

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, smiling and holding a newborn baby wrapped in a white blanket. The background shows a hospital room with medical equipment. The image is framed by a blue and yellow wavy border.

“ We felt like we could breathe again. Someone understood. Someone cared. Someone was going to help us bring our baby home safely. **Lia's Wings** became our lifeline. ”



Hospital
air transfers
for children

Impact Report 2025/26

Helping families whenever and wherever they need us

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Welcome to our 2025/26 Impact Report. This year, we've continued to grow and respond to the increasing needs of the families we support. Thanks to you, more children have received the care they need, and more families have found support when they needed it most. We hope these stories highlight the incredible impact of your support over the past year.



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Introduction from our Chair of Trustees and CEO



Dean Gillespie
Chair of Trustees

As Chair, I am proud to introduce this year's Impact Report for Lia's Wings, the UK's only charity

dedicated to delivering life-saving air transfers by aeroplane for critically ill children and babies. This year Lia's Wings has deepened its role within children's healthcare, ensuring that critically ill children can reach the specialist treatment they need, wherever it is located. Our 2025-26 Impact Report reflects the extraordinary resilience of our families and the collective efforts of our wonderful staff, medics, trustees, partners and supporters.

It has been a year of increasing resilience, investing in stronger structures and building sustainability so we can support the growing demand for our services. Together, we are advancing our three-year strategy with the ambition to expand services and reach more families than ever before. Our plans for the future are ambitious but deeply grounded in the needs of the families we support, while Lia's legacy continues to shape both our work and our future goals.

None of this is possible without our supporters. To every donor, fundraiser, partner and friend: thank you. With your support, Lia's Wings will keep flying further, reaching more children, and honouring Lia's legacy.



Nathalie Scott
CEO

2025-26 has been a defining year for Lia's Wings. We have continued to bridge the gap between families

in crisis, and the lifesaving care their children urgently need. This year also marks my first as CEO, a role that has allowed me the privilege of meeting and listening to our families, our medics, and our partners to shape a clear direction for the future of our organisation.

Behind every flight is a family navigating one of the hardest moments of their lives. Our role is to make that journey easier. Over the past year, we have strengthened our clinical partnerships, expanded our family support services, and invested in the governance and infrastructure needed to meet rising demand. We also launched our new organisational strategy, setting out four goals that will guide our impact: delivering exceptional family-centred care, strengthening clinical excellence, building financial sustainability, and raising national awareness of the vital role aeromedical transfers play in children's healthcare.

This report shares the stories, data, and outcomes that define our impact. Most importantly, it reflects the courage of the families we serve and the dedication of our wonderful team and partners who make it all possible.

About Lia's Wings

What we do

Lia's Wings is the only charity delivering life-saving air transfers by plane both within the UK and internationally. We make sure babies and children receive the vital treatment they need, no matter where they are. Alongside these urgent medical transfers, we provide tailored, wrap-around support for families to help them through a crisis, creating improved long-term health and wellbeing outcomes.

Vision

Lia's Wings envisions a future where every child and their family are given the opportunity to access the most appropriate healthcare and support for their immediate and ongoing needs.

Values

Valiant - We are big-hearted, pioneering and speak up for the families that need our help.

Reliable - We listen and respond to what families need, for however long the need us.

Brilliant - We are passionate and committed, and value every partnership that helps us transform children's lives.



In memory of Lia

We created our first impact report with Lia in mind. It was a special way to showcase the incredible impact she has had on so many lives.

Lia is the daughter of our Trustees, Patrick and Melissa Schoennagel. She lived her short life to the fullest but suddenly passed away, aged only five years. Her death has deeply affected those of us who knew and loved her. Driven by the loving determination of her family that something good would come out of this awful tragedy, Lia's parents, Patrick and Melissa, as well as our charity's Board of Trustees and staff team, wanted Lia's prematurely ended life to be the catalyst for change at our small charity – and that's exactly what happened.

Since rebranding as Lia's Wings in 2023, we have doubled the number of children we are reaching each year, expanded overseas and established a Family Support Service that supports families through their most difficult moments. Lia continues to be a part of every element of our work and touches the lives of every family we help.

Our approach

Led by what families need

Every family's journey is different. For children with complex medical needs, getting home or accessing specialist care often involves far more than arranging transport. Families may be navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems, insurance processes, medical decisions, trauma, and the practical and emotional challenges of having a premature baby or seriously ill child far from home.

These evolving experiences have continued to shape our work. Lia's Wings was founded to address the lack of specialist medical transfers for children, but as we listened to families and gained a deeper understanding of the challenges they faced, our support evolved.

We now provide a range of transport and support solutions tailored to each child's medical needs and family circumstances. This includes supporting families both in the UK and overseas, arranging medical escort flights, road ambulance transfers and air ambulance transfers, advocating with travel insurers, and providing practical and emotional support during a crisis and beyond.



Our impact at a glance



100%

of parents believe the Lia's Wings transfer had a positive long-term impact on their child's health.

27

families supported overseas in 2025/26 **x5 growth** in just three years!

Neonatal cases
60%

Paediatric cases
40%



UK cases
40%

International cases
60%



We completed our

250th aeromedical transfer



We supported families in **17** countries and carried out our first flights from **Lithuania, Thailand and Albania**



Getting children to the care they need safely

For some children, a commercial flight simply isn't appropriate. We provide fully equipped air ambulance transfers within the UK and from overseas for children with complex medical needs who require specialist transport.

