



The History of the NHS

For decades, the NHS has been the pinnacle of healthcare within the UK, and a system that many other countries look to replicate.

While still having its challenges, the NHS has been able to provide free, available healthcare to millions across the country, on average treating over 1 million people with GP practices alone every 24 hours.

Before the NHS

Before the National Health Service began in July 1948, statistics from wartime hospitals showed the healthcare service in desperate need of reorganisation.

Along with the fact that only covered workers had access to GP services and not their wives or families, it came as no surprise that the mortality rate was only around 20%.

Funds for healthcare were mainly provided through charities, The Old Poor Law in England and Wales, and an unregulated private sector. This meant that donors and rate payers had the power to decide who could receive treatment and who couldn't.

While the system was not ideal, the UK was able to provide 20 million people access to treatment for 3 pence per week towards the end of 1939.

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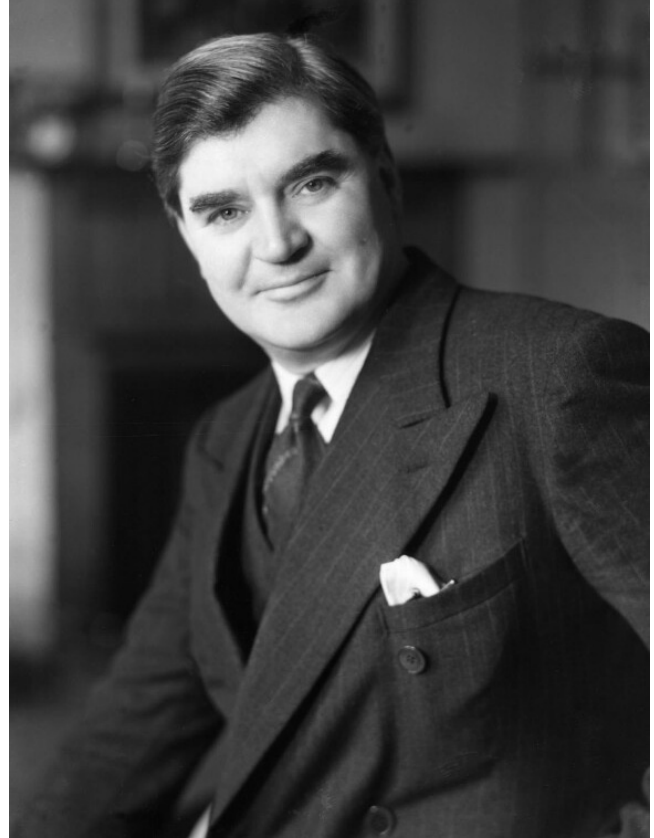
The Early NHS

1952 marked the introduction of the 1-shilling prescriptions (5 pence in modern currency), where everyone had access to needed medication for a price.

1955 saw the UK be introduced to the first polio vaccine in an attempt to lower the cost of NHS treatment throughout the UK, and the measles and mumps vaccines followed in the next decade for the same reason.

The Mental Health Act was introduced to the NHS in 1959, which detailed people's rights in regard to their mental health disorders and how they can be treated, and the next two years saw a drastic expansion of NHS hospitals following Enoch Powell's hospital plan, which was approved in 1962.

From the 60's until the 21st century, there have been decades of medical advancements which the NHS have taken on and allowed the public access to, including advancements in surgery, body replacements such as knees and hips, organ transplant, vaccines, and even the NHS 999 and 111 services.



Birth of the NHS

The NHS was founded on 5th July 1948 by Labour Minister Aneurin Bevan, who launched the National Health Service at Park Hospital in Manchester.

Comparison

As a reference to how much the NHS has changed between its year of birth and now, there are many comparisons we can make, some of them are quite surprising.

As shown, some changes have not always been for the best. Due to budget cuts and the rapid increase of patients in need of treatment, there were 360,000 less hospital beds available in 2018, along with an increase in prescriptions.

Regardless of the struggles and backlog that the NHS is currently facing, most can agree that the National Health Service has, and will continue to be, a staple of our nation and has allowed all UK residents to access free healthcare when needed.

- 1948** — **68,000 full time nurses**
- **11,700 full time doctors**
- **480,000 hospital beds**
- **£12.9 billion budget**
- **1 shilling prescriptions**

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- 2018** — **217,000 full time nurses**
 - **115,000 full time doctors**
 - **120,000 hospital beds**
 - **£149.2 billion budget**
 - **£8.80 prescriptions**