

The History of the English *National Health Service (NHS)*

Many millions of people would not be alive today or lived for as long without the healthcare provided by the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK). The NHS provides safe, good quality and cost effective healthcare to 64+ million men, women and children in the UK.

The core principles of the NHS are:

- A safe and good quality healthcare service that meets the acute and long-term needs of patients and their families.
- A healthcare system that is free at the point of use and is paid for by taxation.
- A healthcare system that is cost effective and aspires to the highest standards of care, leadership and research.
- A healthcare system that values working together for patients, respecting patients and protecting their dignity, values commitment to quality care that is compassionate, that helps patients improve their lives and where everyone counts.

The NHS in England is different than that in Wales and Scotland due to different political systems and funding arrangements.

This document discusses the history of the English NHS only and details the main historical events. The author has written this document out of curiosity, wanting to learn more about the history of the NHS. He is a qualified and registered Nurse and is a supporter of the NHS and its core principles.

The author has undertaken many hours of reading and research in order to complete this document, a bibliography can be found at the end of the document. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, however the author cannot say with complete certainty that there are no errors in this document.

The history of the NHS is important to know. Here are the main events in a timeline ordered by year:

Event	
1858	▪ The Medical Act (1858) legislation is passed and commenced. It establishes the General Council of Medication Education and Registration of the United Kingdom. This later becomes the General Medical Council (GMC).
1916	▪ The Royal Sanitary Institute (later known as the Royal Society of Public Health) begins overseeing courses that qualify Health Visitors. This is later taken over by the Ministry of Health in 1925.
1945	▪ Health Visitors are now required to be registered Nurses or Midwives, have an appropriate Health Visiting qualification and post-registration experience working as part of a primary healthcare team.
1948	▪ 7 th April 1948 – World Health Organization (WHO) ‘Constitution’ comes into being.
5 th July 1948	▪ Health Secretary Aneurin Bevan launches the National Health Service (NHS). The principle is for healthcare provided for all, free at the point of use and paid for by taxation. Despite it being post-war Britain, with difficult economic times, the health of the nation is seen as a priority.
1949	▪ The Nurses Act 1949 legislation is passed and commenced. Rules set out by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales (later the UKCC and later the NMC) must be adhered to by all Nurses. All Nurses must be registered with the Council and pay registration fees. Males Nurses are registered on a separate registration list to

female Nurses. Regional nursing training committees are also created.

- Aureomycin, Chloromycetin and Streptomycin antibiotics become available.
- Antihistamines drugs that inhibit the physiological effects of histamines become available for the treatment of mild allergic responses.

- 1951**
- Male Nurses are added to the main registration list by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales (later the UKCC and later the NMC).
 - ‘Maternal Care and Mental Health’ report by John Bowlby is published by the World Health Organization’s (WHOs). It focuses on the mental health of homeless children in post-war Europe.

- 1952**
- Prescription charges introduced for dental treatments, spectacles and medication.
 - The Great Smog - thousands die in London due to air pollution. See 1956 for information about The Clean Air Act (1956).
 - College of General Practitioners is established.

- 1953**
- DNA is discovered by Watson and Crick.
 - Nuffield publish a report on the work of nurses in hospital wards.

- 1954**
- The link between smoking and cancer is made for the first time.
 - Daily visits to children in hospital wards are introduced.
 - The first kidney transplant is successfully undertaken. The donor is the identical twin of the recipient.
 - A comprehensive review of General Practitioners (GPs) practice is undertaken. It identifies that access to GPs varies significantly dependant upon the geographical area. This leads to GPs being offered interest-free loans by the Treasury to encourage more independent GP group practices to form.

- 1955**
- Ultrasound scans begin to be used during pregnancy.

- 1956**
- The Clean Air Act (1956) legislation is passed and commenced. The driver behind this legislation is the death rates during The Great Smog of 1952. This Act reduces air pollution and leads to better health.
 - The Guillebaud Report (1956) is published. The inquiry looks at the NHS’ expenditure. It finds no inefficiency in the NHS’ expenditure and recommends no structural changes to the NHS. It reports that there has been a reduction in NHS expenditure. It recommended investment of £30 million per year for 7 years (1956-1963) for hospital modernisation and to support additional costs caused by an aging population. The government of the day is trying to save money and continues to seek savings in NHS expenditure.