A private air ambulance functions as a flying intensive care unit, carrying essential medical equipment alongside a specialist paediatric medical team. This allows children who require a higher level of care to travel safely and with the right clinical support around them.

For children who are medically stable and able to travel on a commercial flight, we can provide a medical escort. A specialist medical team takes responsibility for the child's care during the journey, providing an appropriate and often more practical alternative to a private air ambulance where advanced care is not required in flight.

But the journey doesn't end when a child arrives home.

Supporting the whole journey

Families can continue to face significant practical, emotional and medical challenges after returning to the UK. That's why our support extends beyond the transfer itself. We provide practical help with medical information, emergency travel documentation and translation, helping families navigate unfamiliar processes at an incredibly difficult time.

We provide emotional support, giving families someone to listen, understand and respond to their individual circumstances. We provide insurance advocacy, helping families communicate with their travel insurer and progress their assistance. Where needed, we help integrate a child into the most appropriate medical setting back in the UK and can support families to access specialist services, such as physiotherapy.

And importantly, we stay with families for as long as they need us. Our support can continue for months or even years after a child returns home. If we cannot provide the right support ourselves, we help families find a specialist organisation that can.



It is impossible to truly put into words how grateful we are for Lia's Wings and everything they did for our family. During the most frightening and uncertain time of our lives, they gave us hope, strength, reassurance, and support when we needed it most. Their compassion goes far beyond the practical help they provide; they genuinely care for the families they support.

- Megan, parent helped by Lia's Wings

What we've been working towards

When we became Lia's Wings, we set out four key goals to guide our work and strengthen our ability to support children and families requiring neonatal and paediatric air transfers.

Over the past three years, we've worked towards these goals while continuing to listen to families, respond to need and adapt quickly to a changing environment. As an agile, needs-led charity, our strategy gives us direction, but it also allows us to respond when needs change or new opportunities arise.

We set out to:

- **Improve our neonatal and paediatric capability** - Building our equipment, expertise and training to meet growing demand and support children from neonates through to teenagers.
- **Strengthen our support for overseas air transfers** - Developing a more comprehensive package of practical, financial and emotional support for families facing the additional challenges of an overseas transfer.
- **Formalise the Lia's Wings family care package** - Developing our support around the whole family and responding to increasingly complex needs.
- **Build our profile within the NHS** - Strengthening awareness and relationships across the NHS so that more children who need an aeroplane ambulance transfer can access our service.



We've made progress across all four areas, while also recognising where needs have changed and where further investment is needed.

The following pages explore what we've achieved, the difference it has made, and what we've learned along the way, insights that have helped shape our next three-year strategy.



The four goals we set when we became Lia's Wings gave us a clear direction, but they were never intended to be fixed. Over the past three years, we've continued to listen to families, learn from their experiences and respond as their needs have changed. Being needs-led, we remain flexible and make sure our support continues to be timely, relevant and shaped by the realities faced by children and families experiencing a medical crisis far from home.



Charlotte Young,
Chief Operating Officer



Improving our neonatal and paediatric capability

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen our support for babies, children and their families through dedicated emergency funding, enhanced equipment and a new charity base. These developments are helping us build a service that can respond quickly, safely and compassionately when families need us most. Much of this progress has been shaped by the experiences of the families we support and the trust they place in us during difficult and uncertain times.

Jack's Fund: a legacy shaping paediatric care

One of the most significant moments in the development of our paediatric service has been the creation of **Jack's Fund**. The fund was established by Jack's family after the devastating loss of their son to ensure that other families facing paediatric medical emergencies receive the same compassion and support when they need it most.



Although Jack could not be saved, being able to bring him home and support his family through an incredibly difficult journey was very important. His story highlighted that we are not always bringing children home to recover. Sometimes, we are helping families return home when the outcome cannot be changed. In those moments, our role is to provide stability and reassurance.

Jack's story reflects the very foundations of our charity. Lia's Wings is named after Lia, whose short life and sudden passing inspired her family to create something positive from unimaginable loss. Like Lia's family, Jack's family chose to honour his life by helping others. Their generosity continues to ensure that children and families facing the most difficult circumstances have somewhere to turn.

Since the creation of Jack's Fund, we have expanded our knowledge, expertise and confidence in supporting older babies and children. The fund has helped highlight a need that often goes unmet, helping us build a service that is increasingly equipped to respond to complex paediatric cases.

Never Say No Fund

Alongside Jack's Fund, we established a **Never Say No Fund** to ensure that financial barriers never prevent a child from getting home when they need specialist support.

Every repatriation is carefully assessed based on what is safest and best for the child. In some cases, arranging a specialist air ambulance transfer at short notice can cost more than £60,000. The fund gives us the flexibility to respond when needed, ensuring decisions are guided by clinical need rather than a family's ability to pay. Strengthening both our neonatal and paediatric services, the fund helps us provide families with support when they need it most.

Lucy's story on the following page demonstrates the difference this vital support can make.

Investing in specialist equipment for medical escorts

As the number of neonatal and paediatric medical escort flights has grown, we have invested in specialist equipment to improve the safety and comfort of children during repatriation journeys.

This includes lightweight buggy systems, specialist slings and practical support items for families.



We also provide essentials such as clothing for babies born unexpectedly overseas, when families may have little or nothing with them.

