



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE



INNER TEMPLE LIBRARY

1942

70
YEARS
OF THE NHS
1948 - 2018

BEVERIDGE REPORT

The report *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (Cmd 6404), commonly known as the Beveridge Report, was published in November 1942.

The report detailed proposals for a comprehensive “from cradle to grave” system of social security to abolish Want, identified as one of the “Five Great Evils” plaguing society (the other four being Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness).



1945

CLEMENT ATTLEE

Former barrister and Inner Temple member Clement Attlee led the Labour party from 1935 to 1955, becoming Prime Minister in a landslide victory for Labour in 1945.

Attlee’s administration oversaw much reform, including the introduction of the National Health Service.



1946

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NHS ACT

The National Health Service Act 1946 was based upon two core principles: that there should be a comprehensive health service available to all, and that it should be free at the point of use.

The Act came into force in 1948 with 1,771 Local Authority hospitals and 1,334 voluntary hospitals coming under national public ownership. Presided over by first Minister of Health Aneurin Bevan, the new National Health Service was given an initial budget of £437 million.

Since the creation of the NHS the UK has seen life expectancy increase dramatically. In 1948 the average life expectancy was 66 years for men and 77 years for women. By 2014 men were living an extra 17.4 years and women an extra 20.9 years.

Infant mortality has also decreased. In 1948 there were 34 deaths per 1,000, dropping to 5 per 1,000 by 2014.

9 & 10 GEO. 6.

*National Health Service
Act, 1946.*

CH. 81.



CHAPTER 81.

An Act to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive health service for England and Wales, and for purposes connected therewith. [6th November 1946.]

BE it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

PART I.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION.

1.—(1) It shall be the duty of the Minister of Health (hereafter in this Act referred to as "the Minister") to promote the establishment in England and Wales of a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people of England and Wales and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, and for that purpose to provide or secure the effective provision of services in accordance with the following provisions of this Act.

(2) The services so provided shall be free of charge, except where any provision of this Act expressly provides for the making and recovery of charges.

1948

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ANEURIN BEVAN

Park Hospital in Manchester (renamed Trafford General in 1988) was officially opened by Minister of Health Aneurin “Nye” Bevan on 5th July 1948, marking the inauguration of the National Health Service.

The first patient to be treated under the NHS was Sylvia Diggory (pictured) and the first baby born, later that day, was Sandra Pook (6lb 11oz).



1949

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RECRUITMENT DRIVE

The creation of the NHS led to a greater demand for nursing staff. By 1949 this was becoming increasingly difficult to meet and the shortage of nurses was described as an “abiding anxiety” (House of Lords Debates, 3 May 1949).

In response the Government and the Royal College of Nursing launched an overseas recruitment drive. Thousands would answer the call, predominantly nurses from the Caribbean and Ireland. By 1965 35% of UK nurses had been born overseas.

The Royal College of Nursing acknowledged that foreign-born nurses “were often recruited into the least popular areas of health care [...] and not always offered the best training opportunities.”



1951

MIDWIVES ACT

The Midwives Act 1951 consolidated previous legislation protecting the role of the midwife and made it a criminal offence for a person other than a registered midwife to “attend” at childbirth.

Prohibition of persons other than certified midwives attending women in childbirth except under medical supervision.

Provisions relating to the Practice of Midwifery, &c.

9. If a person, being either a male person or a woman who is not a certified midwife, attends a woman in childbirth otherwise than under the direction and personal supervision of a duly qualified medical practitioner, that person shall, unless he or she satisfies the court that the attention was given in a case of sudden or urgent necessity, be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding ten pounds:

Provided that the provisions of this section shall not apply in the case of a person who, while undergoing training with a view to becoming a duly qualified medical practitioner or certified midwife, attends a woman in childbirth as part of a course of practical instruction in midwifery recognised by the General Medical Council or the Board.

