

# AIR AMBULANCE CHARITY SEEKS PUBLIC DONATIONS



The Air Ambulance pictured during a demonstration at its official launch at Rathcoole Aerodrome in North County Cork on 2 September 2019.

Following the launch of Ireland's first charity-led Air Ambulance by Irish Community Rapid Response last September, it's estimated that over 600 lifesaving missions could be flown this year. However, without immediate funding those missions will be in jeopardy, and the charity needs public support to continue to provide this Helicopter Emergency Medical Service nationwide. Report by Grace Heneghan.

**T**he mission of the Air Ambulance is to respond to people at their greatest time of need in Ireland via emergency 999/112 calls. Led by Irish Community Rapid Response (ICRR), the charity air ambulance is being delivered in association with the HSE National Ambulance Service and the Department of Health.

The Munster-based air ambulance, working in tandem with the Athlone-based Emergency Aeromedical Service, is available for nationwide missions.

"As this is a community-based charity led service, €2m will need to be raised annually from the public to remain operational," according to John Kearney, CEO and Founder, with Irish Community Rapid Response (ICRR).

Speaking at the official launch of the Charity Air Ambulance at Rathcoole Aerodrome in North County Cork on 2 September 2019, Kearney said the charity needed the support of the general public, companies, individuals and communities to keep the project airborne. "Our thanks to so many for such generous support to date, he noted.

The Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) delivered 56 missions during its first month of service, after it went live on 30 July 2019. "The first month of service showed a real need for this service. Its use has exceeded expectations. It has been very rewarding to see it become a reality for people and families at their most critical hour of need," he added.

## MAJOR FUNDRAISING DRIVE

In fact, ICRR's Air Ambulance has flown on over 250 missions during its first five months in operation – that's 250 patients, 250 families and 250 communities supported by the air ambulance!

"The success of the air ambulance has meant we've flown many more missions than anticipated, which means increased costs to keep the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) flying," noted Ruth Barton, ICRR Operations Manager.

"In such a short time, the ICRR Air Ambulance has already helped in excess of 200 patients, their families and their communities by responding rapidly when they need help the most. These missions have been in both challenging rural



Liam O’Riordan from Rathcoole (centre), who fell off a ladder and injured his back and was the first person to be airlifted to hospital by the Charity Air Ambulance, is pictured with (l-r): John Kearney, CEO and Founder of ICRR; Captain John Murray; Simon Coveney TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and crew member Paul Traynor at the air ambulance base in Rathcoole Aerodrome in North County Cork.

locations and in towns and cities right across the country,” she added.

Each lifesaving mission costs approximately €3,500, and ICRR estimates that 600 missions could be flown this year alone, but it claims that those missions are in jeopardy without immediate funding.

“Over €700,000 has been raised by the public, donors and benefactors to date, but a further €400,000 is needed to keep flying and saving lives,” noted Barton who has set up a ‘GoFundMe’ page to fundraise on behalf of Irish Community Rapid Response.

The ICRR Air Ambulance is 100% charity-funded, with no



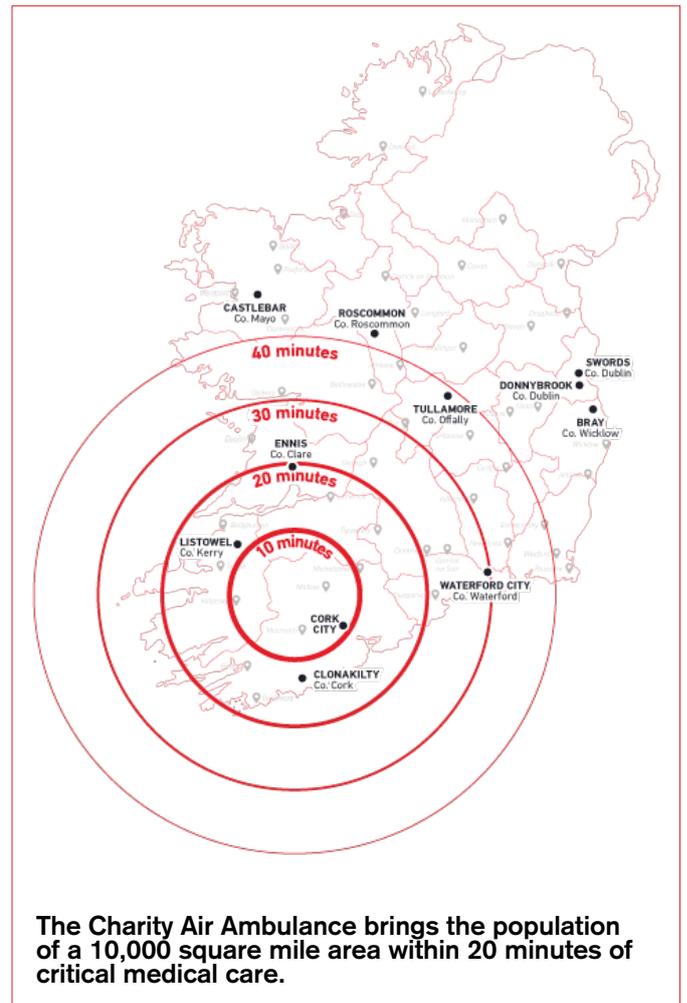
Pictured (l-r): Martin Dunne, Director of the National Ambulance Service, John Kearney, ICRR Founder CEO, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Simon Coveney, Minister of State, Dept of Health Jim Daly and Captain John Murray, at official lift-off of new air ambulance from Rathcoole Aerodrome.

