

# Coming in from the sky

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**A**ir Ambulance Week 2023 is celebrated across the UK from September 4–10, with air ambulance charities across the UK delivering the vital message that air ambulance charities can't save lives without the help of the people they serve.

The event highlights the fact that anyone, anywhere in the UK, can become a patient at any time. Air ambulance charities collectively make over 102 lifesaving missions each day across the UK. There are 37 air ambulance helicopters in the UK, operated by 21 air ambulance charities, providing pre-hospital care support to the NHS and forming an important part of the UK's frontline emergency services.

Air ambulance crews bring the emergency department to patients who have suffered a life-threatening or life-changing trauma or medical emergency, providing specialist critical care to save lives. They receive no day-to-day government funding and depend almost entirely on charitable donations to deliver their lifesaving care.

On average, an air ambulance can reach someone in urgent need within 15 minutes. Air ambulance charities are collectively dispatched to over 102 lifesaving missions each day across the UK.

Air ambulance charities can't save lives without you, and thanks to public support, eight-week-old Charlie was airlifted by Thames Valley Air Ambulance. Berkshire resident Laura Turner was putting her son into his car seat, ready to leave the house for a baby music class,

when Charlie's normal newborn cry suddenly changed to a more strained sound that Laura hadn't heard him make before. She realised with a jolt that he had stopped breathing. Remembering seeing that there was blood coming out of Charlie's nose, Laura recalls: "I thought that was it. I thought he was gone."

Laura had taken a first aid course while pregnant, so she knew how to give him rescue breaths. She called 999, and a few minutes later, Charlie started breathing slowly. Holding her son in the baby recovery position, Laura began the agonising wait for the emergency services to arrive. "It was only six minutes until the ambulance service and Thames Valley Air Ambulance crew got to us. But those were the longest six minutes of my life."

Once help was on hand, the rest was a blur. The Thames Valley Air Ambulance paramedics and doctors, who had arrived by helicopter, worked with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) to get Charlie stable, and he was taken to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Paediatricians monitored Charlie until he was 18 months old. He is now a healthy, happy five-year-old. A chatty boy who loves to learn, he is thriving at pre-school.

"I can still remember the feeling when help arrived that day," Laura explains. "It was such a massive relief that my precious son was in safe hands. I knew these people were trained and would do everything they could to fight for him. There's so much I could say to the Thames Valley Air Ambulance crew who came that day. I can't thank them enough. Without them, Charlie might not be here. We might not have the happy little boy we have today. I want to say thank you a million times over."

Laura wants to share her story with people and let them know that emergencies can happen to anyone at any time. "If one person takes a first aid course because of this, then that'll be worth it." Nobody expects they will ever need the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. I certainly never thought we would."

"It's not worth thinking about what might have happened had help not arrived so quickly that day. But it is so important for me to raise awareness and funds, which might mean another family like ours receives vital care when they need it most."

Simmy Akhtar, Air Ambulances UK's CEO, said: "As charities that almost completely rely on donations, we are encouraging everyone to support their local air ambulance during Air Ambulance Week. By supporting us and your local air ambulance, you will be ensuring patients such as Charlie can continue to receive advanced pre-hospital care when a sudden life-threatening injury or medical illness occurs." **CRJ**

■ To show your support for Air Ambulance Week, you can make a one-off donation to Air Ambulances UK by visiting [airambulancesuk.org](http://airambulancesuk.org)

Photo: Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance

