Celebrating the NHS

What Is the NHS?

NHS stands for National Health Service: a group of organisations that provide medical care for people living in the UK. They support those who are feeling unwell or are injured.

It is estimated that there are 1.5 million people working as part of the NHS carrying out a variety of roles. Every person and every role is crucial in creating a successful health system in the country.

When Was the NHS Founded?

Before the NHS was founded, only wealthy people could afford to go to a hospital or get medical help. Every visit to a doctor or dentist would cost the person money. If the person could not afford it, they did not receive the treatment that they needed.

Aneurin Bevan decided to change things. After the Second World War, Aneurin Bevan was chosen to be the Minister of Health in the government. He founded the National Health Service on 5th July 1948. The Health Minister wanted a system which provided medical care that was free for everyone who lived in the UK. He wanted all people to be treated equally.

Why Is Our NHS Special?

The NHS was designed so that every person who lived in the United Kingdom could receive free medical help, treatment and advice. However, running the NHS is expensive so every working adult pays **taxes** which fund the NHS and pay wages to NHS staff.

Many people consider themselves lucky to have the NHS in the UK. In some parts of the world, people without **health insurance** or who can't afford treatment would not be able to receive medical care. There are also places where the care that you receive when you are ill will be of a lesser quality if you have less money.

How Did the NHS Respond to the Coronavirus Pandemic?

During the global coronavirus (COVID-19) **pandemic**, NHS staff were praised for their bravery and self-sacrifice. Doctors, cleaners and other healthcare workers have risked their own lives to care for other people.
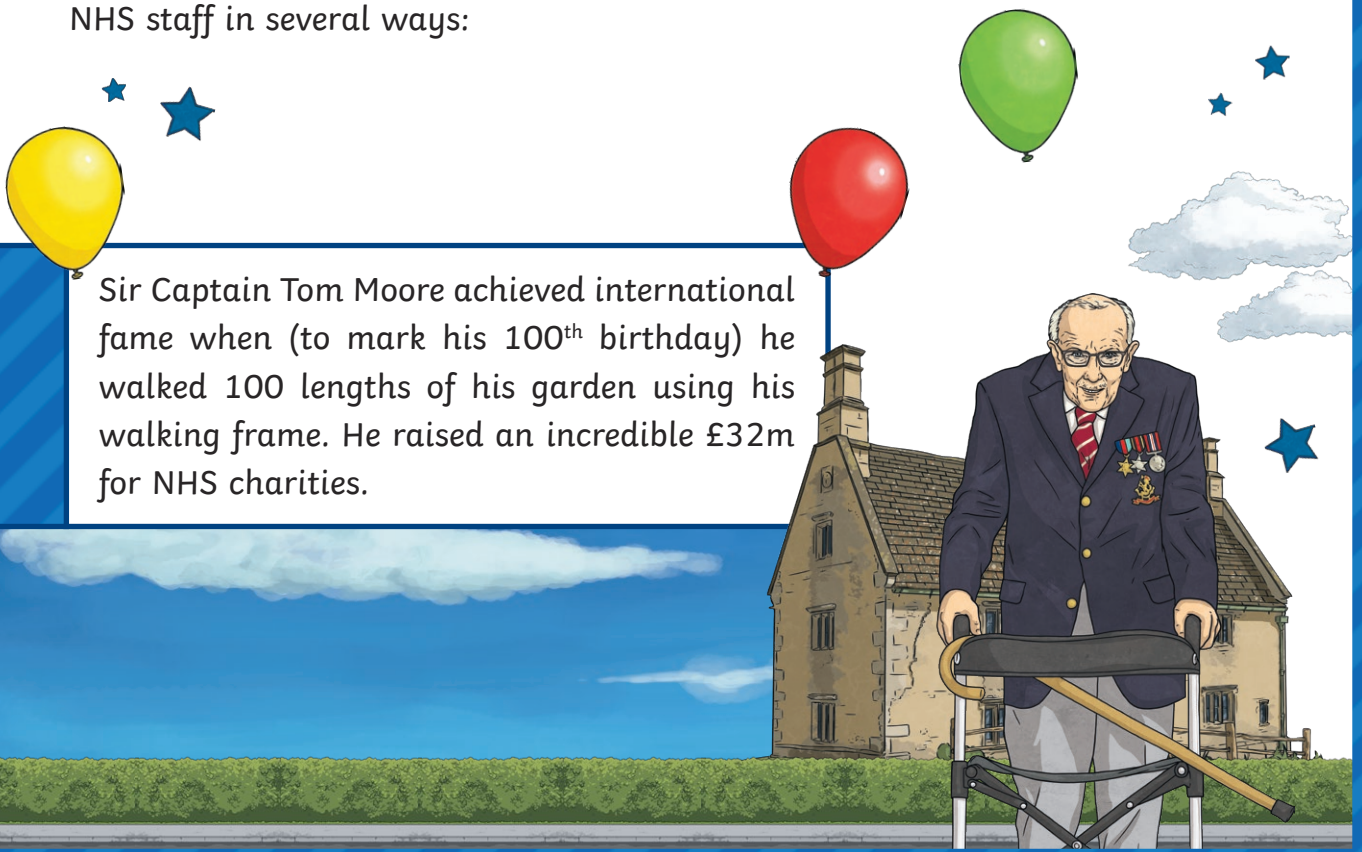
A total of 17 buildings around the UK were converted into hospital facilities to treat people with coronavirus. Many professionals (who had left or retired from the NHS) were asked to return to help.

It took only nine days to transform the Excel Centre in London (a place where events were usually held) into a specialist coronavirus hospital. The hospital was named The Nightingale Hospital and was equipped to deal with 4,000 patients.

How Have We Been Celebrating Our NHS?

During the coronavirus **pandemic**, the British people showed their gratitude for NHS staff in several ways:

Sir Captain Tom Moore achieved international fame when (to mark his 100th birthday) he walked 100 lengths of his garden using his walking frame. He raised an incredible £32m for NHS charities.

During lockdown, families stayed at home (except for in emergencies) to stop the spread of the **virus**. Children and their families displayed rainbows in their windows as a way of spreading hope and thanking the NHS for their amazing work.

Every Thursday evening at 8 p.m., people took to their doorsteps to clap and cheer for the NHS. This was to show their appreciation for the key workers who were going to work and keeping everyone safe.

Glossary

health insurance:	People pay money (called a premium) each month to an insurance company. If you become ill for any reason, the insurance company will pay for the cost of the treatment.
pandemic:	A disease which has spread across lots of countries or the whole world.
taxes:	Money collected by the government to pay for things that the country needs such as schools, roads and the NHS.
virus:	A tiny germ that can infect living creatures and cause disease.