support from the Government to provide the helicopter, pilots, air-base facilities, fuel, logistics, firefighting; basically everything needed to bring medics to the scene of an incident rapidly by air.

“We must also receive donations in order to pay for the VAT charges on the service, which cost the charity and its donors hundreds of thousands of euro per year.”

**PARTNERSHIP APPROACH**

When he officially launched the service last September at Rathcoole Aerodrome in North County Cork, Simon Coveney TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, commended the partnership approach between the ICRR and



The Charity Air Ambulance brings the population of a 10,000 square mile area within 20 minutes of critical medical care.

the HSE National Ambulance Service, to save lives and serve the public good by delivering rapid care to patients.

Under the agreed partnership model, the helicopter, the pilots, the fuel and the airbase facilities near Millstreet in Co. Cork are 100% funded solely by the charity, whilst the National Ambulance Service provides the medical crew and tasks the service through 112/999 calls to its aeromedical desk at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Tallaght.

Since 2008, ICRR has also developed a network of over 250 land-based volunteer doctors and 10 Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs) across the country, to deliver critical medical interventions, which prevent serious injury or death who are also dispatched to calls by the NEOC, within the National Ambulance Service.

**CATALYST LEADS TO FORMATION OF ICRR**

The preventable loss of a child's life in West Cork in 2006 was the catalyst that first led to the formation of Irish Community Rapid Response. "Galvanised by the tragedy, community members embarked on a mission – to expedite the delivery of professional A&E care to life-threatening emergencies in rural or disadvantaged urban areas," according to ICRR's Operations Manager.

Ruth Barton, who is very passionate about the mission, wants to see it continue to help more people into the future. "So many lives have been saved, but the charity is now at risk of grounding its air services without public support. I work with and volunteer for this worthy cause, and I have seen first-hand the immense impact that it makes in communities right across Ireland. It can only continue with your support," she has noted on the ICRR's fundraising page.

All funds raised will be spent on flying emergency lifesaving missions, bringing ill and injured people the medical care that they need at the scene of the incident, and then rapidly transporting them to the hospital that best suits their needs.

"Both babies and adults have

already benefited from this service, and everyday there are more people who may need the lifesaving help that this charitably funded service can provide. All funds raised on the 'GoFundMe' page will go directly to the ICRR Air Ambulance so that they can continue their mission," Barton said.

Visit the GoFundMe Page on <https://bit.ly/36RzU9H> and for more information on ICRR visit [www.icrr.ie](http://www.icrr.ie).

The advertisement is divided into two main sections. The top section is for 'BALLINTINE PARK' in Allen, Naas, County Kildare. It features a central image of a large, white, two-story family home with a dark roof and a prominent chimney. The text above the image reads 'BALLINTINE PARK' in a large, serif font, with 'ALLEN - NAAS - COUNTY KILDARE' in a smaller font below it. Below the image, it says 'A Stunning Collection of Large 3 & 4 Bedroom Family Homes' and 'Register your interest at [BallintinePark.ie](http://BallintinePark.ie)'. The bottom section is for 'CLUAIN DARÁ' in Derrinturn, Co. Kildare. It features a central image of a smaller, two-story family home with a brick and white facade. The text above the image reads 'CLUAIN DARÁ' in a large, sans-serif font, with 'DERRINTURN, CO. KILDARE' in a smaller font below it. Below the image, it says 'A Development of Spacious 2, 3 & 4 Bedroom Family Homes' and 'Register your interest at [CluainDara.ie](http://CluainDara.ie)'. The bottom right corner of the advertisement shows an interior view of a room with a fireplace and wooden flooring.