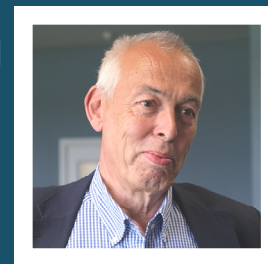


# 75 years of the NHS in South East London



We are pleased and proud to welcome you to this photographic journey through 75 years of NHS care and service to the people of south east London.

It will hopefully spark a sense of pride and achievement in those of you who work in our great NHS family – and perhaps bring back memories for staff, patients and carers alike.

It is remarkable to reflect on how the NHS has moved from a politically controversial project, seen as too ambitious and costly by many, to its place at the heart of Britain's self-image. That journey, surely, was best captured in that memorable 2012 Olympic opening ceremony where the NHS featured so prominently.

The NHS has ensured that all our citizens have been able to benefit from the huge scientific and clinical advances since 1948. Equally, we have seen major policy changes

that have genuinely transformed people's lives – such as closing most of the Victorian long-stay institutions and resettling people with learning disabilities or mental health problems in their communities.

It is interesting looking through some of the early images included here to see how our predecessors took a wide-ranging approach to health – with education campaigns around sanitation and child-rearing. This chimes with our own drive towards truly integrated services that promote prevention and tackle the root causes of ill-health.

We hope you enjoy this stroll down memory lane and are inspired to continue to support your NHS – however you can.

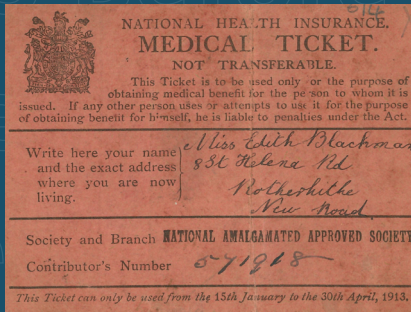
Richard Douglas  
Chair

Andrew Bland  
Chief Executive Officer

# Before the NHS

For most British people before World War II, access to healthcare was, if they were lucky, a lottery. For many others it was simply best not thought about at all.

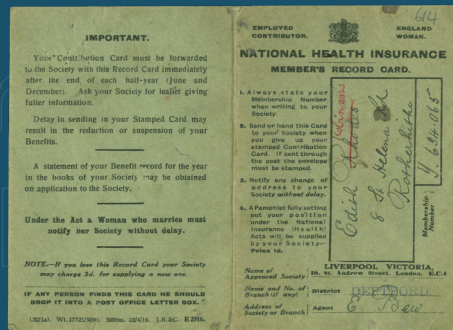
Worries about the cost of getting ill stalked much of the population. Many fell back on the goodwill of charitable organisations that had risen during the long era of the poor laws and the workhouses.



Others got lucky and found benevolent clinicians ready to subsidise the care of poorer patients with earnings from richer ones. Some managed to scrimp together weekly or monthly contributions to private health insurance companies (see medical ticket, above).

From 1911, many working people

were covered by a health insurance scheme funded by deductions from their weekly wage (see insurance card below). The cover did not



extend to their families, however, leaving spouses and children at the mercy of the goodwill of clinicians, institutions or charities.

These concerns reached well up the class ladder. Many people with good middle-class jobs, such as bankers and lawyers, saw their savings disappear if they or a loved one required extensive treatment.

That's why disease – and the squalor which we know leads to many diseases – were among the five giants that the Beveridge report said had to be slain. William

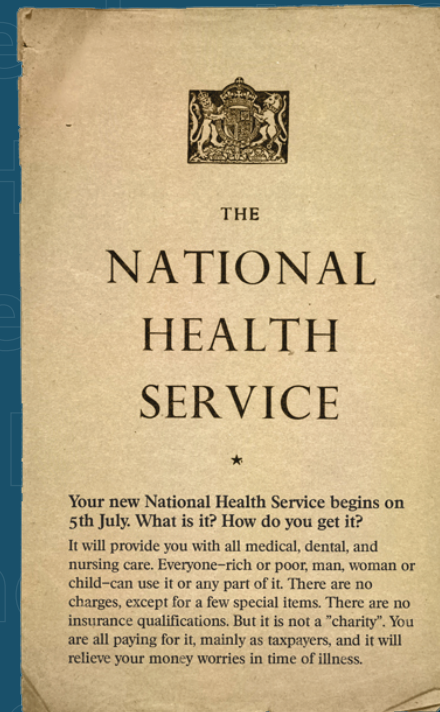
Beveridge was a senior civil servant who delivered his plan for a comprehensive post-war welfare state to Churchill's government in 1943.