Many families never expect their trip to end with a hospital stay or a medically supported journey home. By equipping our medical escort teams with these resources, we can reduce additional stress and ensure children travel safely and comfortably.

These investments are enabling us to provide more responsive, practical support tailored to the needs of each child and family.

Establishing a base at Biggin Hill Airport

To support our growing operations and continue providing vital care for children and families, we have established a base at Biggin Hill Airport in Kent. Being based at London Biggin Hill Airport helps us build closer links with the aviation community and benefit from being part of a well-established aviation environment. It is a much-needed and important step forward for Lia's Wings. Our new space will give us broader reach and increased flexibility to facilitate our service, reflecting our commitment to deliver both a truly national and international service for British children needing an aeromedical transfer.



Meet Lucy

Eight-year-old Lucy, from Birmingham, travelled to Poland with her family to visit her grandparents. After everyone caught a sickness bug, her parents thought little of it when Lucy began feeling unwell, but her condition rapidly deteriorated. She was rushed to hospital, where they treated her for Sepsis. After receiving alarming test results, doctors feared Lucy might have leukaemia, but needed to carry out biopsies to confirm.

Because Lucy was so weak, doctors were hesitant to put her under anaesthetic. They advised that she should return to the UK for further testing and treatment, surrounded by her family and supported by NHS specialists.

At this point, Lucy was critically ill, scared, and far from home, unable to walk and undergoing intense treatment in a foreign hospital. Her family were desperate to bring their little girl home so she could receive the expert care she needed.

Because of her fragile condition, Lucy needed to be flown home on a fully equipped air ambulance, accompanied by a specialist medical team. The family now faced the daunting task of funding a specialist air ambulance transfer to the UK.

Lia's Wings received an desperate call for Lucy's family, and within hours our medical team were on their way to Poland to bring her safely home. Lia's Wings knew that there was a narrow window of opportunity to transfer Lucy back to the UK. Her condition meant that further tests needed



to be carried out as soon as possible so that treatment could begin straight away. If Lia's Wings didn't work to move Lucy immediately, then this initial window for transfer would be missed, and Lucy would then have to remain in Poland for a prolonged period of time.

We flew Lucy to Birmingham Children's Hospital, her local specialist centre, where she underwent several tests that confirmed she had leukaemia. With a confirmed diagnosis, she was able to begin treatment straight away.

Lucy was brought back on Monday via Lia's Wings; they were amazing and are our saviours... Even when it seemed impossible, they were the only charity to support us. Thank you, Lia's Wings.

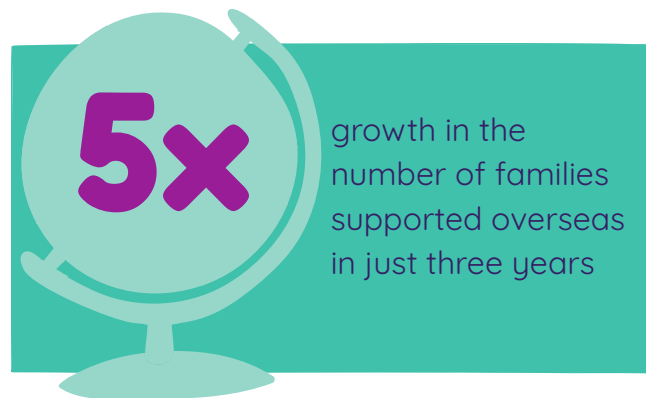
We're delighted to share that Lucy is now in remission. Her hair has started to grow back, something that means so much to her, and she's enjoying being back at school and spending time with her friends. We're so proud of how far she has come.

Establishing a more robust package of support for international cases



International demand continues to grow

Since 2022, we have supported families facing a medical crisis overseas, whether that is a baby that has been born prematurely or a child that has been critically injured or become seriously ill on holiday. Demand for international support continued to grow this year. In 2025/26, we helped 27 families overseas, five times as many as three years ago.



Over the past four years, we have seen the number of international cases increase dramatically, while UK cases have stabilised. This reflects our growing reputation as the first and only UK charity supporting children who need urgent aeromedical transfers from overseas, alongside the progress of rotary air ambulance services within the UK. Now, most of the families we support are from overseas (60%), and we expect this proportion to continue to grow as our reputation strengthens and we develop our support for families.

Working with partners to improve outcomes for families

When a child becomes seriously ill or is born prematurely abroad, families can face complex decisions about their child's care, often while navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems and the limitations of their travel insurance. Not every family needs an aeromedical transfer. Increasingly, families are turning to us for specialist support, guidance and advocacy to help them understand their options and access the right care.

This year, we supported more than twice as many families with travel insurance as last year. This growing need reflects both the challenges families face and our developing reputation and expertise in helping them navigate them.



To reach more families and improve the support available to them, we are building stronger relationships across aviation, insurance and medical assistance. This year, we shared our expertise and raised awareness of the experiences of families through the Air Charter Expo, the International Travel Insurance Conference, the Travel Insurance Industry Conference and as a panel speaker at the British Business & General Aviation Conference.



These relationships are increasingly helping us work with travel insurers to bridge the gap between insurance cover and the practical support families need. By sharing our specialist knowledge, we want to help insurers better understand the realities of caring for a premature baby or critically ill child abroad, and respond in ways that are more informed, compassionate and responsive to families' needs.

