



The NHS Challenge

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Discover what life was like before the NHS and the women who helped shape it.

It's easy to take the NHS for granted, but not that long ago it didn't exist. If you got sick you had to pay to see a doctor. Many people could not afford that. Discover some of the pioneering women who helped shape the NHS, ensuring medical care for all.

How to use this pack

How you use this pack is completely up to you. We encourage you to complete the activities as a family, as children will enjoy learning most when you are learning too.

The pack is designed for 5-11 year olds. We've tried to make it as accessible as possible, to meet all learning needs. So there are some simple ideas, and some activities that might be best for older children. Our guiding principle is that this is not history as you learnt it at school – this is exploring heritage through play, creation and imagination.

Top tips

You might like to start by listening to our [Rebel Women podcast](#). The episode for this pack is called The Women Who Shaped the NHS, and is available where ever you listen.

If podcasts aren't for you, we also have a blog. You can find one for this pack at bit.ly/NHSwomen

If your child has learning difficulties and is finding the podcast and blog hard to access, we've broken the learning down into smaller chunks. See the "fun facts" scattered throughout this activity sheet.

Do as many of the activities as feels right – there are no rules

We will occasionally provide you with physical resources for the activities. Otherwise, use what you have around the house. There is no need to buy anything in.

Adapt and extend each activity as you like. You will find other ideas at www.pinterest.com/eastlondonwomen. For this pack see the *Women Who Shaped the NHS* board.

Activities

Fun Fact

Today, if you are sick you can go to a hospital or see a doctor for free. It didn't used to be like this. Before the NHS was formed, if you became ill you had to pay someone, and it could be expensive. There were no mass vaccination programmes, so children often got sick, and some even died. Dentists were expensive too. If you were poor, you simply didn't go. Many children in East London had rotten teeth, and regularly suffered with toothache.

1. Make a thank you card for your doctor, dentist or maybe the school nurse. You could even send one to your local A&E department.
2. When the NHS first formed there was a shortage of nurses. Many women came from around the world to help out, including from the Caribbean. Either with your friends, or your toys, set up a hospital. How will you look after patients and make them well again?

For older children: Look online for stories of women who came to Britain from 1950s onwards to work for the NHS. Write or discuss with your family what life was like for them.

3. In the past, only men could be doctors. The first woman in Britain to qualify as a doctor was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Visit the Elizabeth Garret Anderson museum near Euston Station. If you can't get there, Maddie from CBeebies has made a short video about it. Watch it here:
<https://youtu.be/f4DYVjS0wUk>

Fun fact

In 1895, Alice Model set up the Sick Room Helps Society, sending nurses to people's homes to care for mothers and babies. It was the first organisation of its kind in Britain, and help shape support we have for mums and dads on the NHS today.

4. Like many people in East London during this time, Alice was Jewish. Try some Jewish food. Visit the Beigel Shop on Brick Lane, established in 1855. Or make your own matzah or latkabs at home.

Fun fact

Minnie Lansbury helped set up a dental clinic and small pox vaccination programme. Small pox killed thousands of children every year, but thanks to Minnie and her vaccines, East London had one of the lowest death rates ever.

5. Have a go at making some natural medicines from things you find around your home or garden. Have a look at our Pinterest board for ideas.

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