Despite prolonged resistance from the British Medical Association and many others, the Labour Government - elected in a landslide in 1945 - pressed on with a comprehensive health service, free at the point of need.

Nye Bevan, the Minister of Health

bleamed with a colourful turn of phrase, said he won over sceptical doctors by "stuffing their mouths with gold". Asked how the new resource-hungry NHS could survive and thrive, he claimed "the sharp elbows of the middle classes" would protect it.

They – and many others – have done a good job, as the NHS has expanded beyond recognition. Now, 75 years later it is looking forward with confidence to the next 75.



A government pamphlet sets out what the public can expect from their new NHS.



# The great day arrives

It seems remarkable now. Less than three years after the defeat of Japan brought World War II to an end, Britain launched its new National Health Service.

Battles across the political divide and with professional bodies such as the British Medical Association had been won.

However, the media did not greet the 5th July 1948 with undiluted enthusiasm. The Guardian explained that “the milestone will be hailed with a chorus of praise, some of it perhaps too complacent”.

“The larger part of the task is to come,” the paper said. “It is a moment of opportunity, not of achievement. The rest will come but

it still wants building – not by MPs or civil servants in Whitehall but by doctors and nurses and opticians and many more, by members of the regional hospital boards and the local hospital committees”.

Interestingly, the paper says that the network of “health centres has had time to grow”. Other journalists and early NHS managers were also placing a lot of faith in these health centres – as evidenced by the documents you can see in our next section, with one article we reproduce featuring photos of both the Bermondsey and Kennington health centres.

That army included 19,000 family doctors and “thousands of specialists in everything from childbirth to brain disease,” armed with 533,000 hospital beds.

Meanwhile, the Bromley and West Kent Mercury reported three days before launch day that the changes would see Bromley’s medical officer of health extend his remit into rural west Kent.

And in a sign of things to come, the South London Observer reported on the same day that Lewisham Labour Party activists had toured the borough in a van, declaring through a loud speaker that the new service was very much a Labour achievement.

And so the scene was set...

The Daily Mirror (opposite page), meanwhile, opens by declaring: “Today the greatest army ever established to fight sickness and want goes into action in Britain.”



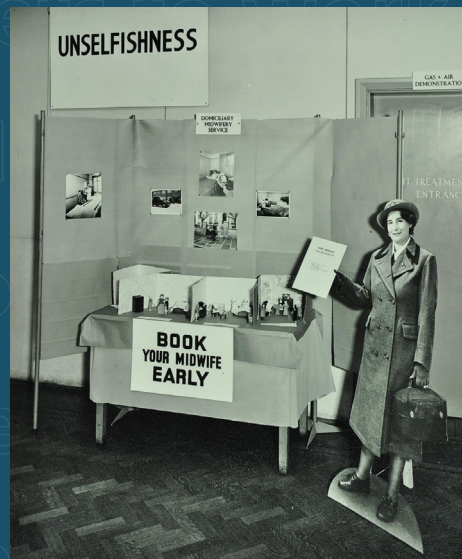
Just three years after the end of World War II, the Daily Mirror reaches for a military metaphor to welcome the NHS, saying: “Today the greatest army ever established to fight sickness and want goes into action in Britain.”

