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## SUPERDRUG'S SUPER NURSES HEAD FOR THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FRONT LINES

When the chips are down, the British go boldly into harm's way. The current monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, insisted on joining the military effort in the Second World War and worked as a lorry driver and mechanic. Today, with the nation at war with COVID-19, the nurses of Superdrug are also stepping up to serve their nation.

### BRITISH NIGHTINGALES

Beyond expertise in retailing and manufacturing, the A.S. Watson Group staff have deep expertise in healthcare. In Superdrug in the UK, 102 certified professional nurses are a vital part of operations, helping customers with a wide range of issues. But given the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the UK, the biggest issue quickly became, by far and away, the response to the pandemic.

The UK was one of the worst-hit countries in the world and its National Health Service (NHS) was struggling not only to contain the virus, but also to maintain other services. Hospitals quickly filled up and medical professionals were pulled away from other duties, working double overtime to fight on the front lines against the coronavirus pandemic.

Superdrug nurses looked at their nation's peril and stepped up – and stepped in. Like Florence Nightingale, the British nurse who embodied selfless devotion to her fellow man, they took up the call in a time of war, this time against COVID-19. They began volunteering for local and NHS services, and Superdrug agreed to maintain their full-time salaries while they worked in the medical system.





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This volunteer programme saw nurses choosing to put themselves in harm's way, working directly with COVID-19-infected patients and testing those showing symptoms. Superdrug healthcare director Michael Henry highlighted the nurses' commitment, saying, “We have an incredibly dedicated, compassionate and professional team of nurses and they have chosen to directly support the NHS in the fight against coronavirus alongside our pharmacy teams.”

## IN HARM'S WAY

Superdrug nurses serve in a variety of roles. Some are in A&E units and in Intensive Care Units working directly with the hardest hit COVID-19 patients who are fighting for their lives. Others are working in new testing services alongside doctors, taking swab samples from potentially infected patients.

Across England and Wales, nurses stepped into these and other roles. The strain on the broader system saw a high demand for them to work providing routine vaccinations to children and pregnant women in local clinics – vital work that could not be neglected even during a pandemic.

## NEW HOPE

Some nurses underwent eight hours of additional training to participate in a new programme to collect blood plasma from formerly infected patients as part of the 'convalescent plasma programme'. The programme will deliver the plasma of recovered people to infected patients, hoping to give them a life-saving immune system boost. So vital were Superdrug nurses, that at one point they made up 31% of the qualified nurse workforce in the NHS blood transfusion service. These nurses also have Superdrug's support to provide triaging, testing and treating patients in community settings across the UK.

In January, Superdrug joined the NHS's COVID-19 vaccination effort. One, then two, then five locations began administering the vaccine, one jab at a time. Guildford in England's south was the first to open and it was quickly followed by Bristol in the west, Manchester and Leeds in central England

and then Basingstoke near London. Cambridge and other sites are soon to follow. They will deliver the vaccine to 1,000 people a week. Superdrug stands by to do more.

Mr Henry, Superdrug's healthcare director, says, "We continue to be in active discussions with the NHS and stand ready to offer additional vaccination sites through further pharmacy involvement."

A strong sense of duty and generosity of spirit is seeing the Superdrug nurses and management support their nation to track, contain, mitigate, vaccinate and cure the scourge of COVID-19.