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## **BEEP Doctors awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service**

BEEP Doctors (BASICS Cumbria), a team of dedicated volunteer doctors which carries out life-saving work in Cumbria, has been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service.

It is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the United Kingdom and is equivalent to an MBE.

"This is a massive honour and we are immensely proud to have been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service," said Dr Theo Weston MBE, the chair and founder of BEEP Doctors. "In my view it is by far and away the best thing to have happened to the BEEP Doctors charity in our near 30-year history."

The King's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and, following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the Award.

Cumbria's BEEP Doctors, who are all volunteers with the charity, provide enhanced pre-hospital emergency medical care. They work closely with the police and fire services, North West Ambulance Service, Great North Air Ambulance Service and North West Air Ambulance.

At incidents BEEP Doctors can carry out some surgical procedures, such as inserting chest drains; some can perform pre-hospital anaesthetics and all are able to administer drugs that most road crew paramedics cannot, such as ketamine/fentanyl to give pain relief and allow fracture manipulation.

Many of the emergencies they attend are road traffic collisions, as well as incidents involving farms, pushbikes, horses and water.

As an example, they recently attended a farmer at Gamblesby, near Penrith, who ended up 90 per cent chopping off his left forearm in a silage machine. Dr Weston attended and was able to reposition the arm into where it should be, splint it and gave him some serious pain relief he would not have been able to have otherwise. Dr Weston escorted him in the ambulance to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary where the forearm was reattached and he made an almost complete recovery and can still work on the farm.

The charity has just received a cheque for £1,400 from a lady who lives near Caldbeck, whose grandson has had two separate road traffic accidents, in both of which he was critically injured. BEEP Doctors attended to him on both occasions and, after being flown by Air Ambulance to the RVI in Newcastle, he has now made a full recovery, is working at his father's business and is living independently in Penrith.

"We don't do this work to receive these honours," said Dr Weston. "We do what we do to help people who are sick and injured at the roadside and the reward for us is seeing people survive where they would otherwise not have or survive in a better condition, but it is absolutely fantastic that the work we do has been recognised in this way."

Dr Chris Moss, an active responder with BEEP Doctors and the trustee responsible for its fund-raising and grant applications, said: "We rely 100 per cent on charitable donations. It is amazing to receive national recognition and this will really help our fund-raising as we move into our 30<sup>th</sup> year in 2024."

Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron said: "I'm delighted that BEEP Doctors have been awarded the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service. This award is massively deserved and is recognition for the vital and selfless work the fantastic team do in providing emergency care in the community."

Dr Chris Grant, executive medical director of the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust said: "I am delighted that BEEP Doctors have been recognised in this manner and can rightly celebrate this award. This is testament to everything that these volunteers do for the ambulance service and our communities. While going about their busy day-to-day lives, these doctors still manage to give their spare time to attend, care for and contribute to those people who really need our help."

Sellafield Ltd has been a huge supporter of the BEEP Doctors through its social impact, multiplied programme. Gary McKeating, Head of Development and Community at Sellafield Ltd, said: "This award is really well deserved. It is a life critical and vital service run by volunteers that saves lives in our community. Well done to all."

BEEP Doctors (BASICS Cumbria) is affiliated to the British Association for Immediate Care (BASICS), an overarching representative body for about 35 schemes like Beep Doctors throughout the country.

Tony Kemp, chief officer of British Association for Immediate Care, said: "I am absolutely delighted at the news of the award of the KAVS to BEEP Doctors (BASICS Cumbria). This award recognises the amazing commitment of the team over 30 years towards the people of Cumbria. As an Association of similar schemes nationwide we are so proud that BEEP Doctors is the first scheme to be given this richly deserved accolade."

BEEP Doctors is one of 262 local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups in the UK to receive the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service award this year.

Representatives of BEEP Doctors will receive the award crystal and certificate from Alexander Scott, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cumbria, later this year. In addition, two volunteers from the charity will attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in May and June 2024, along with other recipients of this year's Award.

The BEEP Fund, as it was then called, was founded by Dr Weston in 1984. Over the years it has grown from just operating around the Penrith area to covering the whole of Cumbria, with 11 doctors now involved. The name was changed to BEEP Doctors (BASICS Cumbria) in 2021.

"Around the same time the group embarked on developing marked-up, specialist response vehicles," said Dr Weston. "We now have three – one in the south, one in the west and one in the centre of the patch."

These were acquired through the help of generous funding from the Sellafield Ltd SIX – social impact, multiplied programme - that paid for two of the cars and a donation of £25,000 after BEEP Doctors successfully bid for money from a grant of £250,000, which is given to the British Association for Immediate Care every year by the County Air Ambulance HELP Appeal.

"We have plans this year to develop a specialist response vehicle in the north of the county," said Dr Weston.

Another milestone for the charity was moving its headquarters from a converted barn in Tirril in Cumbria to a professional office at the NFU building in Penrith in 2001.

Beep Doctors's 11 doctors include A & E consultants at West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven and Cumberland infirmary in Carlisle; two anaesthetists who work at Royal Lancaster Infirmary; and three GPs.

So far in 2023 the BEEP Doctors (BASICS Cumbria) charity has attended 272 incidents and members have completed 872 volunteering hours.