1952

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PRESCRIPTION CHARGES

Prescriptions were free until 1952 when a charge of one shilling (the equivalent of around £1.40 today) was introduced, with exemptions for those on national assistance and the under 16s. Charges were abolished under Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1965 but were to be reinstated in 1968.

Prescriptions are now free in Wales (since 2007) Northern Ireland (since 2010) and Scotland (since 2011).

1956

CLEAN AIR ACT

The Clean Air Act 1956 was a direct response to the “Great Smog” of 1952 which killed between 4,000 and 12,000 in what has since been acknowledged as a major environmental disaster.

A significant rise in cases of influenza, pneumonia, respiratory and cardiac disease was reported in Greater London in December 1952.

The Clean Air Act sought to regulate both domestic and industrial smoke emissions, although it took many years for this to be fully implemented.

Amended in 1968, the Act played an important role in improving air quality in urban areas, with deaths from respiratory disease declining by 34% between 1971 and 2003.



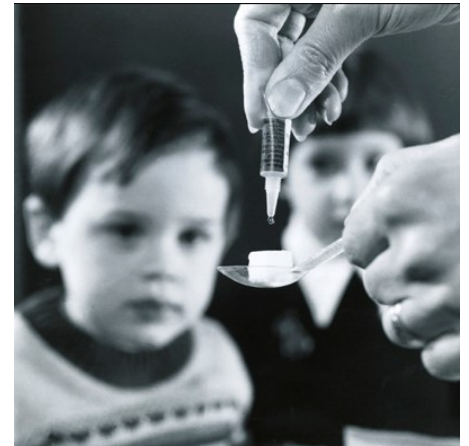
1958

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VACCINATIONS

In 1958 the Government started a programme of vaccination against polio and diphtheria for all children under the age of 15.

Epidemics of polio had reached their height in the 1950s with as many as 8,000 reported cases in a year. The World Health Organization now considers the UK to have eradicated indigenous polio.



1959

MENTAL HEALTH ACT

The Mental Health Act 1959 implemented the recommendations of the Royal Commission on *The Law Relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency* also known as the “Percy Commission”.

It sought to simplify what the Minister of Health referred to as the “complex, difficult, and in many respects out of date” laws governing mental health, and to erase the distinction between psychiatric and other hospitals.

“The aim of the Act is to emancipate the treatment of mental disorder, both in mental hospitals and in the community, from the shackles of certification and compulsion so far as is consistent with the protection of the public.” (1960) 23 Modern Law Review 4.

1961

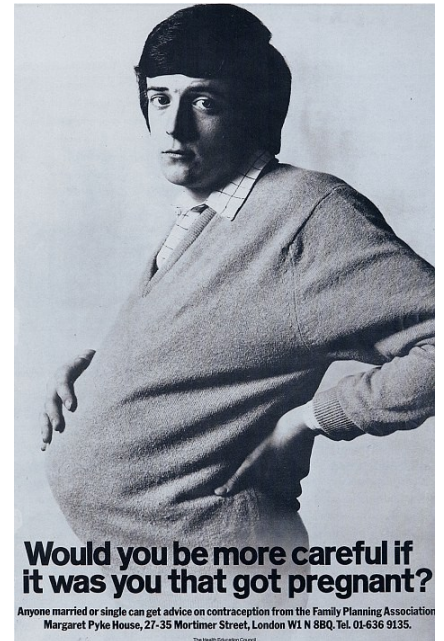
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THE PILL

In 1961 the oral contraceptive pill was made available on the NHS to married women. The National Health Service (Family Planning) Act of 1967 would later extend this to all women irrespective of marital status.

The availability of birth control and family planning advice had a profound impact on society, affording women and men more control over their reproductive health and related life choices.

The Office for National Statistics reports that 94% of women born in 1941 were married by age 35, compared with just 60% of those born in 1973.



1967

ABORTION ACT

Originating as a private member's bill introduced by David Steel and passed in October 1967, the Abortion Act allowed for the legal termination of a pregnancy at up to 28 weeks providing certain conditions were met.