- 1957**
- A government committee is set up to examine the supply of doctors in the NHS. The committee states that there are too many doctors and cuts the numbers being trained by 12%. This is soon realised to be a disaster and in 1961 a doctor training places are increased by 10%.
 - The Percy Commission report (1957) states that patients with mental health problems and/or learning disabilities who can be supported to live safely in the community should do rather than living in institutions as they are at present.
 - At this time ‘mental health conditions’ (including learning disabilities) are the largest area of NHS spending.

- 1958**
- Vaccinations for Polio and Diphtheria commenced.
 - The first medication to reduce high blood pressure becomes available.
 - The Platt Report on the welfare of children in hospital is published. Its main recommendation is allowing parents to visit their children whenever they can. Daily visits to children in hospital wards were introduced in 1954.

- 1959**
- The Mental Health Act (1959) encourages care and treatment to be given on a voluntary/informal basis, as much as possible, and sets out a new system of safeguards where involuntary/formal care and treatment is needed.
 - The Mental Health Act (1959) also instigates the closure of large psychiatric hospitals/institutions, being replaced by community service provision.

- 1960**
 - Pay is poor, especially for doctors. Doctors and the Government are in a dispute over pay. The Conservative Government threaten a 'phased withdrawal from the NHS.' A Royal Commission is appointed to help settle this dispute. The Royal Commission recommends an independent reviewing body for deciding doctors and dentists pay.
 - The Royal College of Nurses (RCN) admits male Nurses for the first time.
 - The tranquilliser 'Librium' becomes available.
- 1961**
 - Contraceptive pill for women becomes available.
 - Antibiotic Ampicillin becomes available.
 - The Human Tissue Act (1961) legislation is passed and commenced. It sets out guidance for the use of dead bodies either in components or whole in medical and/or educational research.
 - Committee on Safety of Drugs (later renamed Committee on Safety of Medicines) proposed. It comes into being in 1964 and requires that all new drugs and preparations should be submitted to the committee.
- 1962**
 - The Hospital Plan approves the development of District General Hospitals under a 10-year plan. The plan underestimates the time and expense of building new hospitals.
 - The first full hip replacement is successfully completed at Wrightington Hospital.
 - Outbreaks of Smallpox.
- 1963**
 - First liver transplant successfully undertaken.
- 1964**
 - Committee on Safety of Drugs (later renamed Committee on Safety of Medicines) established. See 1961 for more information about the Committee.
- 1965**
 - Family Doctor Charter is published and highlights that GPs feel underpaid and that practices require more financial resources. This leads to a new contract being negotiated between GPs and the Government.
 - Ban on TV advertising for cigarettes and tobacco comes into force.
- 1966**
 - 70% of babies are now delivered in hospitals.
 - Measles vaccine becomes available.
- 1967**
 - The Abortion Act (1967) legislation is passed and commenced. It makes abortion legal up to 28 weeks in pregnancy for all women. Previously abortions could only be completed if the pregnant woman's life was in danger.
 - World Health Organization (WHO) starts campaign to eradicate Smallpox.
 - The Cogwheel Report (1967) encourages hospital doctors to become more involved in the management of hospitals.
- 1968**
 - The first successful heart transplant is undertaken in the National Heart Hospital, London.
 - Royal College of Nurses (RCN) begins to admit Student Nurses.
- 1969**
 - The establishment of Social Services Departments in local authorities takes place. This is recommended by The Seebohm Report (1969), which states that children's, elderly and mental health services should all be integrated into one family services service.
- 1971**
 - The Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) legislation is passed and commenced. It identifies illegal drugs into 3 classes: Class A, Class B and Class C. It gives potential legal consequences for each class, differentiating between possession and supply. Substance Misuse is seen as a police issue, rather than being a health issue.
- 1972**
 - The first Computerised Tomography (CT) scanner is developed and the first CT scan is successfully completed.
 - Cochrane's Report is published. This report emphasises the importance of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) to assess the effectiveness of treatments given in clinical research trails.
- 1973**
 - The NHS Reorganisation Act (1973) legislation is passed and commenced. The act restructures the NHS with the aim of better coordination between health authorities and local authorities.
 - The 'Management arrangements for the reorganised NHS' document is published,

which is also known as the 'Grey Book.' This sets out a highly prescriptive management structure that must be used and even details specifications for all roles within the structure.