This is a key focus of our new three-year strategy (page 28). We aim to partner with more travel insurers, share our expertise and use what we learn from families to improve their experience and outcomes, so that more families can access the right support when they need it.

Improving how families find support

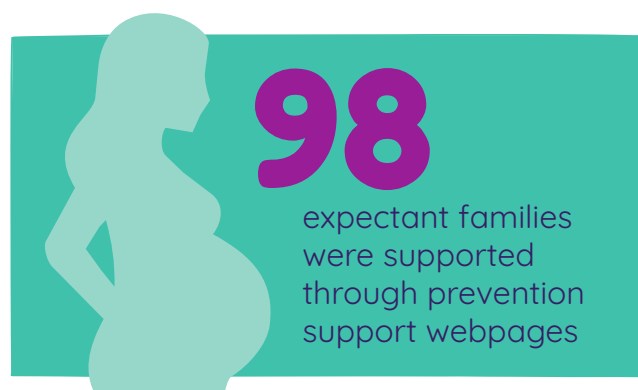
Families need clear, trusted information when facing a medical crisis overseas. As 75% of the families we have supported overseas found Lia's Wings through an internet search or through friends and family (often following an internet search), we have focused on making our website a clear and accessible source of information and support.

This year, we developed our digital support to be more comprehensive and easier to find. This included adding guidance on obtaining emergency travel documents (ETDs), addressing one of the biggest delays families face when returning home after a premature birth overseas. This has significantly reduced the time it takes families to obtain an ETD, helping them return home sooner.



Rebecca Wilson.
Head of Engagement

We also introduced guidance for expectant parents travelling abroad, covering insurance and where to turn if the unexpected happens. In 2025/26, 98 families used the webpages, returning an average of at least three times each, highlighting their value as an ongoing source of information and support.



Where we supported families this year



We supported families **17** countries this year, including:

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  UK |  Japan |  Australia |  Greece |  Morocco |
|  Lithuania |  Albania |  Spain |  Turkey |  Poland |
|  Thailand |  Italy |  Cyprus |  France |  Germany |
|  Portugal |  Ireland | | | |

Meet Frankie

While enjoying a babymoon in Mallorca, Megan and Micky's world changed instantly when their daughter, Frankie, was born three months early.

Far from home, they suddenly found themselves navigating premature birth, a language barrier and life as NICU parents in another country, with no idea when or how they would safely bring their daughter back to the UK.

Thankfully, their travel insurance covered the medical expenses, accommodation and travel costs while Frankie remained in hospital. Initially, they were reassured that an air ambulance home for Frankie would also be covered; however, they were later told that Frankie would not be repatriated until after her due date, meaning they could potentially remain in Spain for more than three months.

This was incredibly difficult to process. Doctors in both Spain and the UK were telling them that Frankie could safely travel by air ambulance much sooner.

They were also facing the terrifying possibility of Frankie being discharged in Spain while they were still living in a hotel room, without the equipment, support or preparation they would have had at home.

For weeks, they battled daily with their insurance company, spending hours chasing updates and desperately trying to bring their daughter home.

Then, Megan's friend, who is a neonatal nurse, recommended Lia's Wings. Our team helped them understand medical



terminology, explained complex information, answered questions and provided reassurance through some of the darkest moments of their lives.

For the first time since Frankie was born, we felt like we could breathe again. Someone understood. Someone cared. Someone was going to help us bring our baby home safely. Lia's Wings became our lifeline.

Using our experience and expertise, we advocated with the insurer for what was medically possible and what the family needed. Finally, the insurer agreed to fly Frankie home — the best possible outcome for the family.

Although Lia's Wings didn't need to physically bring the family home, we stood beside them every step of the way. We understood the potentially devastating impact of the family remaining in Spain, including the possibility of caring for an extremely premature baby straight out of the NICU in a hotel room. We worked to ensure the family had the support they needed and a safe route home.

Formalising our family care package

When a baby is born early far from home or a child becomes seriously ill, injured or needs life-saving treatment far from home, the impact is felt by the whole family. Parents can be navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems, separated from their other children and support networks, while carrying fear, uncertainty and exhaustion.

In 2023, when we started to work with families with more complex needs, we set ourselves the goal of formalising our Family Care Package. The aim was to better understand what families need from us and ensure our support creates a positive, lasting impact, not just during a transfer, but beyond it.

Building support for families' wider journeys

This year, we have made significant progress in strengthening the support we provide to families while continuing to adapt to their individual needs. Our Family Care Package now brings together practical assistance, emotional support and ongoing guidance, from regular check-ins and navigating complex hospital systems overseas, to helping families reconnect with their support networks and access additional services when needed. It means we can be there for the whole family, not just during their child's transfer, but through the wider challenges that can follow a medical crisis.



We have also seen growing demand for peer-to-peer connections, with families often valuing the opportunity to speak to others who have experienced similarly rare and complex circumstances. Whether sharing practical advice, providing emotional support, or creating resources for one another, these connections can help families feel less alone. One example is Annie, whose son Attleigh was born prematurely in Spain and lived for just 28 days. Inspired by her own experience of loss, Annie created a journal for bereaved parents, offering a gentle space to capture memories, thoughts and messages to their baby. These family-led connections and resources are becoming an increasingly important part of our family support.

