

MASS-OBSERVATION IN THE 1990s

SPRING DIRECTIVE 1997

PART ONE YOU AND THE NHS



Next year we shall celebrate fifty years of the NHS which began on 5 July 1948. Some of you may remember the high hopes of the new Welfare State at that time and the fears of those who opposed it; others might have memories of what health care was like before the NHS existed. But for many of you the National Health Service is all you have known.

*We should very much like to hear from you about your own experiences of health care whether recent or in the past. This may have been as a patient yourself or as the carer for someone else (no real names or locations please). Please tell us about your good **and** your bad experiences..*

We hope the questions below will prompt a response from you but as always, feel free to write in your own way if that suits you better.



*Please remember to start with a brief (2-3 line) autobiography:
M-O number (NOT name), sex, age, town or area where you live,
occupation or former occupation*

Please state clearly if you work, or used to work, in health care

How important are health issues to you?

If they are important, is this because you or someone close to you:

- has had a particular need for health services in the past?
- has a continuing need for health care for mental or physical illness or disability?
- works in health or a connected field?
- works in the voluntary health sector (for example a self help group)
- has a general or political interest in local and/or national services?

Most recent experience

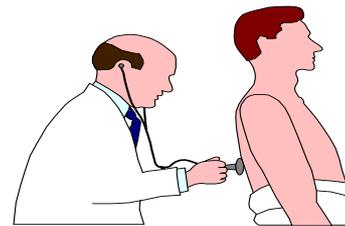
Please describe the most recent experience you have had using health services for yourself or someone you look after. The service might have been provided by the NHS or privately and have been carried out by a doctor, nurse, dentist, physiotherapist or other health professional, or an alternative/complementary health practitioner; in a hospital, clinic, health centre or at home.

How have things changed?

Compare your recent experience with how you remember it 10, 20 or even 50 years ago. How do you think your own experiences compare with those of people you know or with the national picture? In what ways have health services got better and/or worse in your experience?

Relations between patients and professionals

Do you think that the relationship between patients and health professionals has changed? What do you think about the word "patient"? Do you prefer the word "consumer"? What rights do we have as health care users?



Your experience of healthcare in other countries - if any

How did it compare with this country? Please say whether this was on holiday or whether you were living in the other country at the time. What is your opinion about what we spend on health compared with other countries?

Crises and problems in the delivery of health services

We all know that there have been many in recent years. Reasons given include the advances in medical knowledge which mean that more can be done, people having higher expectations (they feel that access to good health services is their right), the survival of more people into old age or with disability and lack of good management or sufficient funds. **What do you think?**

The rationing of care, and decisions about ending life and about creating new life

These, and other, ethical issues have been in the news recently. What do you think? Have any of them affected you personally, or someone close to you?

Caring for an elderly or disabled relative/friend

Many of you wrote about this in an earlier directive, but if you are able to comment in relation to the health services in this directive reply, we would be grateful. Do you need such care yourself? Are there things - even very small things - which would make your life easier? Not all of them are necessarily expensive; some might not cost anything at all; others might be expensive or might mean changes to the way such care is organised.

Getting health advice and information

Where do you find it? Can you list the ones that are most important to you in their order of importance - some ideas are given below but add new ones if you think of them.

- general practitioner (GP) or someone in your local surgery (nurse, receptionist)
- district nurse or health visitor
- chiropodist, dentist, physiotherapist, or some other health professional
- consultant or specialist
- alternative/complementary practitioner
- your local community health council
- local pharmacist
- family planning clinic
- drug or alcohol advice/support groups
- self help group or voluntary organisation (advice line, leaflets)
- magazine or newspaper, agony aunt
- radio programme or phone in, television programme
- medical reference books/specialist literature
- videos or tapes
- fitness clubs, leisure centres
- family or friends
- your own knowledge

Information technology

Do you think this could be useful to you as a means of being better informed about health? Do you already use it in this way? For example, getting information from the Internet, from a teletext system, a medical database, interactive computer programmes or videos, or in some other way?



Complementary and alternative therapies

Have you used any of these services in recent years? How satisfactory has the treatment been? Do you think you will use them more in future?

Private health services or any other non-NHS form of treatment?

Have you used these? Please describe your experience as fully as you can.



Keeping fit and healthy

Do you think it is the job of a National Health Service to keep you healthy as well as caring for you when you are ill? Nationally or locally would you like to see NHS money contributing to the costs of leisure centres? What would you think of a GP prescribing swimming sessions on the NHS? How do you get information about keeping or becoming fit?

What do you and your family (or those you care for) most need now in terms of health services?

Please can you name about three services or aspects of health which are most important to you at present (or will be in the next few years) listed in order of priority.

If you were in charge of the NHS what would your priorities be?

Now? For the next five years? In the longer term? Things are changing so fast that health services may look very different in the future - do you think there will be an NHS?

And finally, how do you think health services should be paid for?

Would you be prepared to pay more yourself, and if so, how?

Part Two

The General Election

As this directive goes to press, we still don't know what the date of the Election will be, but please keep up your reports -

Now, how you want to do this is to a large extent up to you...and how much time, energy and interest you have:

- You might like to keep an occasional diary describing your reactions to election issues, newspaper articles, TV or radio programmes, meetings you attend, reactions to leaflets and posters, local activities. This might appeal to someone who is directly involved through being active in politics.
- You could do a one-off report (or a series of one-offs) on your feelings about the general political situation and the issues which are important to you.

However, there is one task I would like everyone to try:

- Imagine that the Labour Party wins the Election. How would life be different in the whole country? How might life change for you personally? Hopes and fears please.....
- When the actual result is finally announced, describe your reactions.

REPLYING TO THIS DIRECTIVE:

Please reply, as usual, to Part 1 on the NHS if possible during the next three month period (that is, before we send out the Summer Directive in May).

For Part 2, please send in anything you have already written on the Election with Part 1. You may need to wait until after the Election before sending in the rest of Part 2. The main thing to avoid is sending in lots of small instalments as it costs so much in postage and takes us more time to process.

YOUR MINI-BIOGRAPHY:

IF YOU ARE A RETIRED PERSON, PLEASE DON'T JUST WRITE "Retired" FOR YOUR OCCUPATION AS THIS IS VERY UNIFORMATIVE TO RESEARCHERS. Retired Nurse/Teacher/Shop Assistant/Bank Clerk/Lorry Driver/Housewife or whatever IS MUCH BETTER. Thanks, Dorothy.

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