- 1974
 - Control of Pollution Act (1974) legislation is passed and commenced. It makes provision for hygienic waste disposal and prevention/reduction of pollution in the water and air. Although not a piece of direct healthcare legislation, it helps make the population healthier.
 - Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) legislation is passed and commenced. It sets out the responsibilities of both employers and employees in ensuring the workplace is as healthy and safe as possible. The Health and Safety Executive along with local authorities are responsible for enforcement of the act.
 - The Halsbury Committee publish a review. It recommends an increase of pay for Nurses and Midwives by up to 40%. It recommends grading and pay structures for Nurses and Midwives to be integrated. For the first time, the role of 'Sisters' – Senior Nurses – on hospital wards is recognised and it recommends extra remuneration for them.
- 1975
 - Endorphins are discovered by Hughes and Kosterlitz.
 - Whole body Computerised Tomography (CT) scans can be undertaken.
 - The Merrison Report makes several recommendations about the role of the General Medical Council (GMC) in the regulation of postgraduate medical education. Its recommendations are not implemented, but the report does lead to the creation of the Education Committee in the GMC.
- 1976
 - Cimetidine is made available for the treatment of stomach ulcers after being discovered in 1971.
 - 'Sharing resources for health in England' report is published. It is a systematic attempt to address the inequality of funding between different geographical areas. Prior to this report, funding was allocated based on population size, meaning that geographical areas with large populations but lower health needs were getting more funding than those with smaller populations but higher health needs. The report suggests a model where funding for health should be linked to local mortality rates. This model is used from 1977 to 1990 and successfully achieves a more balanced funding.
- 1978
 - The first In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) baby is born in the UK; it is the first IVF baby in the world.
 - The Medical Regulation Act (1978) legislation is passed and commenced. It extends the GMC's functions and sets out disciplinary processes for doctors whose performance is unsafe or impaired due to their own ill health.
 - The World Health Assembly state that access to basic healthcare is a human right and sets out specific targets that it would like to see met by the year 2000.
 - The Government is experiencing financial difficulties as a result of an oil crisis. They propose to impose a pay freeze on NHS Staff. The response of NHS Staff is widespread strikes. This is later known as the 'Winter of Discontent.' It ends in 1979.
 - **On 5th July 1978 it is the 30th anniversary of the launch of the NHS.**
- 1979
 - The first Bone Marrow Transplant is successfully completed at Great Ormond Street Hospital.
 - The Royal Commission publishes the 'Patients first' priorities report. It suggests removing some tiers of Management within the NHS, the creation of new authorities, involving GPs and Consultants in management processes and that other professionals working in the NHS should have better communication with management, so that they can have their say and make suggestions.

- 1980
 - The first Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan is successfully completed.
 - The first keyhole surgery is successfully completed, removing a gallbladder from a patient.
 - The Black Report is published. It details the inequality of healthcare that exists across

different social classes, with poorer people more likely to die prematurely. It evidences that the gap between social classes is widening. This report was commissioned by a Labour Government and later published under a Conservative Government which limited its circulation.