Attleigh's life was heartbreakingly short, but every second of it was filled with love... this story, as painful as it is to tell, is written so that his name is never forgotten and so that any parent walking through this kind of unimaginable loss knows they are not alone."

- Annie, Attleigh's mum

The impact of being there for families

This year, we introduced a new monitoring system to understand the impact of our support both immediately and over the longer term. The feedback has shown just how far-reaching that support can be:



100% said Lia's Wings helped them feel more confident and prepared to deal with their child's health.



90% said our support improved their mental health.



100% said Lia's Wings brought them closer to their support networks.



70% said our support helped them or their partner return to work, or helped siblings return to school.



80% said support from Lia's Wings relieved financial pressure



80% said it helped reunite them with their other children.

Families also told us what they valued most: emotional support and reassurance, regular communication, compassionate staff, guidance through complex processes and, above all, knowing they weren't facing the crisis alone.

Listening, learning and looking ahead

We're proud that **90% of families said we couldn't have done anything better.**

Where families have identified ways we can improve, we're using it to strengthen our support even further.

However, we know there is more to do. Demand for our crisis support and aeromedical services is growing, as well as the number of families who require ongoing support. Half of the families who gave feedback told us they would value ongoing support, including regular check-ins, peer support or signposting to additional mental health support.

Formalising our Family Care Package is something we will continue to work on so that families feel supported, cared for and never alone. We're not creating a fixed model, but building a stronger framework for listening and adapting to our families' needs.



The support provided to Jack's parents by Lia's Wings during those early days, and which has continued since Jack's death, has been above and beyond anything they could have expected. They felt that the Lia's Wings team genuinely cared for Jack, and for them as his parents, and there was, and continues to be, a level of personal kindness and empathy offered during every interaction, which shows just what a special charity they are.

- Faye and Sarah, friends of Jack, helped by Lia's Wings



Meet Adam

When four-month-old Adam, from Plymouth, was critically injured on holiday in Italy, his mother Oana was suddenly alone in a foreign hospital while her husband, Bogdan, and young son, Dominic, had to return to the UK. This was a huge shock to the whole family, as due to the injuries Adam sustained, the Doctors informed Adam's parents that he probably would never be able to walk.

On top of the emotional trauma of the accident and having to cope with what felt like a devastating life-changing situation, Oana was told by the hospital in Italy that she would need to arrange safe medical transport for Adam back to the UK, as well as the appropriate hospital admission for his ongoing care.

As she juggled being there for Adam with desperately trying to find a way home, Oana had a breakthrough. She found Lia's Wings, and from that moment, we stayed by her side. We arranged an air ambulance transfer back to the UK for Adam, rescheduling and adapting when an infection delayed Adam's first planned transfer.

The Lia's Wings team texted me every day. Little updates just to reassure me that things were moving forward. That let me focus on Adam because he was still in hospital, quite critical. Those little texts allowed me to breathe.



Relief came almost instantly when Oana and Adam returned to the UK. Lia's Wings ensured Adam accessed the specialist care he needed, including urgent specialist spinal care at Bristol Children's Hospital, followed by rehabilitation and ongoing support for his complex condition.

The family were finally all reunited after five long weeks apart. Oana had desperately missed Dominic, her eldest son, and Adam's dad had desperately missed Adam.

I was so overwhelmed with how many things I had to do [in Italy]. I was always doing other things to try and help instead of staying with him. So I don't think I could have done it without you... I don't think I could have focused just on him.

Adam and his family are continuing to adapt to his new needs. He has a Wizzybug, a child's electric wheelchair, that is giving him greater independence, while his family continue to travel and make memories together, so Adam can keep making memories and enjoying new experiences.

Our Memory Tree

We honour the babies and children gone too soon, and hold their families close in our hearts. They are forever part of the Lia's Wings family. Their love has left an indelible mark on our charity.



There is no foot so small that it cannot leave an imprint on this world

Building our profile within the NHS

Lia's Wings works within a well-established neonatal and paediatric transport network across the UK, providing specialist aeromedical transfers when existing transport options cannot meet a child's needs. We are often the only option for babies and children with complex medical needs who cannot safely undertake long journeys by road ambulance.

By building strong relationships with neonatal and paediatric teams across the UK, we ensure NHS professionals know when and how Lia's Wings can help, helping children and families access the care and support they need, wherever they are.



Connecting with NHS professionals

During the year, we attended the Royal College of Nursing Critical Care and Flight Nursing Conference and exhibited at the National Neonatal Transport Group Conference, the REaSoN Neonatal Conference and the BAPM Annual Conference.

Our NHS impact at a glance

3

national
conferences and
events attended

2

national NHS
neonatal
meetings hosted

600+

NHS
professionals
engaged

21

referrals
received from
NHS teams



These conferences offer us a chance to connect with medical professionals from across the UK and the opportunity to increase awareness of our services, strengthen existing relationships, share learnings and stay up to date with new developments in neonatal and paediatric care.



Amanda Homan-Green,
Charity Liaison Manager



These events provided valuable opportunities to connect with NHS professionals, raise awareness of Lia's Wings and strengthen relationships with neonatal teams. They also enabled us to reconnect with teams who had cared for children we supported, share updates on their journeys and show them the impact of their work with us.

By increasing awareness of Lia's Wings across the NHS, we can help clinicians recognise when our support may be appropriate and ensure more families are connected to us when they need specialist care. Hearing directly from healthcare professionals also helps us understand the wider impact of our work on children, parents and carers navigating incredibly challenging circumstances.

