Great Western Air Ambulance Charity called to record number of incidents for second year in a row

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For the second year in a row, Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) has been called to a record number of incidents across its region of Gloucestershire, Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and parts of Wiltshire.

With one helicopter and three critical care cars, the specially trained crew responded to 2,344 people in urgent need of medical care in 2025 — an average of six more call-outs each month compared to 2024. GWAAC's crew, which includes Critical Care Paramedics and Consultant Doctors from hospitals, bring the skills, experience and equipment usually found in a hospital emergency department direct to the patient, fast. By making critical decisions at the scene, and with doctors on board, the crew can deliver treatments and interventions that would not normally be possible out of hospital, giving patients the best chance of surviving a serious medical emergency or traumatic injury.

More call-outs to medical-related incidents

Serious medical-related incidents accounted for 56% of GWAAC's total call-outs in 2025 while trauma-related injuries accounted for 44% of missions. This is a slight increase on 2024 when the charity saw a heightened level of medical incidents (55% in 2024) compared to previous years. GWAAC's Operations Officer, Tim Ross-Smith says the changing trend could be a result of the educational work GWAAC is doing with road paramedics:

"We're getting more requests for assistance from our local land ambulance crews on top of the traditional air ambulance call-outs for incidents like road traffic collisions and cardiac arrests. This could be due to the outreach work our crew are doing, educating land paramedics about when we can add value to patients who are in urgent need of care. It's helping our ambulance service colleagues have an increased recognition that our team can support with more nuanced decision making in complex situations."

— Tim Ross Smith, GWAAC's Operations Officer

Top five reasons why GWAAC's crew were needed

The crew were called to 521 people in cardiac arrest (22% of all missions in 2025) meaning it is still the biggest single reason that GWAAC's service might be needed. Sixty-six year old Pam woke up one morning at home and went downstairs as usual to let the dog out when she started to feel unwell; she suffered a sudden cardiac arrest and needed GWAAC's help. She says, *"I'm here today because my husband immediately called 999, the paramedics gave me CPR and defibrillation, the GWAAC team kept me stable and got me to a specialist heart hospital. I'd encourage anyone to learn how to do CPR and find where their nearest defibrillator is so they know how to help in an emergency. And I'd say, please support GWAAC! They're not part of the NHS and rely on donations to continue saving lives."*

Cardiac arrests, combined with the following incident-types made up almost two-thirds of GWAAC's call-outs in 2025:

- Road Traffic Collision = 362 (15% of all missions)
- Collapse = 185 (8%)
- Neurological = 183 (8%)
- Fall = 227 (10%)

Around two-thirds of call-outs (63%) were to male patients and the crew were tasked to 341 babies, children and teenagers needing immediate medical care (15% of total missions) across the region.

Gloucestershire and Bristol were GWAAC's busiest regions

GWAAC's crew were called to help 677 people in Gloucestershire, making up 29% of all call-outs for the charity. Bristol closely followed with 668 people needing the specialist skills of GWAAC's crew. South Gloucestershire came next with 323 people in urgent need, followed by North Somerset (281), Wiltshire (138), Bath and North East Somerset (121), and Somerset (90). GWAAC's crew were tasked to 46 patients outside of its usual region, such as in Wales.

The crew rushed to help 74% percent of people in urgent need across GWAAC's region in one of the charity's fully-equipped critical care cars. In Bristol, GWAAC's critical care cars were used for 93% of call-outs to the city.

Twenty-six percent of taskings were in GWAAC's recognisable bright green and blue helicopter and as is consistent with previous years, only 2% of patients were conveyed to hospital by air. More often, their crew continue treating patients in the back of a road ambulance, where there is more space to work, while transporting them to the hospital best suited to their needs.

CEO Anna Perry says, *"Demand for our lifesaving service has never been higher and I feel very proud that GWAAC has been able to help a record number of people for a consecutive year. I'm especially proud because our charity has been facing increased operational costs and an increasingly tough fundraising environment. So, thank you to everyone who has donated, volunteered, taken part in sponsored events and bought from and donated items to our shops—you kept families together in 2025 and helped someone who was having their worst day. But we have a tough challenge ahead of us; we desperately want to be able to be there for everyone who needs us so we're asking for support from our communities again in 2026. If you can, please donate and help us be there for more people in the future."*

For more information about GWAAC and for ideas on how you can help support the charity, visit www.gwaac.com

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