

Press release: Welsh Secretary honours NHS' Welsh roots on its 70th anniversary

The story of the NHS is a story of British talent and British ambition with some very Welsh roots, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said today as the service celebrates its 70th anniversary (Thursday 5 June).

Aneurin Bevan, from Tredegar became the driving force behind the establishment of the National Health Service as Health Minister in 1948. Since that moment, the principle of healthcare free at the point of delivery based on need, not wealth, has become firmly embedded into our national life.

Speaking ahead of the milestone, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns said:

Wales has a long and proud association with the NHS and today we celebrate one of the greatest gifts that a Welshman has given our nation.

Since then, the nature of the service has evolved to tackle some of the greatest challenges to our health, making it the world-leading lifeline it is today.

The UK Government recognises the enormous importance this service has, not only to the health of our population, but also as a major employer to 78,000 people in Wales. That is why the Prime Minister recently announced an extra £20 billion a year by 2023/24 for health services in England, resulting in a £1.2 billion funding boost for the Welsh Government to spend on health services.

Today, on its 70th birthday, we salute the consultants, doctors, GPs, nurses, healthcare assistants, porters, cleaners, receptionists and managers who touch the lives of people right across the country, consistently rising to challenges and exceeding expectations of what is possible. A very happy anniversary to the great national institution.

Mr Cairns will recognise the valuable and important contribution of medical professionals from overseas at a British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO) Wales event on Saturday (14 June).

BAPIO provides a forum for a diverse group of doctors, dentists and medical and dental students of Indian heritage, with the aim of delivering professional excellence in patient care.

In his speech the Welsh Secretary will thank medical staff from around the world for their tireless efforts to improve the health of the Welsh population.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Every minute of every day there are medical professionals from around the globe working in our hospitals to save lives and drive up standards of patient care.

These people are the unsung heroes within our health service, whose experience and knowledge has always been welcomed here with open arms.

As we celebrate this significant milestone within our health service, I would like to thank BAPIO for its crucial role in recruiting doctors over the last 20 years, saving thousands of pounds in locum costs for the NHS every year.

The event comes as the UK Government announced plans for doctors and nurses to be excluded from the cap on skilled worker visas, meaning no restrictions placed on the number of medical professionals employed through the Tier 2 visa route.

The UK Government has also announced plans for EU citizens who arrive before the end of 2020 to apply for their settled status. The scheme will be phased in later this year, and opened more widely until its full launch by March 2019.