- 1981** ▪ The first case of AIDS is diagnosed in the UK.
- 1982** ▪ The NHS is reorganised with the aim of simplifying its structure. The key change is the abolishment of Area Health Authorities (AHAs).
- 1983** ▪ The Mental Health Act (1983) legislation is passed and commenced. It outlines the assessment and treatment of patients with mental health difficulties. It includes detaining patients in hospital against their wishes when they are at a significant risk of harming themselves or others.
 - The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) is set up, replacing the former General Nursing Council for England. This later becomes the Nursing & Midwifery Council (in 2002).
 - The Griffiths Report (1983) is published. It was commissioned to look at staff efficiencies and other resources within the NHS. The Griffiths Report reinforces management need and function and leads to some managers getting significant pay increases.
 - The Resuscitation Council (UK) is set up. Its aims are to develop guidelines for resuscitation procedures, to teach these procedures, to establish and maintain standards, to study resuscitation techniques & technology, to encourage research and to publish training aids and literature.
- 1984** ▪ GPs prescribing of drugs limited to an agreed list of drugs agreed by the Secretary of State Norman Fowler (a Conservative Government is in power) to save money. It is estimated that by limiting GPs prescribing £75 million is saved.
- 1985** ▪ The World Health Organization (WHO) sets targets for the health of all Europeans (including the British) that it hopes to be met by the year 2000. These targets are wide ranging and include better opportunities for the disabled, reducing disease and disability, elimination of specific diseases, increasing life expectancy, reducing infant & maternal mortality, cancer care, accident care and reducing suicides.
- 1986** ▪ AIDS Health Campaign – It uses shock tactics such as a TV advert with images of tombstones and is followed by a leaflet to every household advising people to “Don’t die of ignorance.”
 - Project 2000 is launched. Its aim is to move nursing education into universities. It wasn’t as successful as the Government had hoped due to lack of financial resources, rejection of academic study by Student Nurses, a feeling that the old way of training was better (learning on the ward as part of the team) by Nurses, a feeling that those who went through the Project 2000 programme were not competent to deliver care and treatments by both nurses and management, and the expansion and rise in uptake of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
 - The ‘Neighbourhood nursing: A focus for care’ Green Paper is published. It looks at reforming primary health care. The paper suggests additional payments to GP who offer specific services and the creation of healthcare one-stop shops.
- 1987** ▪ The ‘Promoting better health’ White Paper suggests patient choice should be increased in Pharmacy and Nurse services. This White Paper forms the basis for new GP contracts in 1990 with GPs being paid extra for health promotion work, screening and other preventative actions.
 - Needle exchange services begin to be set up for injecting drug users (IDUs)– after a study reveals that a high number IDUs had contracted HIV by sharing needles and other injecting equipment.
- 1988** ▪ Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination introduced.
 - Breast Cancer screening introduced. Women are offered mammograms.
 - Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announces a NHS review on BBC television programme *Panorama*. This announcement is unexpected and surprises those who

work in the NHS, as well as members of the public.

- Cows with ‘mad cow disease’ (BSE - Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) are slaughtered and incinerated.

- 1989**
- The Children Act (1989) legislation is passed and commenced. It outlines duties for local authorities and courts. It outlines parental responsibilities. The Act is aimed at ensuring children’s welfare is safeguarded.
 - Hepatitis C virus is discovered.
 - The ‘Working for patients (NHS reforms)’ White Paper is published. It proposes the introduction of a split between purchasers (commissioners) and providers of care (hospital and community services). This is the start of an internal NHS market that is state-financed.

- 1990**
- The abortion limit is reduced to 24 weeks.
 - The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990) legislation is passed and commenced. It sets out that embryos can only be used for specific research purposes. It requires scientists and other researchers to gain approval from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority for any research involving embryos.
 - The NHS Community Care Act (1990) legislation is passed and commenced. Health Authorities have their own budgets and purchase healthcare from hospitals, other health trusts and other providers. This is the introduction of a split between purchasers (commissioners) and providers of care (hospital and community services). This is the start of the internal NHS market. The most significant reform is that some GPs become fund-holders, meaning that they are the purchasers of services for their patients.
 - GPs agree new contracts (see 1987) with the Government.

- 1991**
- The ‘Health of the nation’ White Paper is published. It identifies a number of areas that need improving within the NHS including: cancer care, coronary heart disease care, mental health care and care of those with HIV/AIDS.
 - The Patient’s Charter is published. It outlines the rights of patients to receive quality care and includes targets for waiting times and hospital treatment.
 - British beef declared safe after ‘mad cow disease’ of 1988. See 1988 for more information about ‘mad cow disease.’

- 1993**
- National Blood Authority is established.

- 1994**
- Organ Donor Registration scheme is set up and begins operation.
 - Provider performance targets are introduced. These targets are based off the targets for waiting times and hospital treatment outlined in The Patient’s Charter (see 1991).
 - The NHS is reorganised. The number of regional Health Authorities is reduced from 14 to 8.

- 1995**
- The Health Authorities Act (1995) leads to a new policy framework for commissioning cancer services. This means that cancer services are reorganised.

- 1996**
- NHS electronic network starts. Computers are still a rarity on hospital wards and in community settings; paper notes are still widely used at this time.
 - The Office for National Statistics is established.

- 1997**
- The NHS Primary Care Act (1997) legislation is passed and commenced. It encourages GP practices to increase flexibility and choice.
 - A Labour Government come to power and ‘The new NHS: Modern, dependable’ White Paper is published. It aims to replace the internal market system with a more cooperative and integrated system, yet still maintains the purchaser-provider split.

- 1998**
- NHS Direct telephone advice line is setup. This will later become the 111 NHS telephone service.
 - The Human Rights Act (1998) legislation is passed and commenced. It covers every resident person in the UK and sets out rights and freedoms that every person should expect. The rights in this legislation are based on the European Convention on Human Rights.