# The NHS gets to work

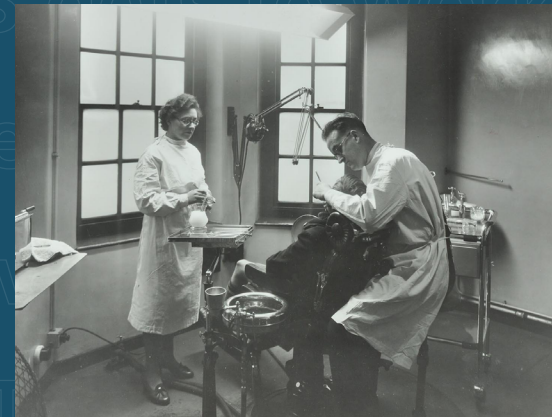


The health service in Lewisham explained 'what the NHS can do for you' at a healthcare exhibition it organised four years after its launch.

Another stand at the Lewisham exhibition promotes a new community midwifery service.



A health visitor advises mothers on children's clothing. Posters encouraging childhood vaccination are displayed on the wall.



A child enjoys a trip to the Stockwell dental clinic in 1948.



JOHN BULL March 5 1949

# THE ALL-IN HEALTH CENTRE

BERMONDSEY COLLECTION

Anything from T.B. to ingrowing toenails is treated under one roof. It's a model for the countrywide chain to come

by FENNER BROCKWAY

FIFTY YEARS AGO, a young medical student at Guy's Hospital was sent to a maternity case in Eskett Street, Bermondsey. Though it was midwinter, there was no fire in the house. There was no washing place; water had to be drawn from a stand-pipe at the other end of the court. There was one outside w.c. which served twenty-five houses.

The student was horrified that a child should be brought into the world in such conditions. He was a brilliant student, perhaps as brilliant as any who has ever passed through our medical schools. When he graduated it was with triple first-class honours. A medical career of unlimited possibilities was open to him. He began it with an appointment as bacteriologist at the Lister Institute.

But Alfred Salter could not forget Eskett Street. What was the use of devoting his life to the treatment of individual cases of ill-health if social conditions persisted in which good health did not have a chance?

**Poor Man's Doctor**  
He turned his back on a medical career in high places. He became a poor man's doctor in Bermondsey, dedicating himself to the service of victims of bad conditions and to the creation of good conditions.

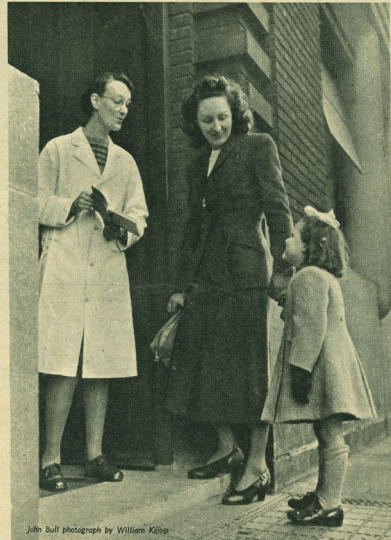
From 1900 until his death in 1945, Dr. Salter lived and worked in Bermondsey. He helped make it the most progressive borough in the country for slum clearance, rehousing and public health. He laid the foundations of a health centre which may now serve as a model for all the new centres which are to be established throughout the country.

It was a long job, and in the early days a disheartening one. When he began his work there was one case of tuberculosis in every three houses. There were many houses where from four to eight cases were reported within a few years. There were as many as 250 deaths from the disease each year. Though the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. King Brown, was constantly urging the council to action, next to nothing was done to rehouse the slum population or provide health services.

**First Step: New Homes**  
At the end of the first World War, Salter was elected to the council and his wife became mayor. They made up for lost time. They set out to put two-thirds of the people into new houses and to bring to every sick person the best aid known to medical science. Above all, they determined to fight tuberculosis.

In the spring of 1924, Dr. Rollier, superintendent of the sanatorium at Leyrin, 4,500 feet up in the Swiss mountains, lectured at Guy's on the new sun-ray treatment. His audience included Dr. Salter, Dr. Brown and Dr. Gosman, Bermondsey's new tuberculosis officer. They were so impressed that they travelled to Leyrin to see for themselves. They came back determined to set up in Bermondsey the first municipal solarium.

