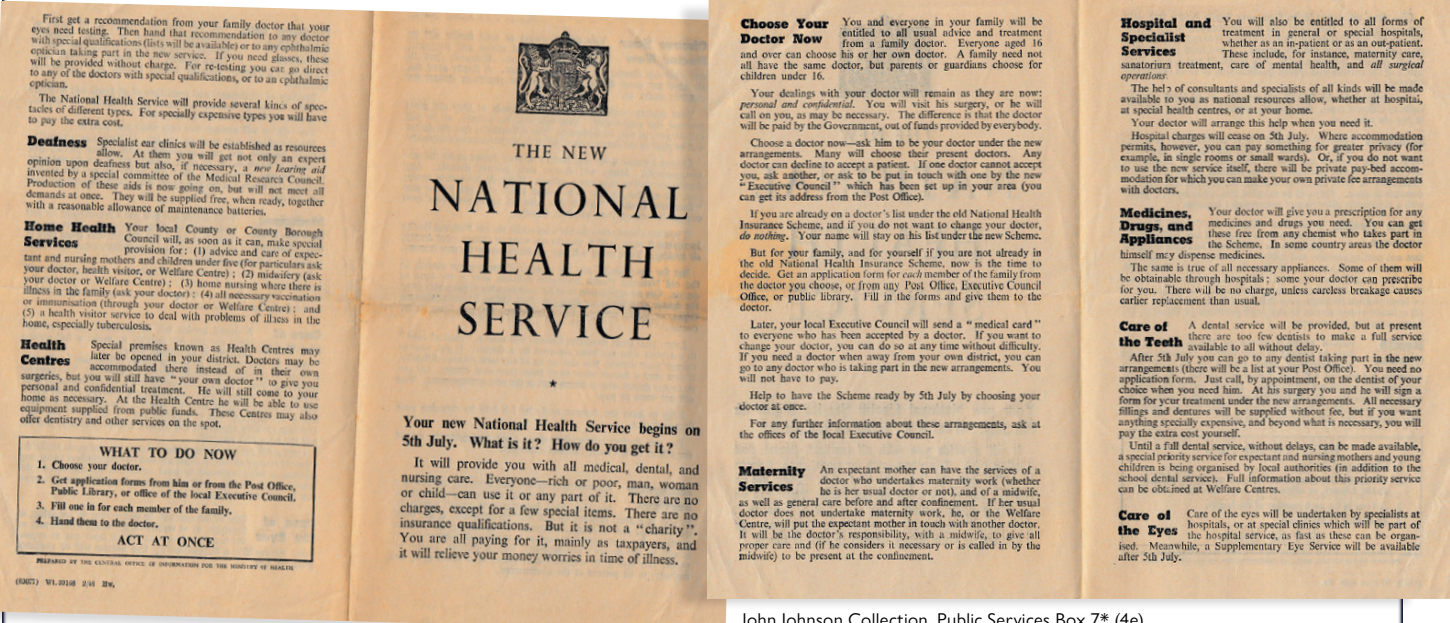


THE NEW NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE Ministry of Health, 1948



John Johnson Collection, Public Services Box 7* (4e)

This is a public information leaflet from 1948. It was sent to households in Britain explaining what the new National Health Service was and how to access its services. You can [view it online](#) and, if you find it difficult to read, there is a transcription of the text on the next pages.

In 1942, Winston Churchill's coalition government created a committee, led by economist [William Beveridge](#), to examine Britain's existing social insurance system and make recommendations. The [Beveridge Report](#) called for radical post-war social reform to fight the 'five giant evils' of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness.

All political parties supported these reforms to some extent, but the Labour Party, led by Clement Attlee, won a landslide victory in 1945, proposing to implement them in full. The new Minister of Health, [Aneurin Bevan](#), oversaw the development of the National Health Service Act (1946), which came into force on 5 July 1948.

FURTHER READING

Read more about the first [40 years of the NHS](#) in an article from 1988.

Explore a [timeline of the history of the NHS](#).

Questions

1. The front page of the leaflet states that 'There are no insurance qualifications.' **Why might this have been a concern for many people?**
2. The new service was also 'not a "charity"'. **Why did the Ministry of Health believe it was important to state this?**
3. Reading through the whole leaflet, **what healthcare provision was available to everyone in the new NHS system? How was the new system different from previous provision?**
4. **What are the similarities and differences between the healthcare outlined here and the care offered by the modern NHS?**
5. Beveridge saw 'Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness' as the five great barriers to post-war reconstruction. **Suggest the five biggest challenges in Britain today.**

TRANSCRIPTION: THE NEW NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Ministry Of Health, 1948

THE NEW NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

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Your new National Health Service begins on 5th July. What is it? How do you get it?

It will provide you with all medical, dental and nursing care. Everyone – rich or poor, man, woman or child – can use it or any part of it. There are no charges, except for a few special items. There are no insurance qualifications. But it is not a “charity”. You are all paying for it, mainly as tax payers, and it will relieve your money worries in time of illness.