- The Acheson Inquiry identifies continuing health inequalities. The Labour Government focuses on tackling health inequalities by revising targets to reduce infant mortality and increase life expectancy. These targets are set out in Public Service Agreements between the Department of Health and the Treasury.

- 1999**
- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is set up and begins developing evidenced-based guidance, pathways and service standards.
 - The Royal Commission recommends that all nursing and personal care provided to old people both in nursing homes and in their own homes in the community should be free, financed by taxation. The Government responds with The NHS Plan in 2000 with a significantly reduced version of the Royal Commissions recommendations.
 - The NHS is reorganised. GPs, nurses and other workers come together under a new system of Primary Care Groups (PCGs) that commission care services on behalf of their communities.
 - The Department of Health publishes 'Saving lives: Our healthier nation' report. It outlines targets for improving public health around cancer, coronary heart disease, strokes, accidents and mental illness. It focuses on health inequality and the financial, social and environmental causes of ill health.
 - The Health Act (1999) legislation is passed and commenced. It sets up the Commission for Healthcare Improvement. The Commission for Healthcare Improvement is the first organisation to assess the performance of NHS hospitals.

- 2000**
- Walk-In Centres are introduced to reduce pressure on A&E Departments and GP Surgeries.
 - The NHS Plan is published (see 1999 for further details). The plan sets out a strategy for increasing the number of doctors, nurses and hospital beds. It details infrastructure funding – planning for 100 hospital buildings by 2010. It sets out a new focus on performance targets and aims to reduce waiting times.
 - Prime Minister Tony Blair commits to investing a large amount of money in the NHS.

- 2001**
- The National Service Framework policies are published detailing the standards of care across a wide range of medical issues such as cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, mental health, old age, children & young people, woman's services, etc.
 - The Health and Social Care Act (2001) legislation is passed and commenced. It formalises in law the commitments made in The NHS Plan (see 1999 & 2000 for further details). It allows the Secretary of State to give permission to private companies to provide services formally exclusively provided by the NHS. It allows these private companies to employ doctors, nurses and other clinical care staff.
 - The first of a number of attempts to measure the quality of care delivered in NHS hospitals. The system star rates hospitals, it is changed ever year to try and improve accuracy, until it is scrapped in 2005.
 - Treatment for Substance Misuse drops from two months to less than a week. Treatment for substance misuse includes psychological therapies and/or pharmacological interventions. It is estimated that for every £1 spent on substance misuse treatment services, £2.50 is saved in reduced costs associated with crime and health.
 - Inquiry into the case of Victoria Climbié, a child who was murdered by her 'aunt.' This case was so severe and there were so many missed opportunities by professionals to save her. It prompted the largest review of child protection procedures in the UK's history. As a result a publication entitled 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' is published, safeguarding and child protection training is delivered regularly to all professionals (including NHS Staff), local children's safeguarding boards (LCSBs) are set up and information sharing is encouraged. Unfortunately it will not be the last child protection case that highlights missed opportunities, issues around communication and/or policies and procedures not being followed.

- 2002**
- First successful gene therapy is undertaken at Great Ormond Street, London.

- National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professionals Act (2002) legislation is passed and commenced. It leads to another NHS reorganisation. The White Paper 'Shifting the balance of power' sees the abolishment of District Health Authorities, which are replaced by Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).
- The UKCC becomes the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).
- Pilot of 'free choice' meaning that patients who are on a waiting list for more than 6 months can opt to see private providers, paid for by the NHS.
- A&E Departments across the country are given a 4 hour see and treat target and fines are introduced for hospitals that are not meeting this target.
- A national NHS IT programme is launched, with major investment being put into IT infrastructure and training. £18 billion is invested over 10-years (2002-2012), so that the NHS can complete more work electronically.
- 'Securing our future: Taking a long-term view' report is published. It looks at the funding requirements of the NHS. It reports that the cost of the NHS in the future will depend on the demand for healthcare and that this can be reduced by good public health policies and disease prevention. This report leads to a 50% real-terms increase in spending on the NHS over the 5 years after its publication (2002-2007).

