

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 60th 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*