

A photograph from the archives. Photo: NHS at 70

From oral histories to archive collections, we've awarded over £980,000 to three projects that record and preserve memories of our National Health Service (NHS), for use now and in the future.

Created in 1948, the NHS was the first universal health system in the world to be made freely available at the point of access. It was a pioneering change in the provision of health services that brought together hospitals, doctors, nurses and dentists under one organisation.

Throughout its history, the NHS has achieved many medical firsts including:

- the UK's first kidney transplant in 1960
- Europe's first liver transplant in 1968
- the world's first CT scan on a patient in 1971
- the world's first 'test-tube' baby born in 1978

- the world’s first liver, heart and lung transplant in 1987

Three inspiring projects

Medical Museum collections

Photograph of various items in a wooden box

Derby and Burton Hospital Charity has catalogued and safely rehoused their collection of medical artefacts, training volunteers in protecting and preserving the collections.

A vibrant exhibition will go on display with an accompanying events programme to support local people from diverse communities.

Awarded: £98,000

Read more about Medical Museum collections.

From Scutari Hospital to NHS Nightingale: The British Hotel to Seacole Recovery Centres

People dressed as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale at the Florence Nightingale Museum.

This project explores the history of British military nursing with an exhibition that will feature the voices and stories of military nurses, veteran patients and historians. Objects from the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps will also be on display.

As part of the project, the relationship between Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole will be explored and brought to life through a new dramatic performance at the museum and online.

Awarded: £98,955

Read more about from Scutari Hospital to NHS Nightingale.

The Story of our Lives

A volunteer conducts a face to face interview

To celebrate 70 years of the NHS, this project was led by the University of Manchester to capture people’s stories and memorabilia for a social history archive.

'Voices of our National Health Service' is a collection of the 2,200 oral history interviews that were recorded and stored in the British Library’s digital collection.

In 2022 a film was published called ‘Covid Voices: A Moment in Time’ that spotlights the diverse experiences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The project involved over 160 volunteers and over 1,200 people who shared their lived experience of the NHS as patients, staff and members of the public.

Awarded: £785,000

Learn more about the project in our interview with project director Dr Stephanie Snow.

Heritage buildings and landmarks turned blue

On 5 July, to mark the 75th anniversary, over 100 buildings across the UK were lit up in blue including Liverpool's Liver building, Nottingham Castle, The Roman Baths, HMS Belfast in London, Grimsby Minster and Belfast City Hall.

People took photos and shared them via social media using the hashtags #NHS75 and #LightUpBlue.

See the full list of buildings and landmarks that took part.

Get funding for your heritage project

If you have an idea of a heritage project that you'd like to explore, we can help.

Find inspiration in our project pages and explore our funding programmes to find out how we can support.



Credit: NHS at 70: The Story of Our Lives



Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health, on the first day of the NHS at Park Hospital, Davyhulme

iversary of the NHS



Activist Keith Armstrong in the 1990s, campaigning for accessible public transport. Credit: Shape Arts

Creating an archive for historic disability rights movement