

There are many local charities that we occasionally dip into our pockets and give loose change to. Each do amazing jobs and none are more worthy than another. However I was fortunate enough earlier this week to attend the launch of the new onboard blood transfusion service for the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance and it reminded me how valuable this incredible organisation is.

The new onboard blood service is the result of fundraising efforts by the Air Ambulance team and donations from organisations like the Henry Surtees Foundation, founded by motorsport legend John Surtees in memory of his son. But it is not just about the money that people give; the county's blood donors provide the most valuable supply onboard.

Most of the time we don't think of our emergency services until we need to call them for ourselves or others in distress. While the Air Ambulance is not an official blue light service it is undoubtedly not only a remarkable operation for those who it helps but one that the other services value, as demonstrated by the presence of the police, ambulance and fire services at the launch.

It is hard to explain why I feel such a great affinity with the Air Ambulance. The helicopter itself is a remarkable piece of machinery and I was lucky enough to have a tour and explanation of all the equipment recently. But it is the work that the pilots, doctors and paramedics do onboard that is most amazing and really can make the difference between life and death.

I hope that I never need the services of the Air Ambulance but if I do then I know that they will be there and it will be thanks to the generosity of local people both with their money and with their blood!