

AIR AMBULANCE KENT SURREY SUSSEX

WEBINAR 10AM 22/7/2020

I attended the above webinar this morning, KHWCC having received an invitation as one of their supporters to take part.

The attendees on the panel were:

CEO	David Welch
Director of Fund Raising	Helene Poursin
Member of Medical Crew	Dr. Maya
Dispatcher	Lottie Ticehurst
Events Officer	Lola Inge

Invited attendees:

Corporate companies / sporting clubs / individual contributors / other organisations.

David Welch – he began by thanking everyone for their help with the funding of AAKSS, he stated without their supporters there would be no Air Ambulance!

This year they are suffering a shortfall of £2m. At the start of the Pandemic lockdown they put out an emergency request for funding and managed donations amounting to £1m, which took the pressure off the organisation somewhat.

It should be remembered that 90% of funding is from charitable donations.

This year AA celebrates its 30th anniversary. Sadly, the majority of the events planned have had to be deferred and/or cancelled, which is really quite sad.

In February this year they had a visit from Princess Anne who takes a great interest in AA in general, to help celebrate their 30th anniversary.

It should be noted that AA have received 5 Outstanding Ratings – it is a first for any Air Ambulance organisation to win such awards.

David stated that AA were well prepared at the end of January for the pandemic and he stated the teams at AAKSS are the best he has worked with in the Air Ambulance arena.

At the start of the Pandemic calls were down 25% because everyone was staying at home and therefore, no cars on the road! The majority of calls during this time were from people falling from roofs, falling from ladders etc during DIY. Calls have now increased with calls to road accidents.

It took AAKSS 3 weeks to organise all staff to work from home and it has been very successful with the volunteers still able to work for AA but from their homes. They furloughed 8 members of staff, all of whom are back working fulltime.

They held a virtual coffee morning in support of all the volunteers working with AA – this helps keep staff and volunteers in touch. The volunteers are from KSS families and they are a very important and integral part of the Air Ambulance family.

Dr. Maja – has been with AAKSS for 4 years and very much enjoys her role with them and intends to continue with the organisation!

She highlighted the additional challenges the Pandemic has brought, especially with the equipment and protective clothing required to be worn by the crews. They are required to wear the full coverall suit– then upon landing to attend patient/s they would have to put on additional PPE to protect the patient/s and themselves! The difficulty was the helmet – because only the eyes could be seen, so they began a search for a full view helmet. Having found a supplier they then had to acquire the necessary aviation approval. The next problem came with the crew when flying – they were not able to use the usual microphone system. So they had to search out a way of attaching a mic to the new style helmet. Once again, all of this equipment costs money,

Also, all of the clothing/helmets etc have to be fire retardant and approved for use in the helicopters by the Aviation Authority. Another challenge for the organisation to face!

Dr Maya stated that without the charitable contributions they would not have been able to obtain such necessary equipment.

Dr Maya took a question from the ‘audience’ – was it cost effective/value for money to run a 24hr service together with another service which ran from midnight to 6am. This organisation is the only AA which runs such services.
Ans: Yes it is a very effective model that they work to.

Last week for instance the overnight calls increased by 5% in just one week.

As lockdown has eased, the roads have become considerably busier, therefore more accidents reported, increased work for the crews.

The busiest time for AA is from midnight when people are on their way home from a night out etc.

The pilots try to always to land as close to the incident as possible. They are the only AA which has a military map which indicates all hazards they may come across – i.e. power lines, and it is also extremely useful when flying at night.

Asked if AAKSS would be taken over by the NHS, to which the reply is no, because by being independent they are able to work to their tried and tested models. They work closely with Care Quality Commission but wish to remain independent.

They believe that other AA will take themselves into independence because they are able to make quicker decisions. Again, they would continue to work closely with the NHS.

Dr Maya divides her time between AAKSS and St. Thomas' London, where she is part of the Medical Emergency Team.

Dr Maya stated that AAKSS is the first crew with a doctor and paramedic on board, after London Air Ambulance. The model introduced because it means doctors and paramedics work extremely well together because of their varied skills and enables the team to deal with emergency calls more efficiently. Previously, the crews were two paramedics. For instance, a doctor can apply anaesthetics at the roadside when necessary, paramedics cannot. They also carry blood and blood products on board.

They are very proud that the crews have risen to the challenges Covid 19 has brought, keeping both crews and patients safe at all times from Covid 19.

They have strict rules in place for the staff and crew when on base for social distancing, ensuring the safety for everyone, they have not dropped a single shift since the start of the Pandemic.

The crew have had to launch a new way of delivering patients onboard because of the Pandemic and keeping everyone safe. The crew have found the new coveralls very hot to work with, but it is necessary.

Prior to Covid 19 the pilots would help the crew with the delivery of equipment at the site but are not allowed to do so because of social distancing, the crew were always very grateful for the additional help from the pilots because it meant they could get to the patient/s quicker. This has added to the additional effort required by the medical crews. After each callout the helicopter, equipment etc has a thorough deep clean.

During the Pandemic AAKSS has helped the NHS with collecting and taking critically sick patients from one hospital Intensive Care to another. Thus saving the NHS staff from having to leave their posts. This type of transfer would usually be taken by an ambulance.

Dr Maya thanked everyone for their help and financial contributions.

Lottie Ticehurst - Despatcher at Maidstone working closely with the Critical Care Staff. Lottie takes all 999 calls and categorises each call as appropriate before passing to AA. The airborne crews are monitored closely by Lottie's group from the minute they take-off until they land. Arranging transport

pickups as required. They work very closely with NHS / Police / Coastguard / Critical Care Staff. This is a very busy unit and calls having increased in short order by 25% it can be seen why.

Lola Inge – Events organiser. Lola has been organising events to celebrate AAKSS ' 30th anniversary. Lola said there are a number of events on their website which individuals can take part in and raise funds for AA.

One such activity is either running/jogging/walking 30 miles in 30 days, then donation via phone/website upon completion.

£30 buys 10 oxygen masks for patients!

Lola advised that the London and Brighton marathons are their biggest fund raisers, they have been deferred to September, but it is still unclear if these events can go ahead.

There is also the Summer Draw and they also run a Lottery.

Volunteers are always needed – working in the office etc. So if anyone has a small amount of time to offer please check their website. They really are a wonderful group of people!

I will interrogate their website to find other events members of our cycling club could take part in order to raise funds.

I sent a 'big thank you' for their help when one of our members had an accident, (no names were mentioned), just the name of our club as one of their sponsors. It was read out to all participants that one of our KHWCC riders on an organised club ride had received serious injury in an accident and was attended by AAKSS.

Dr. Maya stated that since continued easing of lockdown road traffic accident calls had increased – 'awful driving'!