Having been involved with Lia's Wings, who supported one of our ladies who delivered early in Greece, to get back home was such a learning opportunity for me and really highlighted that without your team's support, she would have had a very different outcome. Having your support made such a difference to her knowing people were there to help her get home prevented a significant decline in her mental health.



— Corinne Ward,
Operational Team Leader,
South Staffordshire
Perinatal and Maternal
Mental Health Team

Bringing NHS professionals together

We also hosted the annual National Neonatal Coordinators Group Development Day and the NHS Nurses and Senior Educators Annual Meeting at the London headquarters of our corporate supporter, Linklaters.

By providing a professional space for these meetings, Lia's Wings and Linklaters enabled neonatal professionals from across the UK to come together, share knowledge, discuss challenges and identify opportunities to improve practice. By creating opportunities for NHS teams to learn from one another, we contribute to the continued development of neonatal services and better support for babies and their families.



What this means for families

Building our profile within the NHS is not an end in itself. Every relationship we build, every clinician who learns about our service and every opportunity to share knowledge helps strengthen the pathway between a child who needs specialist care and the support that can get them there.

Through our NHS partnerships, we are helping to make sure that distance, complexity or a lack of suitable transport does not prevent a baby or child from accessing the care they need.

Feedback like this shows the importance of strong NHS partnerships. The more clinicians who know about Lia's Wings, the more families can access support when they need it most.

Meet a Flight Medic caring for families around the world

We spent time with one of our flight medics, Vickey, to learn more about life on a Lia's Wings transfer and what it takes to support children and families through some of their most challenging moments.

When families meet Vickey, they are often at one of the most difficult moments of their lives. A child has become seriously ill or injured overseas. Days, weeks or even months of uncertainty may have passed. Parents are exhausted, frightened and far from home, navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems, language barriers and the overwhelming reality that their child needs specialist care. Then Vickey arrives.



As one of Lia's Wings' flight medics, Vickey is often the first person families meet on their journey home. Alongside clinical expertise, her role requires adaptability, communication, problem-solving and the ability to connect with people in crisis.



A medical escort flight might sound straightforward: meet a family overseas and bring them home. The reality is often far more complex. Every journey involves countless moving parts. Flight schedules change, medical circumstances evolve and new challenges can emerge at any moment. A successful transfer relies on someone who can think quickly, adapt calmly and find solutions under pressure. As Vickey explains, plans rarely stay as plans for long.

You have to change your plan A to plan B, to plan C, to plan D all the time. You have to be thinking on your feet all the time.

What families see, however, is not the problem-solving happening in the background. They see someone calm, reassuring and focused entirely on helping them get home safely. Vickey compares it to a swan gliding across the water. On the surface, everything appears smooth and effortless. Beneath the surface, there is constant movement, coordination and decision-making to keep everything on track.

That ability to remain calm becomes particularly important when working in unfamiliar environments around the world. One of Vickey's first Lia's Wings transfers took her to Nigeria to support premature twins returning home. Alongside the clinical responsibility of caring for vulnerable babies throughout a long journey, she was also navigating a different healthcare system, culture and way of working.

For Vickey, working internationally requires a careful balance of respect, adaptability and advocacy. She understands that local healthcare professionals know their patients, systems and environments best, while also ensuring she does everything possible to help children return home safely.



"You are going into their country, and you need to respect the way that everyone has a job to do and everyone is an expert in their own job," she explains. "It's for us to negotiate how we can both do our jobs and get the best possible result, which is bringing the babies or the children home."

Whether communicating through Google Translate, working alongside overseas medical teams or adapting to a different way of doing things, the goal remains the same: bringing children home safely. Supporting children, however, is only part of the role.

Throughout our conversation, it became clear that some of Vickey's most impactful work happens with parents.

"The patient and the parents have been through the most traumatic experience they're probably ever going to have in their life," she says.

One recent transfer involved a baby receiving treatment overseas. Medically, the child was doing well, but Vickey recognised that another family member needed support.

I realised the dad probably needed more support than the baby. As long as the baby is fine and medically safe, let's look after Dad because Dad also needs this.

It is a simple observation, but one that captures the way Vickey approaches every transfer. She looks beyond the immediate clinical need to understand what each family member is experiencing and where support is needed most.

For her, no case is ever about a single patient.

"It comes as a bubble," she says. "It's not just one person, it's the whole family." That philosophy was evident during another recent transfer. While a child was stable and receiving treatment, Vickey recognised that their mother desperately needed a break from the relentless cycle of hospitals and hotel rooms.

The day after I arrived, I saw that the mum just needed a break. She just needed to get away from the hospital and have some adult conversation, so I took her shopping.

The pair spent several hours together exploring local markets, shopping and stopping for coffee. "For her, that was amazing," Vickey recalls. "She was smiling, and we were just having a bit of a laugh."

It was a small gesture, but one that offered a few precious hours of normality during an otherwise overwhelming experience.

Moments like these do not appear in medical records. Yet they are often the moments families remember most.

Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than in her relationship with Mayla.



When Vickey first met her, Mayla had become quite fearful of healthcare professionals after spending an extended period in hospital overseas. Every new medical face represented another procedure, another needle and another difficult experience. Building trust would take time.