- 2003**
- A new contract for GPs & Consultants in Hospitals is negotiated by the Government. The new contract means more autonomy for GP practices, doctors having more time with patients and supplementary pay for achieving standards set out in the Quality and Outcome Framework. The new contracts mean increases in pay and pensions doctors.
 - NHS Staff vote in favour of the Agenda for Change policy. NHS Staff receive increases in pay and changes to working conditions. It is hoped that the increased pay and changes to working conditions will lead to increased recruitment and longer retention of NHS Staff. Agenda for Change aims to modernise the NHS.
 - Another NHS reorganisation. The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act (2003) legislation is passed and commenced. It provides for the establishment of NHS Foundation Trusts. Foundation Trusts are more autonomous, but not all politicians' think that they are the way forward. At the time, a Labour Government is in power, with Prime Minister Tony Blair. 65 Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) vote against this legislation.
 - Every child matters Green Paper outlines 5 outcomes wanted for every child by the Labour Government in Power. They are for every child to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution and to achieve economic well-being. These outcomes are ambitious and are shared and spread across different Government Departments.
 - The Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act (2003) legislation creates two new NHS inspectorate bodies: The Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection and the Commission for Social Care Inspection.
 - All cigarette and tobacco advertising is banned.

- 2004**
- The Healthcare Commission takes over the roles of the former Commission for Healthcare Improvement.
 - The Children Act (2004) amends the Children Act (1989) following the Victoria Climbié inquiry. It brings all local government functions around welfare and education under local Directors of Children's Services. It also creates ContactPoint, a database that listed all children and any professionals involved with them and/or their families. It was intended to aid information sharing, but it was expensive to set up and run. It was also criticised for being underused and ineffective. It is shut down in 2010.
 - The Government's White Paper 'Choosing health' is published. It details plans for involving GP practices in commissioning of services. It promotes individual responsibility for health especially around issues such as smoking, obesity, diet and nutrition, exercise and sexual health. It supports the concepts of individual choice, personalised services and coordinated working between both the public and private

- sectors.
- The start of ‘payment by results’ contracts.
- 2005**
- Mental Capacity Act (2005) legislation is passed and commenced. It states that capacity to consent to or decline treatment should be assumed for anyone 16 year old and older. If capacity to consent is in doubt a Capacity Assessment should be undertaken.
 - Expansion of Nurse and Pharmacist prescribing.
 - End of the system that gives star ratings to hospitals, see 2001 for details on the star rating system introduction.
- 2006**
- Bowl Cancer screening introduced.
 - Vaccinations for Pneumococcal Meningitis commenced.
 - Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme launched for adults, meaning that adults can get easier and quicker access to talking therapies for mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety disorders.
 - Another NHS reorganisation. Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) are reduced from 28 to 10. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are reduced from 303 to 152.
 - The White Paper ‘Our health, our care, our say’ is published. It encourages patient choice, more care delivered by community services and less care delivered by hospitals.
- 2007**
- NHS Choices Website launched. Provides a wide range of articles and videos about all aspects of physical and mental health.
 - The Conservative party propose reforms in their published ‘NHS autonomy and accountability: Proposals for legislation’ White Paper. It sets out their vision for the NHS of the future. Proposals include: the scrapping of a target-driven culture, a reduction in red tape, giving patients the power to decide how and where they should be treated, to give the day-to-day management of the NHS to an independent board and put senior doctors in charge of how the NHS spends its money. The paper pledges that if elected into government, patients will be able to choose which hospital to be treated at, whether the hospital is a NHS one or one in the private sector, providing that the care delivered is at or below the NHS cost. At the time, a Labour Government is in power.
 - A smoking ban in England comes into effect, meaning that smokers can no longer smoke indoors and outdoors at certain places (i.e. outdoors on hospital grounds, on playgrounds at schools, etc.). The use of outdoor smoking shelters becomes widespread.
- 2008**
- Patients are given ‘free choice’ meaning that when they are referred to a Specialist from their GP, the patient can choose from any hospital or clinic that operates within NHS standards.
 - Vaccinations for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) commenced.
 - A series of reports are published by Lord Darzi which undertake a major review of the NHS and to set out a 10-year vision for the NHS. This vision includes reconfiguration (what would be another reorganisation & reform) of hospitals, centralising specialist services and polyclinics (large community facilities providing a much wider range of service than those offered by most GP practices).
- 2009**
- The NHS Constitution is published and sets out the rights and responsibilities for patients and staff. Included in The NHS Constitution are 7 principles on how the NHS should act and make decisions, 6 core values, a number of pledges to patients and staff and a list of rights and responsibilities for both patients and staff.
 - The Care Quality Commission (CQC), a new independent regulator for England comes into being. This organisation is a merger of three regulators: the Healthcare Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Mental Health Act Commission.
 - Sir David Nicolson, the NHS Chief Executive warns the NHS to prepare for efficiency savings of £15-£20 billion over three years (between 2011-2014).

