

# Mothering the NHS, aged 75



A significant number of us MU members were born before the NHS. We are the generation which gave birth to it, nurtured it like a parent and rejoiced proudly as it grew and became strong and productive. Like a mother, we are distraught to see it suffering and critically ill.

We too may have experienced what it's like to be 75 years old. Bits of our hardware wear out and our soft-ware wrinkles; our batteries recharge more slowly; and our life-expectancy reduces just as our life-experience reaches its peak. We now look with hope to our children; hope that we will not over-burden them with our own care needs; hope that they will continue the work we started and will find new skills to offer the world. And so it is with the NHS.

For those who labour in the NHS, strike action is counter-intuitive. It is a deep-rooted scream for help. This world-renowned service is begging for life-sustaining critical care.

When Michael Rosen (the children's author: of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' fame) was in critical care with Covid and in an induced coma, the hospital staff pinned his poem '**These are the Hands**' above his bed. He wrote it for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS. Every day, the nurses and doctors in attendance wrote a diary of his progress and their hopes for his recovery. It is a most touching witness to the deep care and love that NHS staff bring to the bedside. When Michael recovered, he wrote a new book in tribute to the NHS, '**Many Kinds of Love**' and another poem '**This is You – You're Looking at You**'. If you want to go on a 'Bear Hunt', then they're worth looking up.

Never has the NHS needed our prayers more than now. We clapped them and painted rainbows for their commitment against the odds through Covid.

**Let us pray hard now, as a mother would!**

## These are the Hands

These are the hands  
That touch us first  
Feel your head  
Find the pulse  
And make your bed.

These are the hands  
That tap your back  
Test the skin  
Hold your arm  
Wheel the bin  
Change the bulb  
Fix the drip  
Pour the jug  
Replace your hip.

These are the hands  
That fill the bath  
Mop the floor  
Flick the switch  
Soothe the sore  
Burn the swabs  
Give us a jab  
Throw out sharps  
Design the lab.

And these are the hands  
That stop the leaks  
Empty the pan  
Wipe the pipes  
Carry the can  
Clamp the veins  
Make the cast  
Log the dose  
And touch us last.

*Michael Rosen: written  
for the NHS aged 60*