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All Health and Social Care staff

2 July 2020

Marking the 72nd Anniversary of the NHS in Scotland

Sunday 5 July 2020 marks the 72nd Anniversary of the NHS. There can be very few if any of us who do not have cause to be grateful for our NHS. In big ways and small, it touches all our lives. But on this anniversary, I want to thank each one of you.

In this 72nd year, our NHS Scotland has had to respond in ways it has never had to at any point in its history. The NHS – and that really means every single member of NHS staff, has had to respond very quickly to the demands of a pandemic on a new virus about which we are continually learning. And all at the same time as continuing to deliver essential and urgent health care to the people of Scotland.

So while the NHS has always had to adapt and respond to the health needs of the people of Scotland and both lead and respond to emerging clinical practice and scientific developments over its 72 years, the response in recent times from NHS staff and staff across health and social care, has been phenomenal.

This has truly been a system wide effort, spanning health and social care but reaching across our public, independent, third and private sectors. Our colleagues who work in health and social care services across Scotland have demonstrated incredible resilience and capability – by quickly adapting and delivering in the most extraordinary of circumstances – and I am very grateful to each and every one for your tireless work, your compassion and your care.

You've worked so hard to make sure that our health and care services have coped and continue to manage with the added pressures we face. I know that many of you will be working in unfamiliar settings, are being asked to learn new skills and are working in new roles. I also know that all of you will be doing that at the same time as you have your own worries and anxieties about family or friends. Some will have been very directly affected by the loss of loved ones and it is important that we take time to recognise that, to recognise that grief never follows the same path for any of us and that we need to reflect and remember those we've lost.

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None of this is going unnoticed and it is important to me that you take time to look after your own health and wellbeing. At different times in the last few months every one of us has felt overwhelmed or unsure or anxious. And that really is OK. It is part of being human. So please make use of the National Wellbeing Hub (www.promis.scot) to help you do so


Of course, COVID-19 is still with us. The virus hasn't gone away. And while we have, together, achieved a very great deal in driving down the level of the virus in Scotland, you know probably better than many just how easily it could rise again. So you know that we need to remain ready to flex our response and our services to cope should that happen just at the same time as we are safely and steadily restarting important health care that we had to pause in the early stages of the pandemic.

We ask a very great deal of you in normal times. In recent months and for the months ahead we will be asking for even more. But in your response – in your professionalism, your dedication and your care you have been exemplary. So please take a moment to be proud of everything you have done – as an individual and as a team.

The future is always with us. And our future as an NHS is even more firmly grounded in all you have achieved and because of that, no matter how hard it will feel at times or how complex – that future is a bright one.

So please accept my heartfelt thanks today – and every day.

kindest regards



JEANE FREEMAN

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