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- 2010**
- Equality Act (2010) legislation is passed and commenced. It protects people against discrimination on the grounds race, gender, being transgendered, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, being pregnant or just had a baby, being married or single, age and for being a carer. It applies to all healthcare settings. Various NHS organisations begin Equality Impact Assessments – although these are not required by the legislation.
 - A Labour Government publish ‘Building the National Care Service’ White Paper focusing on the future of health and social care funding, keeping the ethos of services being delivered free at the point of need. However the White Paper doesn’t clarify how this would be funded and a few weeks later Labour loose office to a Coalition Government made up of Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs.
 - The Coalition Government in power decides to undertake austerity and cut funding. They exempt the NHS from funding cuts, but state that the NHS still has to achieve the efficiency saving targets set by the previous Labour Government.
 - The Coalition Government shuts down the child protection database ContactPoint (for more information see 2004).
 - The Coalition Government release ‘Equity and excellent: Liberating the NHS’ White Paper. It outlines another reform. It includes proposals such as: giving groups of GPs budgets to buy care, abolishing all Strategic Health Authorities & (SHAs) Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), creating a new NHS Commissioning Board, ending performance targets – including those for waiting times and transforming an organisation named Monitor into an NHS financial regulator. Critics voice concerns about the scale and pace of the changes to the NHS, at a time when healthcare demand is at an all time high and that there is an aging population.
 - Psychoactive substance ‘mephedrone,’ which mimics the effects of ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamine is being sold online and in head shops. Its use dramatically increases and it is banned.

- 2011**
- A proposed ‘Health and Social Care Bill’ is being debated in the media with a lot of criticism. Prime Minister David Cameron pauses the progression of the bill to undertake a ‘listening exercise.’
 - The Commission for Funding of Care and Support proposes a means-tested support system for care, with a lifetime cap of the costs of care that every individual can expect to pay. This proposal would lead to an additional cost to the taxpayer and where the money would come from is debated.
 - A pay freeze on all NHS Staff, as well as other public sector staff is commenced.

- 2012**
- The Health and Social Care Act (2012) legislation is passed and commenced. The pace of change is quick and although clusters of GP practices, nurses, other professionals and patients are supposed to come together to form Commissioning groups; for a while there is chaos in the NHS as providers are unsure who is commissioning which services. As time passes, some GPs pass their commissioning responsibilities to local authorities. The legislation also removes the overall responsibility for health from the Health Secretary.
 - NHS doctors strike for the first time in 40 years due to Government proposals to make major changes to NHS pensions.
 - Care and Support White Paper published. It announces measures around care for older people including: improving access to care, ensuring a smooth transition for people who move to different geographical areas, more support for carers, the aim to have better and consistently good care and encouragement of integration of different support services.
 - The Government publishes its objectives and expectations for the NHS in its first Mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board. Included are improving health for older people and those with long-term conditions, that mental health should be given the same priority as physical health and that decision making should be done on a local level. The Mandate was criticised for lacking detail about how it was going to achieve its objectives.

- The NHS is celebrated in the Olympic Opening Ceremony in London. British film & theatre director Danny Boyle is responsible for the Olympic Opening Ceremony performance that captivates the world.

- 2013**
- Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are abolished with their functions passed to NHS England. 211 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are formed, which are groups of GP practices coming together to commission health services. CCGs are supported by Commissioning Support Units (CSUs) and as time passes, some GPs pass their commissioning responsibilities to local authorities.
 - Public Health England is created. It is responsible for providing advice and influencing public health issues. Public health funding is returned to local authorities, but at a time of significant cuts to local authorities' budgets.
 - The Government announces funding reforms for care and support based on the proposals made by the Commission in 2011 (see 2011 for more details about what the Commission proposed).
 - An agreement between the Department of Health and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry is reached on the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme. This means that most medicines bills for the NHS will stay at flat rate over the next 2 years and then grow slowly after that. If NHS spending exceeds the growth rate then the pharmaceutical industry would make payments to the Department of Health.
 - Currently 75% of new student nurses completes higher diploma level nursing qualifications, with only 25% completing degree level qualifications. However the Coalition Government now requires all student nurses to undertake the degree level qualifications. Critics expect this to have a major impact on nurse training; higher diploma level student nurses get their tuition fees paid and are given a small grant to cover living expenses by the NHS. Degree student nurses will get their tuition fees and a much smaller means tested grant to some cover living expenses by the NHS.
 - **On 5th July 2013 it is the 65th anniversary of the launch of the NHS.**