Before 1967 abortion was a leading cause of maternal deaths, with 30,000 to 100,000 illegal abortions performed each year.

The Abortion Act came into force in April 1968, but did not apply to Northern Ireland.

1968

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HEART TRANSPLANT

The first heart transplant to be performed in the UK (and the tenth ever worldwide) took place at the National Heart Hospital in Marylebone in May 1968.

Fred West (45) received the heart of 26 year-old labourer Patrick Ryan. West survived 46 days before succumbing to an infection.

The first heart transplant considered to be a long-term success was performed in August 1979 at Papworth Hospital in Cambridge. Recipient Keith Castle lived more than 5 years after the procedure.

1970

PEEL REPORT

In 1970 Sir John Peel produced a report for the Department of Health and Social Security—*Domiciliary Midwifery and Maternity Bed Needs*—more commonly known as the “Peel Report” in which he presented the “medical model” as preferable to home births.

“We consider that the resources of modern medicine should be available to all mothers and babies, and we think that sufficient facilities should be provided to allow for 100% hospital delivery. The greater safety of hospital confinement for mother and child justifies this objective.”

The report proved controversial: some questioned the basis of Peel’s assumptions. It did, however, influence the NHS’s approach to maternity matters and home births fell out of favour, with just 2.1% of births taking places at home in 2016.

1971

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CT SCANS

Computed tomography or CT scanning was developed by Sir Godfrey Hounsfield who performed the world's first CT scan on a patient at Atkinson Morley Hospital in 1971.

Hounsfield was awarded the 1979 Nobel Prize in Medicine in recognition of this work.



1978

ALMA ATA

In September 1978 the International Conference on Primary Health was held in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan. The resulting “Alma Ata Declaration” asserted that health care is a universal human right.

“The Conference strongly reaffirms that health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector.”



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IVF BABY

Louise Brown was born on 25th July 1978 at Oldham General Hospital. The first “test-tube” baby was born after her mother, Lesley Brown, successfully conceived by in vitro fertilisation (IVF).

One month later the birth was televised on ITN and the BBC, and The Times reported on the baby’s good health: “The apparent normality of the infant should allay fears that the technique is fraught with danger to the foetus”.

1980

BLACK REPORT

Inequalities in Health: Report of a Research Working Group on, more commonly known as the “Black Report”, was published in August 1980 for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Headed by Sir Douglas Black (President of the Royal College of Physicians), the working group identified marked inequalities in ill-health and mortality rates.

The report acknowledged “the multi-causal nature of health inequalities, within which inequalities in the material conditions of living loom large.”

“Most recent data show marked differences in mortality rates between the occupational classes, for both sexes and at all ages [...] A class gradient can be observed for most causes of death, being particularly steep in the case of diseases of the respiratory system. Available data on chronic sickness tend to parallel those on mortality.”

Distribution of the Black Report was limited and its recommendations mostly disregarded.

1988

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ACCESS TO MEDICAL REPORTS

The Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 gave individuals the right to view any medical reports released by their GP or other medical practitioner for employment or insurance purposes.


As well as giving patients the right to view their own medical reports, the Act allows them to veto release and to add comment if they consider the information to be incorrect.

1988

MMR VACCINE

The introduction of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine in October 1988 and the accompanying public health campaigns resulted in dramatic reductions in the number of reported cases of all three illnesses.

After 1998 and the speculative reports of potential links between MMR and autism and Crohn's disease, vaccination uptake dropped significantly (from 87.4% in 2000-01 to 79.9% in 2003-04)*. These reports have since been discredited and vaccination rates are steadily rising again.



**GIVE YOUR CHILD SOMETHING
YOU NEVER HAD.**

THE MMR VACCINATION.
(Measles, Mumps and Rubella)

MMR
THREE WAY
PROTECTION
FOR YOUR
CHILD

HEALTH EDUCATION AUTHORITY

*The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least 95% coverage.