The council, on their recommendation, bought a house in Grange Road, installed equipment for treatment by artificial sunlight and invited the doctor in the borough to send along not only patients suffering from tuberculosis, but those who seemed likely to get it. The sunshine of the Mediterranean was brought to the slums of Bermondsey. Children especially were blessed by it.



Bermondsey Centre is a family affair: no formality, no queuing

Inside a large pen thirty-four toddlers played with indiarubber animals, while all round, ultra-violet lamps poured on them healing rays. In another room babies slept in a row of cots under the health-giving light. In the hall older children marched round the lamps on trucks marked on the floor, not an inch of their bodies escaping the rays. Adults also came in large numbers; 250 patients attended each day. It was soon found that they benefited enormously. They put on weight, acquired a healthy colour and in most cases threw off the danger of the disease. Dr. Salter himself had been threatened with tuberculosis when a student and had received sanatorium treatment. In Bermondsey it was his practice to sleep in an open-air sleeping shelter in his garden. He now got the council to provide similar

shelters for consumptive patients and many of them began to sleep out of doors. There were a few cases, however, which did not respond either to artificial sunlight or to open-air treatment: cases where bones and spines and glands had become diseased. Salter would not accept defeat even in these extreme instances. He persuaded the council to send them to the Leyrin Sanatorium in Switzerland, where six beds were permanently reserved for Bermondsey patients. The result of the double-front war on tuberculosis—rehousing and health treatment—was remarkable. In ten years the number of new cases and of deaths from the disease was nearly halved. Salter looked forward to the day when the scourge would be swept from the borough. The solarium was only one of the

many health services which Bermondsey Council was by now providing. There were maternal and child-welfare clinics, ante-natal clinics, dental clinics, foot clinics. But these were scattered all over the borough in ordinary dwelling houses. A centre was needed where all activities could be organized under one roof. And, in November, 1936, the Health Centre was opened.

Within a few years we shall probably have health centres in every town and borough in the country. They are to be a part of the new National Health Service and already are being built on the large housing estates. Aneurin Bevan J.P. appointed a special committee to inquire what the new health centres should be like.

**Modern and Homely**  
I hope the members of the committee will visit the Bermondsey centre. I have just been there. Let me tell you what I found.

Bermondsey lies in a backwash of London, hidden between the bend in the Thames below London Bridge and the Old Kent Road. Though there is relief in the trees which line every street and promise in the new housing projects which are under way, the first impression of Bermondsey is bound to be one of devastation. Indeed, the population was reduced by half through wartime destruction.

But in Grange Road, amid typical drab desolation, there comes the sudden surprise of an impressive and beautiful building. It is the health centre. It is modern in its simple, diagonal lines, and the brown brickwork removes any cold, institutional effect. The interior is restful, reassuring.

There is no hospital atmosphere here; no impersonal instructions, no queues, no long periods of waiting. Everybody comes by appointment and is an individual; there could not be greater consideration in Harley Street. The patients are at home. The centre belongs to them, and they are conscious of it.

Like so many British institutions, it has not been built on clear-cut principles; it has grown from experience, almost illogically.

**More Than a Hospital**  
It is not a hospital, for there are no resident patients. It is not merely a centre for diagnosis, for it also provides treatment. It goes beyond the functions of hospitals, clinics and consulting rooms, for it is a propagandist centre for healthy living.

Its record is comprehensive and triumphant. The work of the infant clinic has brought down Bermondsey's infant mortality rate from 156 at the beginning of the century to thirty-nine two years ago.

The ante-natal clinic has coped with bigger obstacles. A few years ago, pregnant women were shy of examinations and advice. But in Bermondsey, the friendly spirit of the doctor and his staff and the value of their guidance are appreciated so much that ninety-nine per cent of the prospective mothers in the borough attend. During one recent year every mother who gave birth to a baby in Bermondsey had visited the clinic. Bermondsey was the first borough to have a foot clinic. Corns, bunions and ingrowing toenails may not be mortal, but they cause untold discomfort and a health centre must not ignore them. The specialist in charge of the ear

Continued on page 17

In the future Britain's Health Service will be based on a series of local Health Centres. It will be years before the present housing shortage allows the new centres to be built. Meanwhile Bermondsey's long established Health Centre offers a rough guide to what the centres may be.

