

Nursing and the NHS: a brief history

1948

5 July 1948: the National Health Service is launched at Park Hospital in Manchester (now known as Trafford General Hospital). The new NHS took control of 480,000 hospital beds in England and Wales, while an estimated 125,000 nurses and 5,000 consultants were available to care for hospital patients. However, there was also a shortage of an estimated 48,000 nurses.



Anatomy lesson, 1948

1950s

1950s: A large influx of nurses from the Caribbean starts to join the NHS workforce, as part of the so-called "Windrush" generation.

1950s: Introduction of tranquillisers transforms mental health nursing.

1951: Male nurses are merged into the main General Nursing Council register.

1956: The first nursing studies unit in the UK is established at the University of Edinburgh.

1959: The Mental Health Act 1959 abolishes the legal distinction between psychiatric and other hospitals.

1960s

1960: The first UK kidney transplant takes place at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

1962: Health minister Enoch Powell publishes *A Hospital Plan for England and Wales*. At its heart is the district general hospital, designed to provide a comprehensive range of inpatient and outpatient services to

populations of 100,000 to 150,000.

1966: The Salmon report paves the way for a new nurse grading structure, heralding the end of the old matron title and meaning every hospital would have a chief nursing officer.

1967: Nurse Dame Cicely Saunders sets up the first hospice.

1967: Termination of pregnancy becomes legal under the Abortion Act 1967.

1968: Surgeon Donald Ross carries out Britain's first heart transplant at the National Heart Hospital in Marylebone, London, on 3 May.



Nurses taking an emergency patient across a busy road from one side of Cirencester Memorial Hospital to the other, 1966



Measuring and weighing, 1972

1970s

1972: The Briggs report concludes that basic nurse training should be provided in clinical settings.

1972: The first computerised tomography (CT) scanners are introduced in the NHS.

1974: Jean McFarlane becomes the first professor of nursing at an English university.

1975: A Royal Commission on the NHS was set up to consider the "best use and management of the financial and manpower resources of the NHS". The Commission went on to recommend a simplification in the administration of the service.

1980s



Student nurse mentored at St George's Hospital, 1988

1983: The NHS Pay Review Body starts recommending national pay awards for nurses and other health service staff.



Checking intensive care unit drips at Ashford Hospital, 1998

1983: The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) replaces the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

1983: The Griffiths report calls for the appointment of general managers in the NHS and also recommends that clinicians should be more closely involved in management process.

1988: Routine breast screening for women over the age of 50 starts, with breast screening units around the country providing free mammograms.

1990s

1990: Nurse education undergoes a revolution with the advent of Project 2000. The new system ushers in supernumerary status for students, a non-means-tested bursary and an education focus on academic preparation over clinical experience.

1991: The first NHS trusts are established to make the service more responsive to the user at a local level. There are 57 in total.

1994: The NHS Organ Donor Register launches in October 1994.

1998: The nurse-led advice line NHS Direct launches across England and Wales, followed in 2001 in Scotland

by NHS 24. NHS Direct is controversially replaced in 2014 by NHS 111.

1999: The National Institute for Clinical Excellence – better known as NICE – is set up to reduce variation in the availability and quality of NHS treatments and care.

2000s

2000: The NHS Plan promises 20,000 extra nurses, over 100 new hospitals and 7,000 extra beds. Controversially, it leads to more private sector involvement in the NHS.

2002: The Nursing and Midwifery Council was created, replacing the UKCC.

2004: The Agenda for Change contract comes into force, harmonising pay and career progression across separate staff groups.

2008: The Darzi review aims to shift NHS emphasis from increasing care quantity to improving quality.

2009: Gordon Brown launches the Prime Minister's Commission on the Future



Technology in Southampton University Hospital, 2003

of Nursing and Midwifery, with the aim of giving nurses more control of services and the direction of policy.

2010s



Nursing Times cancer nurse of the year, Helen Stradling, 2010

2012: Andrew Lansley's controversial Health and Social Care Act is passed, replacing primary care trusts with clinical commissioning groups that give GPs power over funding local services.

2013: The hard-hitting Francis report is published on the care scandal at Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust, making 290 recommendations.

2014: The *NHS Five Year Forward View* is published by NHS England. It sets out a future vision of the NHS based around the new models of care.

2014: The first strike over NHS pay in 32 years is held by nurses. Midwives also strike for the first time. The action follows a government decision not to introduce a 1% blanket pay increase for all NHS staff against a backdrop of increasing financial difficulties.

2016: The number of nurses and midwives on the NMC's register reaches a peak of 692,556 in March, before beginning to fall. It has previously increased in size year on year since 2013.

2016: Following the European Union referendum, nurse applicants from countries in Europe crash by 96% due to uncertainty around Brexit.

2017: The first group of 1,000 trainee nursing associates begin two-year programmes, marking the government's creation of a new role bridging the gap between healthcare assistants and nurses.

2017: The government abolishes the student nurse bursary in England, sparking a 23% reduction in the number of applicants to nursing degree courses.



Specialist eating disorders service, Phoenix Wing, 2015

2018: NHS unions accept a 6.5% pay rise over three years in England and a 9% pay rise in Scotland.

2018: Prime minister Theresa May promises a new 10-year plan for the NHS and says it will receive an average 3.4% funding increase annually from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

2018: The NHS celebrates its 70th birthday and a major nurse recruitment campaign is launched.

2018