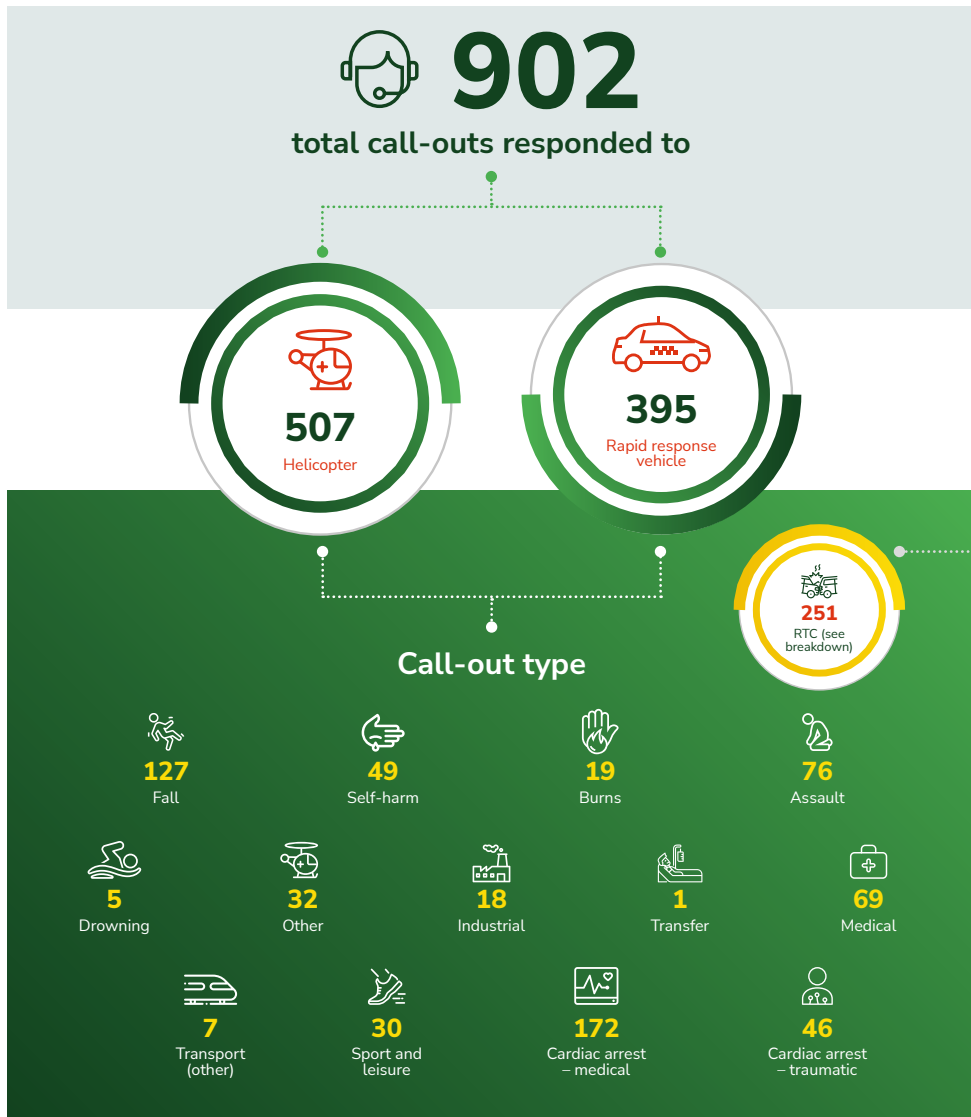
They are incredible. Their knowledge standard is second to none and like nowhere I have ever worked before.





# 6 months of missions...

The following data shows what our teams have been up to in the six months from 1 Jul 2021 to 31 Dec 2021.





# 20 years of life-saving care, will you celebrate with us?

# 20 YEARS

The greatest gift we can receive for the charity's 20th birthday is your support. Whether it's a donation today, a commitment of your time as a volunteer or a pledge to fundraise, your help means we can help those who need us most in our region.

Here are a few ways you can get involved in our 20th year.

## Having a birthday party or a big celebration?

Ask your friends to donate to our cause instead of gifts.

## Donate £20

£1 for each year we've been providing critical care.

## Set up a regular donation

Whether it's £2 or £20 a month, this regular support helps us provide our care and plan for the future.

## Take on a challenge

Or join an event and collect sponsorship.

## Donate now or get in touch:

T: 01325 487 263 E: [support@gnaas.com](mailto:support@gnaas.com)

## Great North Air Ambulance Service

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[www.gnaas.com](http://www.gnaas.com)      /GNAirAmbulance



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