

Happy



75th

Birthday!

NHS Scotland

10 & 11 GEO. 6.

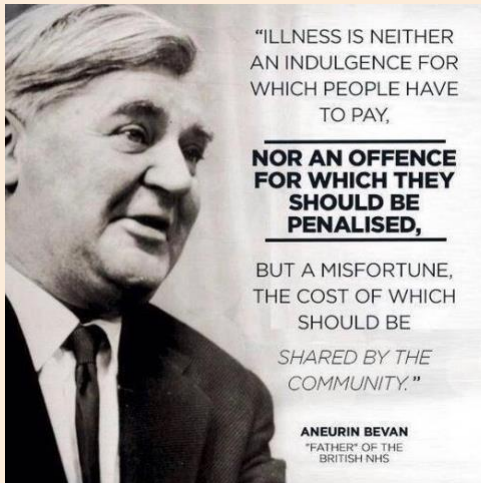
*National Health Service
(Scotland) Act, 1947.*

CH. 27.



CHAPTER 27.

An Act to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive health service for Scotland, and for purposes connected therewith. [21st May 1947.]



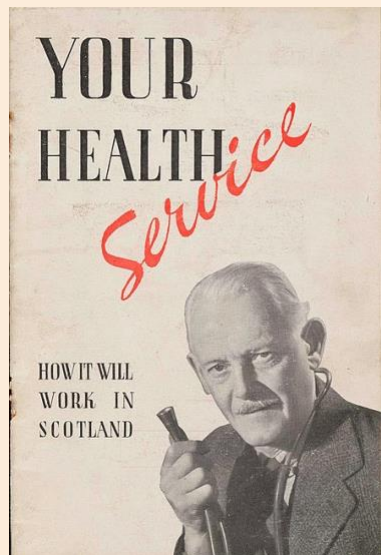
The National Health Service in Scotland

As a result of the National Health Service (NHS) (Scotland) Act 1947, a separate NHS in Scotland came into being on 5 July 1948. It aimed to meet all health needs free of direct charge to the citizen.

Before the creation of the NHS, Scotland had pioneered new forms of organised health care, which anticipated some of its provisions. Such factors combined with other features of Scottish society to create a national health service as distinctive as the Scottish medical culture that preceded it. That distinctive structure is present today in the devolved NHS Scotland, accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

Before the NHS, Scottish health care combined voluntary, municipal, provident, private and government provision at the hospital and community levels. Afterwards, over four hundred hospitals were vested in the Secretary of State for Scotland (SSS) operating through the Department of Health for Scotland (DHS).

The DHS also assumed responsibility for twenty-five Local Health Authorities (LHA), which co-ordinated community-based services. General practitioners (GP), dentists, chemists and opticians remained self-employed. However, the DHS set up Executive Councils (EC) to arrange payment for services for NHS patients. In addition, a Scottish Medical Practices Committee (SMPC) was set up to help coordinate the distribution of GPs nationally. Locally, doctors' views were also represented via Medical Committees (MC). The DHS placed great emphasis on the future coordination of doctors' activities through Health Centres (HC), which would be concerned with health education and direct patient care.

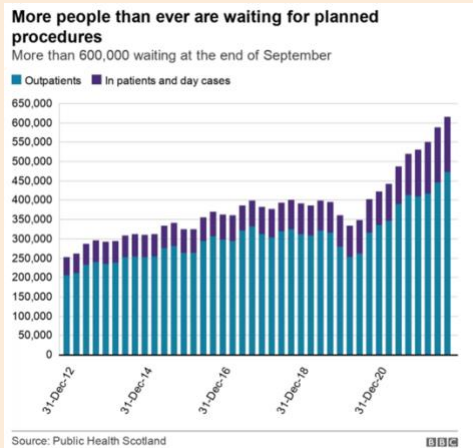


NHS Scotland Today

The NHS as an institution rightly attracts almost universal support, primarily because we all rely on it. The founding principles of an NHS free at the point of need, funded by general taxation, delivering universal, equitable, high quality, comprehensive healthcare based on needs is, in our view, the best way to organise healthcare.

The current NHS crisis has prompted calls for NHS reform.

Ambulances queuing outside our A&E departments is a visible sign of the NHS crisis that is difficult to ignore. As are waiting times for hospital treatment and access to GPs and dentistry. NHS Scotland delayed discharge statistics also illustrate the need to focus on social care.



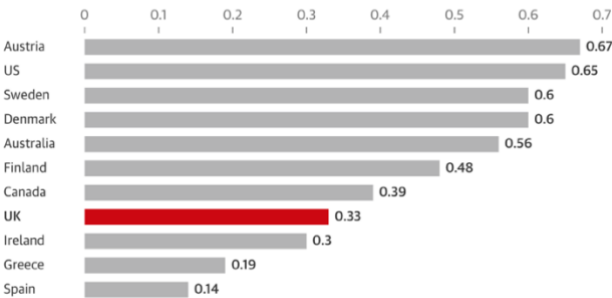
The proposed National Care Service in Scotland will do nothing to challenge this, taking even more services from the public sector. Creating a National Care Service remains the right approach. However, its role should be to create a national framework, with services designed and delivered locally as a public service.

Pressures on our NHS are caused by health inequalities. Increasing excess death rates caused by austerity highlight the underlying causes of inequality, an ageing population and the need for investment. Men in the most deprived areas of Scotland not only live 14 years less but can expect to spend 35% of their lives in poor health. Poorer women face similar problems. They live 11 years less than women from less deprived areas and spend 37% of their lives in poor health. This requires action outwith the NHS in housing, social security and other public services.

Instead of looking at privatised solutions like health insurance, we should be investing in the NHS and its workforce. A new report from the King's Fund highlights that the UK "underperforms significantly" in tackling its biggest killer diseases, in part because the NHS has been weakened by years of underinvestment and proportionally fewer doctors and nurses. The comparative study of 19 well-off nations concluded that Britain achieves only "below average" health outcomes because it spends a "below average" amount for every person on healthcare.

The UK has below-average investment in healthcare infrastructure

Annual capital spending on healthcare as a % share of GDP, 2019



Guardian graphic. Source: OECD

The report also dismissed assertions by ministers that Covid-19 was to blame. The impact of the pandemic merely "compounded the consequences

of more than a decade of squeezed investment in staff, equipment and wider services that keep us well".

We would like to take the opportunity on the 75th anniversary of our NHS to send our very best wishes and a big thank you to all the precious current and former NHS workers across Scotland. Yours in solidarity SHA Scotland.

You can read more about NHS reform in our NHS Reform Discussion Paper at <http://www.shascotland.org>.

The SHA was founded in 1930 to campaign for a National Health Service. SHA Scotland is a campaigning organisation which promotes health and well-being and the eradication of inequalities through the application of socialist principles to society and government. We believe that these objectives can best be achieved through collective rather than individual action. We campaign for an integrated healthcare system which reduces inequalities in health and is accountable to the communities it serves.

