



Hospitals

Before the NHS in Gloucestershire

Most early hospitals were charitable foundations and were often linked with religious houses. From the mid-16th century many of these were replaced with almshouses and small hospitals. These were often funded by a bequest from a wealthy individual. Many towns had almshouses which provided accommodation for the elderly poor people.

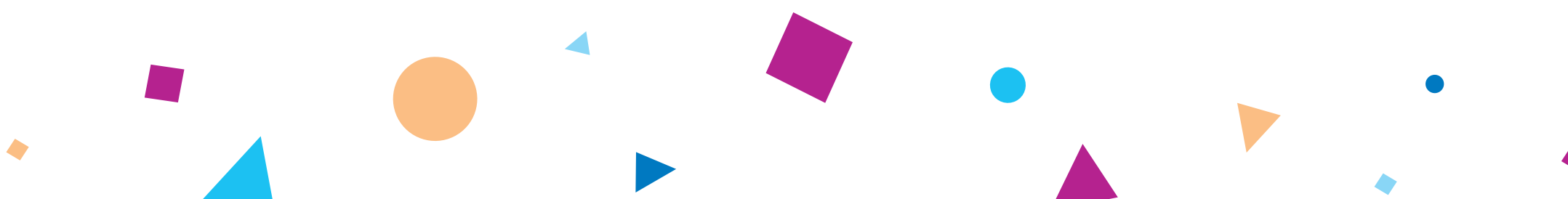
By the end of the 19th century all the larger towns in Gloucestershire had at least one hospital. Some like the Infirmary in Gloucester had their origins in the 18th century and were funded by subscribers. They provided medical treatment for subscribers, their families and nominees but there was no universal provision of care. Other hospitals were founded by an individual person with an interest in public health or as a lasting memorial to a notable local figure.

From the late 19th century specialist hospitals were built or evolved. For example, maternity or mother and baby homes and hospitals to treat specific diseases like smallpox and TB (Tuberculosis). For poor people, workhouses usually included an infirmary which was open to inmates and was funded by the Poor Rate collected by the Guardians of the Poor.

Hospitals as part of the National Health Service

When the National Health Service came into existence in July 1948, it took over the running of many hospitals. Most voluntary hospitals came into public ownership, funded principally from general taxation with salaried medical staff and professional administrators.

Here we look at the development of the major hospitals in Cheltenham and Gloucester.





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Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

1755: A temporary Infirmary was opened at the Crown and Sceptre Inn in Lower Westgate Street. It was supported by voluntary contributions and governors met every Thursday to manage it and admit patients. Admission was by subscriber's ticket; donations were according to means. Physicians and surgeons from the city gave their services free of charge. Resident staff included a matron, and apothecary and a secretary.

1761: Construction of the permanent private hospital, Gloucester Infirmary, was completed outside the south gate, with separate wings for men and women. Ordinary income was from subscriptions with extraordinary income coming from gifts and legacies. Many parishes (40 by 1788) subscribed to provide treatment for the poor in their parish. From the start there were problems of overcrowding, rising costs and insufficient ordinary income. It was observed that by the end of the 18th century that the root of the problems lay in an increasing number of subscribers but a drop in the real value of subscriptions.

1825: Major enlargement of the Infirmary with the addition of a south wing, with 54 beds in three wards.

1871: A wing was built on the north side, following the diversion of Parliament Street. This contained an out-patient department and two surgical wards.

1878: The Gloucestershire Eye Institution amalgamated with the infirmary.

1904: Nurses Home was completed.

1909: King Edward VII granted the title of Gloucestershire Royal Infirmary and Eye Institution.

1922: By this date all in-patients paid for their keep according to their means unless they were members of a contributory scheme.

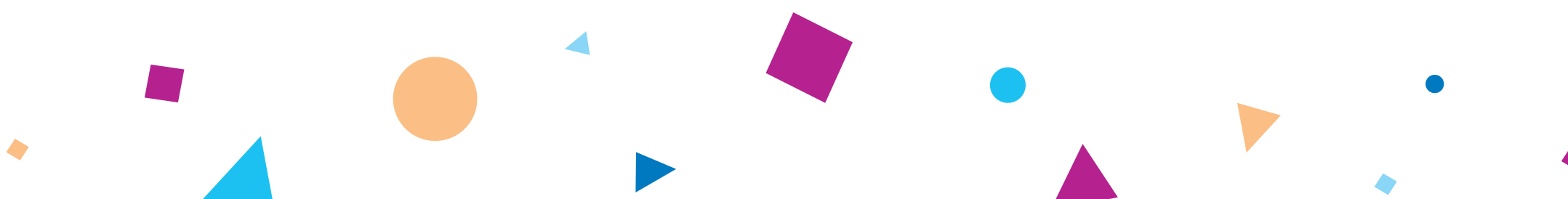
1932: A further detached block was opened with specialist departments and clinics and 16 beds for paying patients.

1949: Following the introduction of the NHS in 1948, the Infirmary was amalgamated with the City General Hospital and was then known as the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

1960s: A new general hospital for the Gloucester District was begun in Great Western Road and departments and clinics were moved from lower Southgate Street as buildings on the new site were completed.

1975: The wards in Southgate Street were closed.

1984: The main part of the old infirmary was demolished and the nurses' home was disused.





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Gloucestershire City General Hospital

1852: The Hospital was formerly the infirmary of the Gloucester poor-law union. The infirmary behind the union workhouse was demolished in 1850 to make way for the railway and replaced by a detached building west of the workhouse.

1912: The guardians began a 149-bed infirmary on a block system on the other side of Great Western Road and patients were transferred to the East Block of this building in 1914.

1914: British Red Cross Society then took over the West block for nursing WWI war wounded in 1914, and then the East block in 1915. The building was completed after the war.

1930: The infirmary was transferred to the corporation and became known as Gloucester City General Hospital.

1949: Following amalgamation with Gloucester Royal Infirmary, became jointly known as Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

1960s: The Great Western Road buildings and adjoining land, which included a maternity hospital and wooden huts erected in 1942 for treatment of war wounded in WWII, were chosen for the new Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

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