Choose Your Doctor Now

You and everyone in your family will be entitled to all usual advice and treatment from a family doctor. Everyone aged 16 and over can choose his or her own doctor. A family need not all have the same doctor, but parents or guardians choose for children under 16.

Your dealings with your doctor will remain as they are now: personal and confidential. You will visit his surgery, or he will call on you, as may be necessary. The difference is that the doctor will be paid by the Government, out of funds provided by everybody.

Choose a doctor now – ask him to be your doctor under the new arrangements. Many will choose their present doctors. Any doctor can decline to accept a patient. If one doctor cannot accept you, ask another, or ask to be put in touch with one by the new “Executive Council” which has been set up in your area (you can get its address from the Post Office).

If you are already on a doctor’s list under the old National Health Insurance Scheme, now is the time to decide. Get an application form for each member of the family from the doctor you choose, or from any Post Office, Executive Council Office, or public library. Fill in the forms and give them to the doctor.

Later, your local Executive Council will send a “medical card” to everyone who has been accepted by a doctor. If you want to change your doctor, you can do so at any time without difficulty. If you need a doctor when away from your own district, you can go to any doctor who is taking part in the new arrangements. You will not have to pay.

Help to have the Scheme ready by 5th July by choosing your doctor at once.

For any further information about these arrangements, ask at the offices of the local Executive Council.

Maternity Services

An expectant mother can have the services of a doctor who undertakes maternity work (whether he is her usual doctor or not), and of a midwife, as well as general care before and after confinement. If her usual doctor does not undertake maternity work, he, or the Welfare Centre, will put the expectant mother in touch with another doctor. It will be the doctor’s responsibility, with a midwife, to give all proper care and (if he considers it necessary or is called in by the midwife) to be present at the confinement.

Hospital and Specialist Services

You will also be entitled to all forms of treatment in general or special hospitals, whether as an in-patient or as an out-patient. These include, for instance, maternity care, sanatorium care, care of mental health, and all surgical operations.

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Medicines, Drugs and Appliances

Your doctor will give you a prescription for any medicines and drugs you need. You can get these free from any chemist who takes part in the Scheme. In some country areas the doctor himself may dispense medicines. The same is true for all necessary appliances. Some of them will be obtainable through hospitals; some your doctor can prescribe for you. There will be no charge, unless careless breakage causes earlier replacement than usual.

Care of the Teeth

A dental service will be provided, but at present there are too few dentists to make a full service available to all without delay.

After 5th July you can go to any dentist taking part in the new arrangements (there will be a list at your Post Office). You need no application form. Just call, by appointment, on the dentist of your choice when you need him. At his surgery you and he will sign a form for your treatment under the new arrangements. All necessary fillings and dentures will be supplied without fee, but if you want anything specially expensive, and beyond what is necessary, you will pay the extra cost yourself.

Until a full dental service, without delays, can be made available, a special priority service for expectant and nursing mothers and young children is being organised by local authorities (in addition to the school dental service). Full information about this priority service can be obtained at Welfare Centres.

Care of the Eyes

Care of the eyes will be undertaken by specialists at hospitals, or at special clinics which will be part of the hospital service, as fast as these can be organised. Meanwhile a Supplementary Eye Service will be available after 5th July.

First get a recommendation from your family doctor that your eyes need testing. Then hand that recommendation to any doctor with special qualifications (lists will be available) or to any ophthalmic optician taking part in the new service. If you need glasses, these will be provided without charge. For re-testing you can go direct to any of the doctors with special qualifications, or to an ophthalmic optician.

The National Health Service will provide several kinds of spectacles of different types. For specially expensive types you will have to pay the extra cost.

Deafness

Specialist ear clinics will be established as resources allow. At them you will get not only an expert opinion upon deafness but also, if necessary, a new hearing aid invented by a special committee of the Medical Research Council. Production of these aids is now going on, but will not meet all demands at once. They will be supplied free, when ready, together with a reasonable allowance of maintenance batteries

Home Health Service

Your local County or County Borough Council will, as soon as it can, will make special provision for: (1) advice and care of expectant mothers and children under 5 (for particulars ask your doctor, health visitor or Welfare Centre); (2) midwifery (ask your doctor or Welfare Centre); (3) home nursing where there is illness in the family (ask your doctor); (4) all necessary vaccination or immunisation (through your doctor or Welfare Centre); and (5) a health visitor service to deal with problems of illness in the home, especially tuberculosis.

Health Centres

Special premises known as Health Centres may later be opened in your district. Doctors may be accommodated there instead of in their own surgeries but you will still have "your own doctor" to give you personal and confidential treatment. He will come to your home as necessary, At the Health Centre he will be able to use equipment supplied from public funds. These Centres may also offer dentistry and other services on the spot.

WHAT TO DO NOW

1. Choose your doctor.
2. Get application forms from him or from the Post Office, Public Library, or office of the local Executive Council.
3. Fill in one for each member of the family.
4. Hand them to the doctor

ACT AT ONCE

Prepared by the Central Office of Information for the Ministry of Health