## ALL-IN HEALTH CENTRE

In July 1948 Britain's National Health Service came into existence. Already the size of the scheme has given the impression that the vast enterprise has assumed the scope and shape that was originally planned. In fact a major part of the service has not yet begun to operate, and may not be fully functioning for years to come.

The missing section of the scheme is the ambitious programme of proposed Health Centres. Indeed it could be said that in its ultimate form, the Health Centres will be the foundation of the Health Service.

But the centres will be purely local affairs, provided, equipped, and maintained, by local Health Authorities. The Health Centre is intended to be a centre for a given community in which accommodation will be provided for a group of family doctors. The final form of the centres has not been decided, but often they will include dentists, dispensaries, a maternity and child welfare services, and the midwifery staff of the local Health Authority.

In some cases the centre may include facilities for specialist and out-patient care usually given at hospitals. The main value of the centre will be in bringing the branches of the Health Service together, in a close relationship. In this way the now scattered work which every local Health Authority does in preventative medicine and welfare services, will be linked with the curative work of the family doctor and family dentist.

The advantages for most family doctors will be obvious. Instead of the usual ground floor waiting room and surgery, he can share waiting room facilities, have a dispensary and centre receptionist on the premises, and have his own surgery in the centre. For this he will make an agreed payment

This typewritten report to the health committee in Southwark sets out how the centres will be the 'foundation' of the NHS.

Health centres offering a comprehensive range of services were at the heart of early thinking about the NHS. This magazine article shows a mother and her child arriving at the Bermondsey Centre here there is 'no formality, no waiting'.



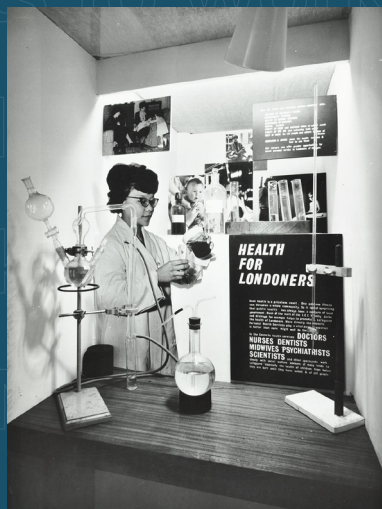
A nurse oversees afternoon tea for patients and visitors sitting under the 400 year old Froggnall oak tree.



Anxious relatives wait for news of loved ones in the surgical waiting room at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup.



Recruiting the workforce: This 1959 careers fair reminds us that workforce pressures are nothing new. This is promoting opportunities for scientists in the London NHS.



A patient signs consultation notes at Lambeth Chest Clinic in 1956.



A slightly forbidding children's ward at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup in the 1950s.



Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup was founded in 1917 to provide ground-breaking facial reconstruction and related treatment to soldiers injured in World War I. It provided a wide range of services when it joined the NHS in 1948. Here, the widow of Sir Harold Gillies, who drove the hospital's creation, unveils a 50th anniversary plaque in 1967.



Alfie, a year old King Charles spaniel, rests up and greets well-wishers soon after his ground-breaking surgery at Guy's Hospital to repair a damaged heart valve in 1971.

# The Windrush generation and the NHS: an enduring legacy

Aged 21 and knowing no-one apart from friends made on the three-week journey from the Caribbean, Madree was greeted by dark, cold December skies in Southampton. Whisked straight from the ship to a north London hospital where she was to start her nurse training, even the bright lights expected in the capital were largely hidden by the 'dreary' mist and drizzle.

That was 1965 and 37 years later, she had a second start in England, as a midwife at Lewisham Hospital. By that time, her daughter, Carol-Ann Murray, had started on a nursing career that would lead to a senior role in the south east London NHS.

Despite the shock of the cold, Madree ventured further north to work in the maternity unit at York City Hospital after she completed her nurse training.