1989

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“WORKING FOR PATIENTS”

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was keen to pursue significant reform of the NHS after labelling it a “bottomless financial pit”.

In 1989 the Department of Health produced a White Paper entitled “Working for Patients” outlining a number of recommended reforms. These would be implemented by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 which came into force in 1993.

Chief among the changes brought in were the creation of the “purchaser/provider” split and the introduction of the hospital trust.

1994

ORGAN DONOR REGISTER

Until October 1994 there was no central register of organ donors in the UK.

Organ donor cards had been available for people to carry since 1981 and kidney donor cards had been in existence as far back as 1971, but cards could easily be lost or go undiscovered in the event of an emergency.

Today more than a million people register as organ donors each year, with a total of more than 25 million people (or 38% of the population) signed up to donate.



1998

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NHS DIRECT

NHS Direct was a 24-hour telephone advice service, staffed by nurses, intended “to provide people at home with easier and faster advice and information about health, illness and the NHS, so that they are better able to care for themselves and their families.”



It was discontinued in March 2014 and replaced by NHS111.

1999

NICE

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) was established in 1999 to “reduce the variation in the availability and quality of NHS treatments and care” and put an end to what some had called the “postcode lottery”.

NICE
National Institute for
Health and Care Excellence

In 2005 NICE joined with the Health Development Agency to form the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

2004

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HUMAN TISSUE ACT

The Human Tissue Act 2004 was based upon the founding principle of consent. It established the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), a regulatory body overseeing the removal, storage and disposal of human tissue.

The Act also created the new offence of “DNA theft” which made it “unlawful to have human tissue with the intention of its DNA being analysed, without the consent of the person from whom the tissue came.”

2007

SMOKING BAN

The ban on smoking in all enclosed public spaces came into force in England on 1st July 2007.

With maximum fines of £200 for individuals and £2,500 for businesses breaking the law, it constituted one of the biggest public health interventions in recent times.

In the year of the ban Britain had an estimated 10.2 million smokers. This number dropped to 8.3 million by 2016.

It is generally agreed that the ban’s impact on the nation’s health will take time to evaluate. But the cultural shift proved dramatic.

“The law has played a key part in the huge cultural change we have seen in the past decade, especially among younger people”

- Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England.

2009

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NHS CONSTITUTION

The NHS Constitution was introduced in 2009 in response to a recommendation of the *High Quality Care for All* report by Lord Darzi.

The constitution outlines “commitments to patients and staff, and the responsibilities that the public, patients and staff owe to one another to ensure that the NHS operates fairly and effectively.”



**THE NHS
CONSTITUTION**
the NHS belongs to us all

2009

CARE QUALITY COMMISSION

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) was established in 2009 under the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Amalgamating the Healthcare Commission, the Commission for

Social Care Inspection and the Mental Health Act Commission, the CQC is an independent regulator for health and social care services.



2014

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CARE ACT

The Care Act 2014 detailed the duties Local Authorities have when assessing people's care needs. It has been labelled the most significant reform of social care law since the 1950s.

The Act aimed to put people in control of their own care and introduced a “wellbeing principle” where the impact on the person's wellbeing remains central throughout assessment.

ELIZABETH II

c. 23



Care Act 2014

2014 CHAPTER 23

An Act to make provision to reform the law relating to care and support for adults and the law relating to support for carers; to make provision about safeguarding adults from abuse or neglect; to make provision about care standards; to establish and make provision about Health Education England; to establish and make provision about the Health Research Authority; to make provision about integrating care and support with health services; and for connected purposes.
[14th May 2014]

2016

DEVOLUTION

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 allows functions of public authorities to be devolved to local government.

Greater Manchester became the testing ground when it began the devolution process in 2015. In doing so it took control of its £6 billion health and social care budget.

Other local governments signing devolution deals include Cornwall, Liverpool and, most recently, London.