

# **Stories from the Front Line**

The People Behind  
the NHS Headlines

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and

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Series in Sociology



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“The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it.”

*Aneurin Bevan*



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Dedicated to our parents.

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To Roseanne MacKee, Tracy Jackson, and her daughter Jamie-Lee, we are grateful that you felt able to share such traumatic personal experiences with us. That you chose us to recount the events leading up to and from the deaths of much-loved parents is a great honour. We hope we have made their memories proud.

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# Introduction

Yvonne Bennett

This book was inspired by a distressing incident I had with my elderly mother, which I decided to document on the social media platform TikTok. The first video went viral overnight, and within hours I was receiving messages from others who had similar stories to tell. The reasons behind people using social media to chronicle events, be they traumatic or celebratory, will be examined in further detail in a subsequent chapter. My response to the received messages was to write about these experiences as I wanted to give the people who had reached out to me a voice and to see if analysis could explain why so many of our elderly were being let down by the National Health Service (NHS) during medical emergencies.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the title of this book, we were mindful not to fall victim to “[t]he let down by the NHS syndrome”, as labelled by McLardy-Smith (2022, p. 34). We want to investigate the ways in which the public might be failing the NHS, a national institution, in addition to the challenges the NHS faces in providing free care at the point of contact in the twenty-first century. This societal shortcoming may be through unrealistic expectations or by a simple misuse of services.

The UK media reports stories, such as my mum’s, with “nauseating frequency and relish” (McLardy-Smith, 2022, p. 34), yet our stories are more than just a headline or tomorrow’s fish and chip wrapper.<sup>2</sup> A Google search revealed an abundance of media headlines, a fraction of which are noted below. I must point out that these stories are from across the UK, the final one being my mum’s story:

- 21 Jan 2020 — Great-grandmother, 83, died from sepsis after waiting five hours for an ambulance and then 70 minutes to be seen in 'bedlam' A&E, inquest hears.
- 20 Oct 2021 —A great-grandma, who's 87 years old, was forced to wait almost nine hours for an ambulance, lying on her drive in the pouring rain, after falling over.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid copyright infringements, we have paraphrased all TikTok comments used in the book.

<sup>2</sup> This is a term which relates back to a time when take away fish and chips were sold wrapped in old newspapers.

PAGES MISSING  
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

# Authors

## **Yvonne Bennett**

I obtained my BA and MA through the Open University. On leaving school, I trained as a nurse and, after having my children, retrained as a nursery schoolteacher. I have completed a PhD at Canterbury Christ Church University. My research area of interest is conservative Presbyterianism in the Gàidhealtachd (Highlands and Islands) of Scotland. In 2021 I published a book which examines the ways in which churches in Britain help the vulnerable in their communities. The book *The Church Who Needs It? We Do!* examines the difficulties a group of South London women experience with Universal Credit and life under lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic. In 2022, I edited a book, *Women and Religion in Britain Today Belonging* with Vernon Press.

## **Christina Stead**

I studied History at Durham University and then worked as an academic administrator and manager for a university in London. After a period of working in an educational consultancy, I took a career break when my daughter was born in 2004. Seeking new challenges, I volunteered in my local community and then retrained as a careers counsellor, gaining an MA (Distinction) from Canterbury Christ Church University in 2014. I was then awarded a scholarship by the university to pursue doctoral research, and my PhD (2020) explored the career paths of senior professional women in accountancy, education and medicine. I am currently working as a mentor to a student who is completing a doctorate in Nursing, and I am a school governor with a brief that includes safeguarding.



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