It was here that she had one of her most unpleasant experiences of workplace racism. "Racism was always there...but I had one experience that really shocked me and I felt sad about that because it

was the late 1960s. Like many white Rhodesians and South Africans at that time, this woman came to England to give birth. It shocked me because she was a clergyman's wife as it showed racism runs very deep."



Madree on hospital stairs in the 1960s.

Increasingly violent racism saw Madree decide that 1970s Britain was not the place to raise her family so she returned to Trinidad soon after completing her midwifery training in Hertfordshire.

Madree's arrival back in London in 2002 was obviously less of a shock than her first. Completing her return to practise midwifery training at King's College, Madree worked as a midwife at Lewisham Hospital until a well-earned retirement in 2009.

Around a decade earlier, her daughter, Carol-Ann, began training for a career as a mental health nurse – a path that has seen her rise to the role of Associate Director of the SEL Learning Disabilities and Autism programme.

Carol-Ann says: "Of course I knew my mum was a nurse but one of the

main motivations for coming into nursing was to help young people and that was why I chose mental health nursing. I felt that I was very fortunate having had a good upbringing with a loving extended family, and I knew a lot of people didn't have that."

Reflecting on the Windrush 75th anniversary coinciding with the NHS's 75th birthday, Madree says: "We built the NHS – cleaners and kitchen workers as well as the nurses. To be honest I never had bad experiences from colleagues – they treated me with respect and care. It was not all bad."



Madree (centre) with daughter Carol-Ann (right) and grand-daughter Arianna.



# Leaving Bedlam behind

Nurses at Bethlem Hospital take part in a tutorial in the hospital grounds.



Staff and patients enjoy sports day at Bethlem Hospital in 1957.



An image to accompany a journal article on ground-breaking brain surgery by Dr D L Davies in 1949.



Drawing of Maudsley Hospital around 1955.



Patients working at the former Bexley Mental Hospital.



Princess Alexandra was a regular visit to the Maudsley and Bethlem hospital sites. Here she learns about occupational therapy during a visit in 1971.

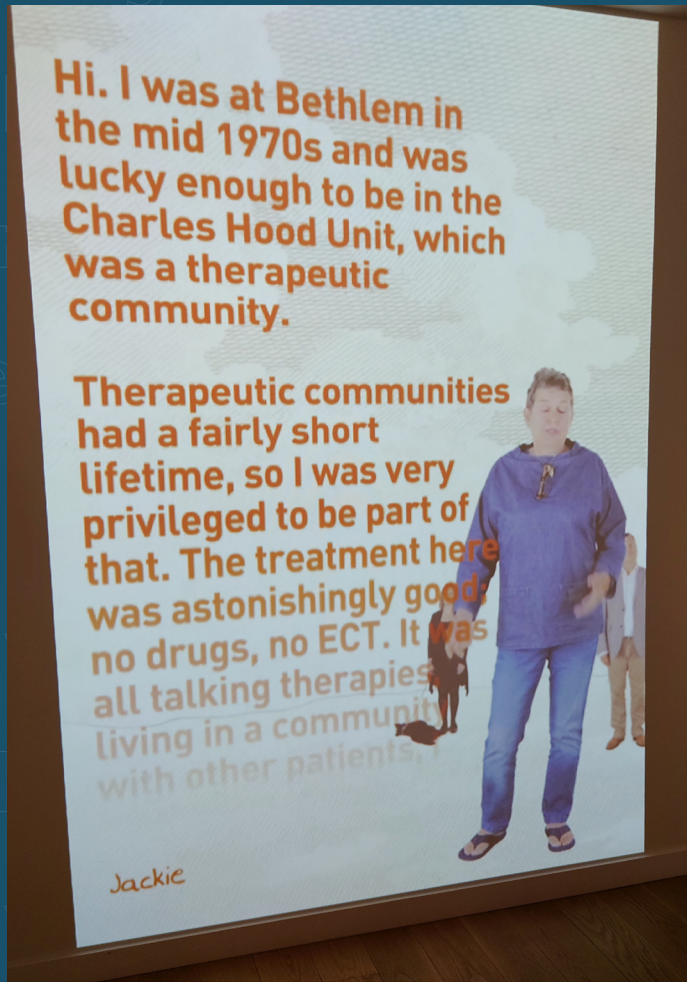


Bexley nurses' accommodation block at the old Bexley Mental Hospital.