At first, Mayla avoided eye contact and wanted little interaction. Gradually, through patience, conversation and simply being present, a connection began to form. During one outing, Mayla painted Vickey's nails. It was a small moment, but a significant step.

By the time they boarded the flight home, the transformation was remarkable.

I sat next to her on the plane on the way back and it literally brought a tear to my eye. She fell asleep on my shoulder.

That moment speaks to the unique role Lia's Wings medics play. They are not only responsible for a child's clinical care and accompanying the child home, but for helping frightened children and exhausted families feel safe and understood.

As Vickey puts it: "You can walk away with a medical report, but you don't get any of this. All the bits that make the difference are all of these parts. The human side of it.

A message from Vickey

Having supported families through some of the most difficult moments of their lives, Vickey is clear about the difference Lia's Wings supporters make.

Sometimes families think it's never ever going to end, and it's never going to get any better. When we turn up, we are the tiniest glimmer of light and hope that their ordeal and their nightmare are coming to an end.

Thanks to your support, experienced professionals like Vickey can bring together clinical expertise, adaptability, compassion and humanity, helping children and families navigate one of the most challenging journeys they will ever face and bringing them safely home.

Because of you, children can reach vital care, no matter where they are



When a child needs specialist care, getting them to the right place can be life-changing. Whether that means bringing them home to the UK, flying them to specialist treatment or supporting a family through an incredibly difficult journey, your support makes it possible.

Lia's Wings receives no government funding. Every aeromedical transfer we facilitate and every minute of family support we provide is made possible by the generosity of our supporters — individuals, families we have supported, corporate partners, charitable trusts and foundations, air ambulance operators, NHS transport teams and clinicians.

This year, together, we:



Supported 46 children and families



Facilitated 31 aeromedical transfers



**Reached families in 17 countries
across four continents**

No journey happens alone

Getting a child to the right care while supporting their family through an incredibly stressful and uncertain time takes an extraordinary team. Our network of air ambulance operators and flight medics enables us to respond to British children across the globe, while NHS transport teams and flight medics help facilitate complex and long-distance aeromedical transfers within the UK. Alongside delivering expert clinical care, they provide reassurance and compassionate support to parents, helping families feel informed, cared for and less alone during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.



Each number represents weeks and months of complex problem-solving, fierce advocacy and unwavering compassionate support, all made possible by you.

We are also incredibly grateful to our corporate partners, supporters, and charitable trusts and foundations whose funding makes our work possible. We are particularly grateful to our long-standing corporate partner, **Houlihan Lokey**, for their unwavering support since 2018. Over the past year, colleagues have raised more than £114,000 through fundraising events, matched donations and support from the One Global London conference.

We would also like to thank **Caprinos Pizza** and **The Impellam Group**, whose partnerships with Lia's Wings have now come to an end, but whose support helped us reach hundreds of children and their families.

For the past four years, **Caprinos Pizza** and Lia's Wings have grown alongside one another. Lia's Wings has doubled the number of children we reach, while Caprinos has grown from 75 stores to more than 120 and expanded internationally. Through donation round-ups, collection boxes and direct company donations, Caprinos has raised more than £36,000 for our work while helping to raise awareness of Lia's Wings in stores and online. We are hugely grateful to Zamman Ahmed and the Directors of Caprinos Pizza for choosing Lia's Wings as their first charity partner and championing our work throughout the partnership.



The Impellam Group STEM brands, Carbon60, SRG Talent and Lorien, have also supported Lia's Wings over the past four years, with **Guidant Global** and **Consumera** joining the partnership in 2025. Their support has taken many forms, from Dragon Boat races and volunteering at family fun days, to hiking the Three Peaks and even running a half marathon through a zoo. Their enthusiasm has helped raise vital funds and, importantly, provided opportunities for their teams to connect with our work. A special thank you to Chris Blackburn and Paula Cooper for your passionate support, right from the very beginning.



We would also like to thank our ambassadors, **Tosin Adarabioyo, Tony and Diane Kim**, for helping to raise significant awareness and funds for our organisation. We are hugely grateful to you for being such strong ambassadors for Lia's Wings.



Our corporate, trust and foundation supporters help Lia's Wings say "yes" when children urgently need lifesaving medical flights. Through funding, volunteering and advocacy, they enable specialist medical transfers, family support and continued growth towards our goal of never turning away a family in need.



Charlotte Reyes,
Director of Fundraising



We would also like to say a special thank you to:

- Linklaters
- Pula Aviation Services
- Gleacher Shacklock
- Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Warburg Pincus
- Apollo Global Management
- Goldman Sachs
- Avera Capital
- The Air Charter Association
- The Sherling Trust
- Souter Charitable Trust
- The PF Charitable Trust
- Leslie Smith Foundation
- Thomas's Fulham School
- Glendower Preparatory School
- Fletchers Group
- Horwich Cohen Coghlan Solicitors
- Hugh James
- Passyunk Avenue
- Theodore Maxxy Charitable Trust
- ISTAT Foundation
- Britford Bridge Trust
- Reuben Foundation
- Gates Foundation
- Pedro Silva

As demand for our services continues to grow, so too does the importance of your support. We receive no government funding, and every family we help is supported through the generosity of people and organisations like you.

Families supporting other families

Many of our most committed supporters are families who have experienced Lia's Wings' support firsthand. Having faced the distress of a premature baby or seriously ill child far from home, they give back so other families can receive the same support when they need it most.