- 2014**
- An independent international study finds that the NHS is the most cost effective healthcare system in the world.
 - The Five Year Forward View report is published detailing how the NHS needs to change in the next 5 years if it is to reduce health inequalities, improve quality of care and meet the £30 billion gap in funding by 2020/2021.
 - A number of NHS health trusts/organisations from across the country report financial deficits, or that they are likely to go into financial deficit without additional funding.
 - The media report that 66 A&E and maternity units in the NHS have been closed or downgraded, this at a time of ever increasing demand for emergency and maternity care.
 - The Coalition Government is still in power. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne give an addition £2 billion in the Autumn budget, but only after reports in the media of a number of hospital NHS trusts already being in deficit and after mounting media pressure about the Conservatives not increasing funding to the NHS like they had promised in their pre-election manifesto.

- 2015**
- A general election is looming. The Labour party set out their 10-year plan for the NHS. It promises 36,000 additional NHS staff and to repeal the legislation that will allow/is slowly allowing the NHS to be privatised. The Conservative party set out their pledges for the NHS in their manifesto. It pledges 7-day access to GPs, 5,000 more GPs and at least £8 billion a year of additional funding to the NHS by 2020. Labour doesn't win the general election, the Conservative party do.
 - Junior doctors strike after the Conservative Government threatens to make changes to doctor's contracts. Junior doctors strike because politician's want to remove fines for NHS health trusts that overwork their doctors – meaning that the NHS would become unsafe due to doctors being exhausted and overworked; because politicians want to make all day & evening on a Saturday part of their regular working week (meaning that doctors wouldn't get any extra increment/extra pay for working Saturdays) and

because despite what the government say that they believe they will end up being paid less.

- Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt states that the driver behind the contract changes that he wants to impose are so that the NHS becomes a 7-day service. Junior doctors point out through social media posts, photos and videos that the NHS is already a 7-day service.
- Junior doctors are angry that Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt because he is refusing to talk and negotiate with their union (the British Medical Association); because he is lying, claiming that more people die at weekends than during the week due to a lack of senior doctors and sourcing a particular research study (the authors of this study come out and publicly say that this was not the outcome of their study); and because he attempts to belittle, demean and demonise junior doctors to the public. However there is widespread support for junior doctors among the public and in the media.
- Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne announces in his Spending Review that £600 million of the NHS' £8 billion extra funding will come by cutting funding to public health.
- The Treasury proposes that student nurses pay their own tuition fees. Previously student nurse tuition fees have been paid by the NHS to aid recruitment and make going into nursing study more affordable.
- Greater Manchester decides to merge health and social care budgets and services as part of devolution.

- 2016**
- Monitor and the Trust Development Authority merge to become NHS Improvement, which has a regulatory role with NHS Trusts.
 - Sustainability and Transformation Plans are developed locally. £2.1 billion has been provided to support the activities developed within these plans in the first year alone.
 - Psychoactive Substances Act (2016) legislation is passed and commenced. It covers anything that could have a 'psychoactive' affect. Alkyl Nitrates ('poppers') are made except at the last minute. Strangely possession of a psychoactive substance will not be an offence unless in a custodial institution (prison or young offenders institute). But supply and production will be an offence.

The English NHS has been reformed, reorganised and restructured on numerous occasions, all seemingly driven by politician's interest, rather than clinical need. The cost of these reforms, reorganisations and restructures has never been identified either beforehand or afterwards. What seems to be lacking in these reforms, reorganisations and restructures is input from doctors, nurses and other professionals that work in the NHS or the views of patients and their families.

Moving forward, the author hopes that the NHS becomes seen as too important to keep reforming, reorganising and restructuring. The author hopes for less political input and that any changes are made **with** doctors, nurses, other professionals that work in the NHS rather **to** them. The author hopes that the views of patients and their families are at the core of any future changes to the NHS and how it operates.

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