The great and the good attend the opening of a drug unit in 1968.





A former patient seeks to dispel fears about mental health treatments in the 1970s.



A photo (posed by model) of a patient's room at the world-leading Pears Maudsley Centre for Children and Young People which opens in 2024.

# An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

A German nurse writing a letter in the 1955 silent film "A letter to Ann: A day in the life of a nurse at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup", filmed by a doctor.



Nurses at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup are rapt during a lecture in the 1960s.

Nurses and friends at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup following a prize giving in 1954.



Call the District Nurse: a district nurse in 1950s London shows it wasn't just midwives who employed a bicycle.



An increasingly professional and diverse workforce



A recruitment campaign photo showing the range of jobs available in the 1970s NHS.

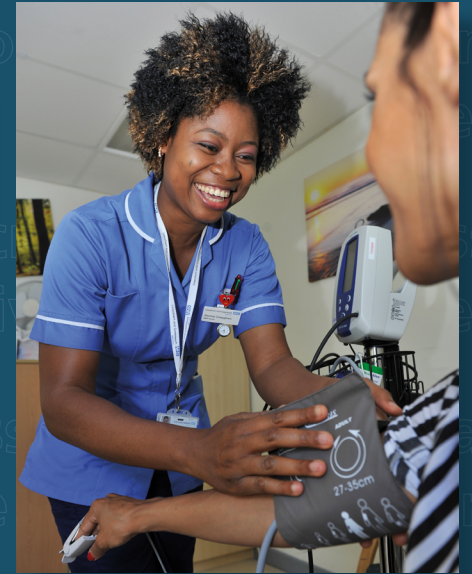
An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

Akunna Onwughara, a staff nurse at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust checks the blood pressure of a mum-to-be.



An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce



An Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust district nursing team pictured outside their base.



An increasingly professional and diverse workforce



Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust district nurses Nomsa (left) and Yasmin.

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

An increasingly professional and diverse workforce

Senior Nurse Shirley Patel appears eager to start the demolition of old residential accommodation at Queen Mary's Hospital Sidcup in 2000.



An increasingly professional and diverse workforce



# Historic hospitals thrive in the 21st century



In June 2023 Guy's and St Thomas' was the first Trust to employ the newest surgical robot. GSTT has the UK's largest robotic surgery programme.

Bromley toddler Isabella Dominguez, pictured with mum Chanel, couldn't move her arm until she benefitted from a pioneering rehabilitation programme at Evelina London Children's Hospital in 2022.



Ginny Wanjiro, an ICU sister at Guy's and St Thomas', launched a scheme in 2023 to care for the hair of seriously ill patients from diverse backgrounds and with all skin tones.



Where we've come from: A historical photo of the King's College Hospital administration block. All this time later King's remains a centre of excellence and innovation.



King's Hospital NHS Trust staff and patients enjoyed treats and ward parties around the coronation of King Charles III in May 2023. Queen Camilla was born at King's.



Dagmar Turner plays a violin while undergoing brain surgery at King's in 2020. This ensured the surgeon did not damage parts of the brain which control hand movement.

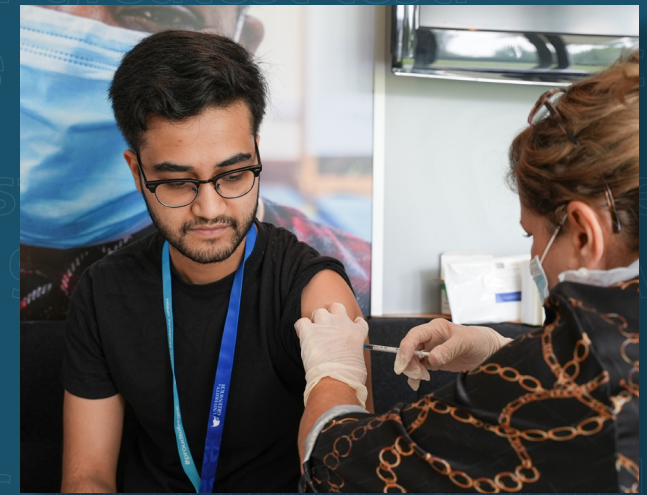


# Our greatest test: the Covid-19 pandemic



100 year old Ellen Prosser, a care home resident in Bexley known as Nell, receives the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine to be administered.

