



# Discover why our health service is the “envy of the world”

## When the National Health Service began in 1948, it transformed the UK's healthcare.

If you've ever broken a bone or fallen ill, you've probably visited a doctor or a hospital run by the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

Recently people have been talking about the NHS because of a row between the Government and junior doctors about their pay and working hours. The Government wants to make sure that there is a good medical service available every day – even at weekends. Junior doctors – doctors who are still training – are not happy with these plans because it means they will have to work for longer hours, and this might make them too tired to look after their patients properly and safely.

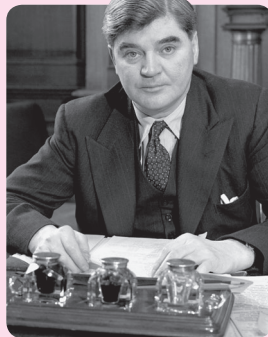


Junior doctors protest outside Westminster.

## What is the NHS?

The NHS is an organisation that provides free healthcare to all people in the UK, regardless of how rich or poor they are. The service is paid for by the Government using tax paid by the public. Tax is money paid to the Government by people who work, and the amount they pay depends on how much they earn. Here in the UK we're lucky to have free healthcare. In other countries many people have to pay a lot of money to receive medical treatment. As a result, the NHS is often described as “the envy of the world”.

## The birth of the NHS



The founder of the NHS, Aneurin Bevan.

The NHS was born on 5 July 1948. It was introduced by the Minister for Health, Aneurin Bevan, three years after the Second World War ended. During the war, there was a big increase in people needing

medical care, so the Labour Government decided to create a free healthcare service, the first one anywhere in the world.

## What was life like before the NHS?

Before the NHS was introduced, doctors charged for their services. Instead of seeking help from a trained doctor or nurse, people with little money would rely on remedies they made at home. These were not based on scientific knowledge and could be very dangerous. As a result, thousands died from infectious diseases. Infant mortality – the number of children who died before their first birthday – was around one in 20. In 2013 that number was less than one in 250.

Almost 70 years later the NHS has had a dramatic impact on people's lives. In 1948, almost half of the UK population died before the age of 65. Today that number is just 14% – partly thanks to the NHS.

**FACT!**  
A study in 2013 found that the NHS was more popular than the Royal Family.



1948  
Nurses learn about the human skeleton.



2008  
Surgeons operate on a patient.

# NHS



2003  
Looking at X-rays before a knee replacement.



1977  
Nurses are taught how to resuscitate a patient.

## The future of the NHS

The NHS is very expensive to run, which is partly why it is in the news so much. Between 2013-14, the NHS cost the Government a whopping £134.1 billion. This figure goes up every year because new drugs and technologies cost a lot of money. People are also living longer, so often need more care. Another problem is our changing lifestyles. Poor diets, for example, have contributed to increased levels of obesity-related illnesses. These illnesses cost the NHS more than £5 billion a year.

Some politicians say that in the future people might need to start paying for the NHS. However, there are also lots of exciting new technologies that could transform the NHS, such as medical equipment you can use at home and smartphone apps that help people monitor their health themselves.



The current health secretary, Jeremy Hunt.



Unhealthy lifestyles are putting a strain on the NHS.

## Five cool facts about the NHS

### The NHS's very first patient

Sylvia Bevington was 13 years old when she was taken to a hospital in Manchester, now known as Trafford General, with a serious liver condition. On 5 July 1948, the first day the NHS opened, she became the first person ever to be treated by the NHS. Without the treatment, Sylvia may not have survived.



Sylvia Bevington is visited in hospital by Aneurin Bevan.

### Vaccinations

In 1958, the NHS introduced two vaccinations for all children under the age of 15 to protect them against polio and diphtheria. Today, there are seven types of free vaccinations given to children, most of them when they are born.



A child gets vaccinated.

### Lots of jobs...

The NHS employs a staggering 1.6 million people and is the fifth biggest employer in the world.

### ...lots of patients

Today, the NHS in England deals with more than 1 million patients every 36 hours.



The NHS at the London Olympics.

### Olympics

During the 2012 London Olympics, the NHS was given a starring role in the opening ceremony. Six hundred real nurses and doctors and lots of children danced on stage and formed a giant NHS logo.