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NHS Parliamentary Awards: How you can show support for NHS staff

The wellbeing at work award is an opportunity to recognise good practice in improving the experiences of NHS staff and highlight best practice already taking place across the NHS.

The end of the nomination window for this year's NHS Parliamentary Awards is almost upon us, with the deadline for entries falling on 1 September.

As in previous years, the awards represent a fantastic opportunity for MPs across the country to recognise the work and impact of teams and individuals working in and with your local NHS.

These are the second awards to take place since I became the Chief People Officer at NHS England and NHS Improvement.

So much has changed since the last awards, with our NHS people across the country having faced and risen to the considerable challenges presented to them during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I know that many colleagues are still processing the events of this year that have taken a considerable physical, psychological and emotional toll, and I know there will be apprehension about the further challenges over the months ahead.

Covid-19 has shone a harsh spotlight on the health inequalities our country faces, particularly the impact of the virus on people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) backgrounds.

It's important that we take every opportunity to recognise and thank our people for the hard work they have been doing over the last six months.

But even before the pandemic, colleagues working in a range of roles across our NHS have shown their resilience and determination time and time again, constantly working to provide the best care possible for patients.

Whether they're on the front line or in an essential support role, colleagues deserve a comprehensive package of emotional, psychological and practical support, which is why we have made a range of guides, apps and events available to support the wellbeing of NHS staff and their teams, which we plan to offer for the long term.

There are ten different categories that you can nominate for, but the one I want to focus on is the wellbeing at work award.

This award is particularly close to my heart because it is for a person or a team who has successfully trialled and embedded changes that have made the NHS a better place to work.

During the pandemic, we have seen people across the NHS show energy, creativity and drive in finding solutions to new and unprecedented problems. The pandemic has propelled these principles and ambitions into our day to day working lives more powerfully than we could ever have anticipated.

There are many people across the NHS who deserve to be nominated for this award and I know that they would really appreciate the thanks for their hard work.

The wellbeing at work award offers a chance not only to recognise good practice in improving the experiences of NHS staff, but also to highlight and spread the best practice already taking place across the NHS. That is why I, along with the rest of the team at NHS England and NHS Improvement, would be delighted to see as many nominees submitted in this

category as possible.

If you are not sure who would be the best person or team to nominate, I would urge you to contact your local trusts, CCG and voluntary sector organisations to talk through ideas with them.

It's important that we take every opportunity to recognise and thank our people for the hard work they have been doing over the last six months. But in addition, now is the right time for the NHS to set out our ambition and actions even higher to continue to help make the NHS a really great place to work for everyone.

To do that, as part of *We are the NHS: People Plan* for 2020/2021 – action for us all we have developed Our NHS People Promise, which sets out what people should expect from our NHS in recognition of their skilled and tireless work.

The themes and words that make up Our People Promise have come from those who work in the NHS. We have talked to people in many different healthcare roles and organisations and they have made it clear what matters most to them.

Of course, pay is important, but our staff have told us that high-quality health and wellbeing support and inclusion and flexibility are just as critical. We must pledge as colleagues, line managers, employers and central bodies to work together to make these ambitions a reality.

Our focus now turns to supporting NHS leaders to make this plan a reality and use it to support staff in a meaningful way.

The way this plan is translated into action will differ for each organisation, but its intention and ambition should carry through our many different teams, organisations and systems. It's our shared duty as leaders to agree that every member of staff is entitled to what is included in the People Promise.

It's in all of our interests to make sure the conversation doesn't end here, to secure positive change for our people, and ultimately our patients. I am now asking all NHS leaders to actively and authentically own, sponsor and champion what is in this plan, and ensure their teams do too. These aspirations are not 'nice to haves' – they can change lives.

By taking the time to recognise where excellent practice is already in place, you can play an important part in this process, helping to improve the working lives of those NHS staff in your

constituency, and by extension resulting in better care for all your constituents.

So please, if you haven't already, nominate someone before 1 September.

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Prerana Issar, NHS Chief People Officer

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