



The Sussex Air Ambulance Presented by Dave Winsor.

Fri 7th April 2017

Based on previous speeches given to other groups, Dave was specifically requested to come and give tonight's talk, and it was indeed a superbly polished performance.

Most of us are aware of the air ambulance from various events reported up and down on TV and the radio. However, we probably don't appreciate the current sophistication of the organisation and how much money is required in order to maintain the operation, which is a charity relying on public donations for much of its income. £6.4 million is required each year just for this regional service.

The Kent, Surrey & Sussex air ambulance operates from two sites at Redhill (having moved from Dunsfold to allow around the clock activity) and Marden. From these sites most of the region can be accessed within 15 minutes at a top speed of 140mph. A critical care paramedic monitors all 999/112 calls and if required the helicopter can be airborne in 4 minutes. The Sussex ambulance was the first to have an on-board doctor - senior consultants are used. Much of the knowledge for treating patients on site or on the return journey has been developed from rescuing casualties in military conflicts. To cut time to patient, helicopters with blades 12' above the ground are used so that medics can get out and back in whilst they are still rotating. Night time flying was introduced in 2011 with the CAA stipulating the need for two pilots. 2013 saw the introduction of blood being carried on board, four units of type O, which cost £120 each. There is now also freeze dried plasma, at £240 per unit, to help seal wounds.

Around 2200 callouts are made annually which allows a profile of the type of incident to be made. For those under 50 the most common events are road traffic accidents, falls, assaults, sport & leisure (equine in particular) and industrial. For those over 50 the most common cause of each callout is cardiac arrest.

The helicopters are operational 92% of the time, with 4% allocated to maintenance and the rest lost to bad weather or unexpected faults. A £9.2 million lease-purchase of a new helicopter is currently being implemented for the next 10-15 years. The doubling of seats to four and the extra space on board will enable work to continue on the patient whilst the extra 25mph top speed will knock valuable time off the journey to hospital. Of those in the region, the main ones used are at Southampton, Brighton, The Royal London, St. George's and King's. With each callout costing on average £2200, the need for funding continues relentlessly.

Leycester Whewell, EHADPS secretary, 4 June 2017