This year, our families and their loved ones organised challenges, events and appeals that raised an incredible £71,000. This ensured we could continue responding to every family that needed our support.



Alongside this, Jack's Fund raised a further £7,600 through a series of fundraisers organised by Jack's family and friends. Created in Jack's memory, the fund supports our growing paediatric service, helping more children and families access specialist care and compassionate support.



To every family and supporter who has fundraised for Lia's Wings, thank you. Your generosity doesn't just fund the flights and care we provide, it tells our story in ways words alone can't. Thank you so much, we are so grateful for every one of you!



Eloise Harvey,
Fundraising Assistant



Our next 3-year strategy

2026-2029

Distance should never be a barrier to critically ill children receiving the care they need.

Lia's Wings is working to ensure every child can access the vital medical care and life-changing support, no matter where they are in the world. We are a charity with a unique mission, a team dedicated to using compassion and unique expertise to support families who trust us at the most vulnerable moment of their lives.

However, we face many pressures, including rising international demand, increasing case complexity, rising flight costs and the need for stronger organisational resilience to match our operational growth. Our new three-year organisational strategy (2026-29) is our response to these pressures. It is built around four key goals, each designed to deepen our impact and secure our future.



Goal 1: Ensuring distance never stands in the way of a child's care

- We will expand our domestic and international air transfer service, supporting more families year-on-year and strengthening our overseas pathways.
- By 2029, over 70% of our transfers will be international, supported by multilingual resources and defined referral routes with embassies and international hospitals.
- Our Never Say No Fund will enable emergency transfers for the most vulnerable babies and children, allowing us to respond rapidly in the most time-sensitive cases.
- We will strengthen partnerships with airlines and aviation partners globally, enabling us to fly further and more often.



Goal 2: Offering care beyond the journey

- We will invest in specialist training for our operations team in perinatal mental health, trauma-informed care and bereavement support, ensuring families receive emotional and practical help for as long as they need us.
- Our new Family Advisory Group will guide our service development, ensuring that families' voices remain central to everything we do.
- We will improve our family resources, creating a more accessible hub to help families understand aeromedical transfers and the care and service they can expect from Lia's Wings, alongside a strengthened signposting network for further specialist support.

Our new three-year organisational strategy is ambitious, practical and rooted in Lia's legacy and the values that define us: being **Valiant**, **Reliable** and **Brilliant**. It maps out how we are going to strengthen our foundations, expand our reach and ensure that every child can access the care they need, wherever they are.



Nathalie Scott, CEO



Goal 3: Raising awareness to reach more families

- By 2029, we will be recognised as a sector leader in compassionate, family-led medical repatriation.
- We will build partnerships with travel insurers to promote best practice in neonatal and paediatric aeromedical transfers and the importance of family support.
- We will establish relationships with embassies and consulates to create referral pathways and procedures, while promoting best practice in international medical repatriation.
- We will strengthen our advocacy for neonatal babies, improving procedures for securing Emergency Travel Documents, highlighting the impact of the current system and building relationships within Government to drive change.



Goal 4: Building a strong, innovative and resilient charity

- By 2029, Lia's Wings will be a robust, future-ready organisation with the capacity, stability and agility to meet rising demand and deliver the best possible outcomes for children and families.
- We will invest in our team through training, wellbeing support and tailored development plans.
- We will strengthen our fundraising through a diversified income portfolio and increased multi-year funding, improving stability and enabling future development.
- We will introduce new data collection systems to strengthen organisational resilience and improve our ability to measure impact and outcomes for children and families.



Without Lia, none of this would be possible

At the heart of everything we do is Lia. Thank you to our trustees, Patrick and Melissa, and their children, John and Lillian, who enable us to continue the incredible legacy of their daughter and sister, Lia.



Lia lived her short life to the fullest but suddenly passed away, aged only five years. Her death has deeply affected those of us who knew and loved her. Driven by the loving determination of her family that something good would come out of this awful tragedy, Lia's parents, Patrick and Melissa, as well as our charity's Board of Trustees and staff team, wanted Lia's prematurely ended life to be the catalyst for change at our small charity.

Lia's parents, Patrick and Melissa, began and have continued to channel their love for their daughter and their support of our charity by raising significant funds for our charity to expand our work. Since becoming Lia's Wings, we are helping more than twice as many families as we did before. Lia continues to have an extraordinary impact on every child and family we support.

Her legacy is also being carried forward through the annual **Ride for Lia** overseas cycle challenge. Over the past two years, it has raised more than £250,000 for Lia's Wings. We are incredibly grateful to Patrick for spearheading this challenge and leading such an impactful way for people to come together in Lia's memory. We would also like to thank everyone who took part in the 2025 Ride for Lia. Their commitment to fundraising is helping to ensure Lia's legacy continues to make a lasting difference for the families we support.



Ride for Lia is incredibly special. There's something powerful about seeing so many people come together, challenge themselves and support one another, all because they want to make a difference for Lia's Wings. It's a beautiful way to carry Lia's legacy forward and help more critically ill children and their families.



Amber Lawrence,
Fundraising Manager

Together, we make every journey possible. Thank you for bringing vital care and life-changing support within reach for children and their families.



0300 140 9980



hello@lias-wings.org.uk



lias-wings.org.uk



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London Biggin Hill Airport, Hangar 1,
Office 5B, Bromley, Kent, TN16 3BH

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