A happy helper at Kennington Montgomery Hall.



A Greenwich university student receives his Covid jab.





Sheikh Faisal Boaudi gets his Covid vaccination at a Lambeth centre.



Vaccinators take a break while vaccinating staff and residents at La Rosa care home in Streatham.



The vaccination team visit La Rosa care home in Streatham.



A vaccinator caught between patients at Streatham library.





A vaccination team member encourages shoppers at a shopping centre in Penge.



A boy is distracted before he receives a polio vaccine in Brixton - a reminder of the importance of the childhood immunisation programme, particularly after the pandemic.



In 2020, a year forever linked with the Covid-19 pandemic, Guy's and St Thomas' lit up the Houses of Parliament to celebrate the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. Florence established the world's first professional nursing school at the newly re-built St Thomas' Hospital in 1860.

## A word from our south east London MPs

“Throughout its 75 years, the NHS has always been there for me and my family, including when my wife, Ann-Louise, suffered a serious stroke in 2019. It’s recognised around the world for the excellent universal care it provides – no matter a patient’s means, background or creed - none of which would be possible without the dedicated staff that work tirelessly at every level of the organisation. We should be immensely proud - of what it achieves and what it stands for.”

Sir Bob Neill, MP for Bromley and Chislehurst



The NHS is one of our country’s greatest achievements. As we celebrate 75 years of the NHS caring for us and our loved ones from cradle to grave, we must make sure it is fit for the next 75 years and beyond. That’s why I will proudly use my voice in Parliament to stand up for our NHS and the principles which underpin it.

Janet Daby, MP for Lewisham East

As we mark 75 years of our fantastic NHS I want to thank everyone who has contributed to our health service in South East London and helped deliver world class patient care. I am so grateful for all of this work and want to recognise in particular the huge sacrifices made these last few years to combat and recover from the pandemic.

Ellie Reeves, MP for Lewisham West and Penge



On the 75th anniversary of our NHS, I am immensely proud and humbled by the unwavering dedication of NHS staff in Erith and Thamesmead, South East London, and throughout the UK. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the entire nation joins in expressing its continued gratitude and appreciation for our NHS and the doctors, nurses, and care workers who have made great personal sacrifices to safeguard our loved ones. Thank you and happy anniversary.

Abena Opong-Asare, MP for Erith and Thamesmead

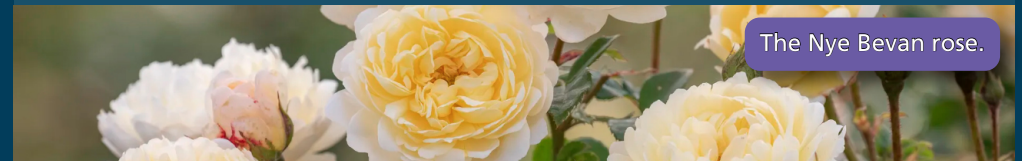
I would like to wish all patients and staff at our local excellent NHS services a Happy 75th Anniversary. Thank you for everything that you do to keep us healthy and looked after in our times of need, and as one of the local Members of Parliament, I look forward to continuing to work together to improve and support patient outcomes in South East London.

Louie French, MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup



Since 1948, the NHS has been at the centre of our national identity. As we celebrate its 75th anniversary, I would like to pay tribute to every member of staff in Lewisham Deptford and across the country who have worked tirelessly to provide us with high-quality publicly owned healthcare.

Vicky Foxcroft, MP for Lewisham Deptford



The Nye Bevan rose.



# With thanks to

Ian Wallman: [www.ianwallman.com](http://www.ianwallman.com)

London Metropolitan Archives

Bethlem Museum of the Mind

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

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