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The NHS Parliamentary Awards: Our chance to thank those who power the nation's most treasured institution

Written by Jeremy Hunt MP and Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent on 3 September 2020

Jeremy Hunt MP and Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent | [NHS Parliamentary Awards](#) [1]

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The nation owes a debt of gratitude to the 1.3 million-strong army of nurses, midwives, doctors, pharmacists, maternity care assistants, porters, cleaners, and countless other staff who run our health service. The NHS Parliamentary Awards give MPs a chance to recognise the outstanding care they and their constituents receive.

The National Health Service is preparing to mark the anniversary of its foundation after the most challenging time in its 72-year history.

Coronavirus has been a global health emergency on a scale not seen for a century. The NHS, which first opened its doors at Trafford Park Hospital on July 5, 1948, responded swiftly and flexibly to deal with the pandemic but staff – present, past and future – have had to come together as never before, supported by volunteers and the public.

The nation owes a debt of gratitude to the 1.3 million-strong army of nurses, midwives, doctors, physios, pharmacists, healthcare and maternity care assistants porters, cleaners, and countless other staff who ensured no patient who could benefit from NHS care was unable to receive it. Along, of course, with the other key workers such as care staff, teachers, transport workers, delivery drivers and shop assistants who kept the country running.

Singling out those who have made the greatest contribution will be hard, but that is exactly what we are asking you to do for the 2020 NHS Parliamentary Awards.

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We know how much the awards have meant to all those who have been nominated in previous years. To have the skill, professionalism and compassion of the NHS recognised and celebrated is a huge boost, not just to those selected but to their colleagues and their organisations.

As staff reflect on what they and the country have been through, mindful of the possibility of a second

wave of infections, such a boost could not be timelier.

Since the NHS was placed on the highest level of alert over Coronavirus at the start of the year, staff have worked tirelessly to redesign services, including creating the Nightingale hospitals and Seacole centres. They have been supported by partners in local government, social care, the military, the voluntary sector, hospices, and the private sector.

They have been bolstered by the thousands of former staff who came out of retirement to help. They have worked alongside thousands of student midwives, nurses and medical students who started their careers early. Three generations of NHS staff – past, present and future – came together to fight Coronavirus.

Almost 100,000 patients with COVID-19 have been admitted and treated at our hospitals, up to 19,000 a day at the peak. All the while, staff also worked hard to provide urgent care, from mental health and cancer to maternity and A&E services, to those who needed them in challenging circumstances.

In maternity, the use of video consultations and online clinics have allowed expectant families to keep in touch with their midwives and maternity team from the safety of their own home while ensuring that women attend essential face to face visits. For cancer patients, hospitals have used chemotherapy at home, with local pharmacy teams and community nurses providing the service to reduce cancer patients' risk of exposure to the virus. In general practice, the rapid adoption of remote consultations in 99% of GP practices has meant millions of patients have been getting expert support from their family doctor from the comfort of their own homes.

The dedication, flexibility and hard work, of all our NHS and social care staff, volunteers and carers deserve recognition. That is why we are delighted to announce that on July 2 we are re-opening the nomination portal for NHS Parliamentary Awards 2020.

[The NHS Parliamentary Awards sponsored by Fujifilm](#) ^[1] are a chance for all MPs in England to celebrate the outstanding care they and their constituents receive. It is a time for all MPs to show how much they appreciate those that power England's treasured national institution.

MPs can work with their local NHS and care community to find these outstanding individuals and organisations and publicly announce which they are officially nominating for one, some or all the ten categories of the national awards. Nominations close on September 1, 2020, and we will announce our regional champions on November 23.

The National Awards Ceremony announcing which nominees have won in each category – and the MP that supported them – will take place on July 7, 2021.

The Awards are not just for clinical roles or individuals and are not confined to NHS staff either. You can nominate charities who provide essential services to patients, those who have fought to change the way care is delivered and volunteers new or old.

Last year over 250 MPs nominated an individual or organisation for an NHS Parliamentary Award. The national judging panel was blown away by the talent, creativity and brilliance in the NHS and health community identified by England's MPs. This year their task in picking a winner will be even harder.

Taking part in the awards is not the only way to recognise and thank the NHS staff and other key workers in your constituency.

On July 5 at 5pm the NHS will mark its birthday by leading applause for those who have supported us through COVID-19 and beyond.

It will be a time where we recommit to connecting with our neighbours and communities, especially those who are isolated or vulnerable (while of course maintaining physical distancing). We urge members of Parliament to get involved by:

- Joining the nation for the biggest loudest clap at 5 pm on 5th
- Asking your local business and buildings to light up blue on the 4th
- Nominating a Health and care hero for an NHS Parliamentary Award
- Asking your constituents to consider a career in the NHS

Thank you for reading this, and we hope you will take part.

Jeremy Hunt is chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee and Parliamentary Sponsor of the NHS Parliamentary Awards. Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent is the Chief Midwifery Officer in England.

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