

UK pays tribute to National Health Service on 72nd birthday

July 5 2020, by Pan Pylas



NHS staff outside Royal Victoria Infirmary join in the pause for applause to salute the NHS 72nd birthday, in Newcastle, England, Sunday, July 5, 2020. People across the U.K. joined a round of applause to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the formation of the free-to-use National Health Service, undoubtedly the country's most cherished institution. The reverence with which it is held has been accentuated this year during the coronavirus pandemic. (Owen Humphreys/PA via AP)

People across the U.K. joined in a round of applause on Sunday to mark the 72nd anniversary of the free-to-use National Health Service, one of the country's most cherished institutions.

The reverence with which it is held has been bolstered this year during what has been Europe's deadliest coronavirus outbreaks. Though the U.K. as a whole has a confirmed virus death toll of 44,220, the third-highest in the world, behind the United States and Brazil, the NHS and everyone who works within it, in whatever capacity, have been lauded for their work and care.

Created by the Labour government after World War II in 1948 by bringing together the nation's disparate health institutions, the NHS' founding principles have never changed. Funded by everyone through the tax system, it provides free health care to any U.K. resident when needed.

Prince Charles said the NHS has been through the "most testing time" in its history and that it was right for the whole country to come together to pay tribute to everyone who works within it.

"Our remarkably selfless nurses, doctors, paramedics and countless other staff have made costly sacrifices to provide treatment for more than 100,000 patients with coronavirus and thousands more who needed other care," the heir to the U.K. throne said.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Annemarie Plas, founder of Clap For Our Carers, join in the pause for applause to salute the NHS 72nd birthday, outside 10 Downing Street in London, Sunday, July 5, 2020. People across the U.K. joined a round of applause to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the formation of the free-to-use National Health Service, undoubtedly the country's most cherished institution. The reverence with which it is held has been accentuated this year during the coronavirus pandemic. (Victoria Jones/PA via AP)



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Annemarie Plas, founder of Clap For Our Carers, arrives to attend a reception as part of the NHS birthday celebrations to salute the NHS 72nd birthday, at 10 Downing Street in London, Sunday, July 5, 2020. People across the U.K. joined a round of applause to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the formation of the free-to-use National Health Service, undoubtedly the country's most cherished institution. The reverence with which it is held has been accentuated this year during the coronavirus pandemic. (Victoria Jones/PA via AP)



Locals join in the pause for applause to salute the NHS 72nd birthday, outside Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, Sunday, July 5, 2020. People across the U.K. joined a round of applause to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the formation of the free-to-use National Health Service, undoubtedly the country's most cherished institution. The reverence with which it is held has been accentuated this year during the coronavirus pandemic. (Kirsty O'Connor/PA via AP)

The main national tribute came at 5 p.m. when people joined in a round of applause to commemorate the efforts of everyone involved in the battle against the virus.

A Royal Air Force Spitfire with the message "Thank U NHS" painted on its underside also flew over several eastern NHS hospitals. The iconic

World War II fighter plane finished its run over Cambridge.

After coming down with coronavirus himself and spending three nights in [intensive care](#), Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson credited NHS workers with saving his life and has insisted it will get whatever resources it needs. The main Labour Party opposition says the NHS has been starved of funding for the past decade during the government's austerity drive.

Johnson was joined by Annemarie Plas, who founded the #ClapforCarers initiative that lasted for 10 weeks following the imposition of the national lockdown on March 23, during Sunday's round of applause. She said she felt "very honoured" to have been able to join Johnson.

Overnight, many of the country's major sites, including the Houses of Parliament and the arch at Wembley Stadium, England's national soccer stadium, were lit up in blue to remember all those who died during the pandemic. And before the weekend's soccer matches, players joined in the round of applause.

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