

## Professor Sir Stephen Powis

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026

Orator: Professor Gavin Perkins, Dean of Warwick Medical School

Vice-Chancellor,

Our honorary graduand this morning is the former National Medical Director of NHS England. I am delighted to introduce PROFESSOR SIR STEPHEN POWIS.

Stephen was the National Medical Director of NHS England from 2018 until 2025 – the culmination of an illustrious career in medicine, most recently as Group Chief Medical Officer of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. As a senior leader in the NHS, Stephen championed initiatives in cardiovascular and respiratory disease prevention, antimicrobial resistance and organ utilisation, driving improvements that impact millions in the UK and beyond. He promoted the integration of advanced technologies and clinical innovation into the NHS, including the use of digital technology to improve outpatient services and of AI to improve diagnosis.

He championed equity in healthcare, advocating for NHS policies and practices promote diversity and reduce health inequalities. He led several important national reviews, for example into transplant services and into NHS clinical access standards, and oversaw the creation of the National Patient Safety Strategy. And under his guidance, England is making excellent progress on eliminating Hepatitis C well before the World Health Organisation's goal of 2030.

And, of course, Stephen's tenure as the NHS's most senior doctor included the Covid Pandemic – the greatest threat the NHS has ever faced. Stephen played a prominent role in the pandemic response, guiding the NHS's strategic response to the crisis. He was a key member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), advising government ministers and speaking directly to the public at multiple Downing Street press briefings.

He played a prominent role in the delivery and implementation of the Covid-19 vaccine and witnessed the very first vaccination (to 90-year-old Margaret Keenan, here in Coventry at our partner hospital University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire) – a moment which he described as 'really, really emotional'. Stephen was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2022 for his exceptional service to the NHS, particularly during the pandemic.

Throughout his career, Stephen has been extensively involved in medical education, holding both academic and national positions. He was Professor of Renal Medicine at



# UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

University College London (UCL) from 1997 to 2017 and Director of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education at UCL from 2010 to 2013. National roles have included serving on the board of Medical Education England and chairing the Association of UK Universities Medical Directors Group. Together with Professor Sir Chris Whitty, Stephen also led a national review of postgraduate medical training that reported last year.

He has also sponsored the National Medical Directors' Clinical Fellow Scheme which offers doctors in training experience in leadership and management – Stephen himself holds an MBA from Warwick – and health policy. We were privileged to welcome him to Warwick Medical School in 2024, where he gave a Dean's Distinguished Lecture to staff and students and toured our new Clinical Education Hub.

Sir Stephen's career exemplifies transformative leadership with vital contributions to national healthcare policy and practice. It is a particular pleasure to welcome him back to Warwick during our year of celebration of our Medical School's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Vice-Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, PROFESSOR SIR STEPHEN POWIS.

