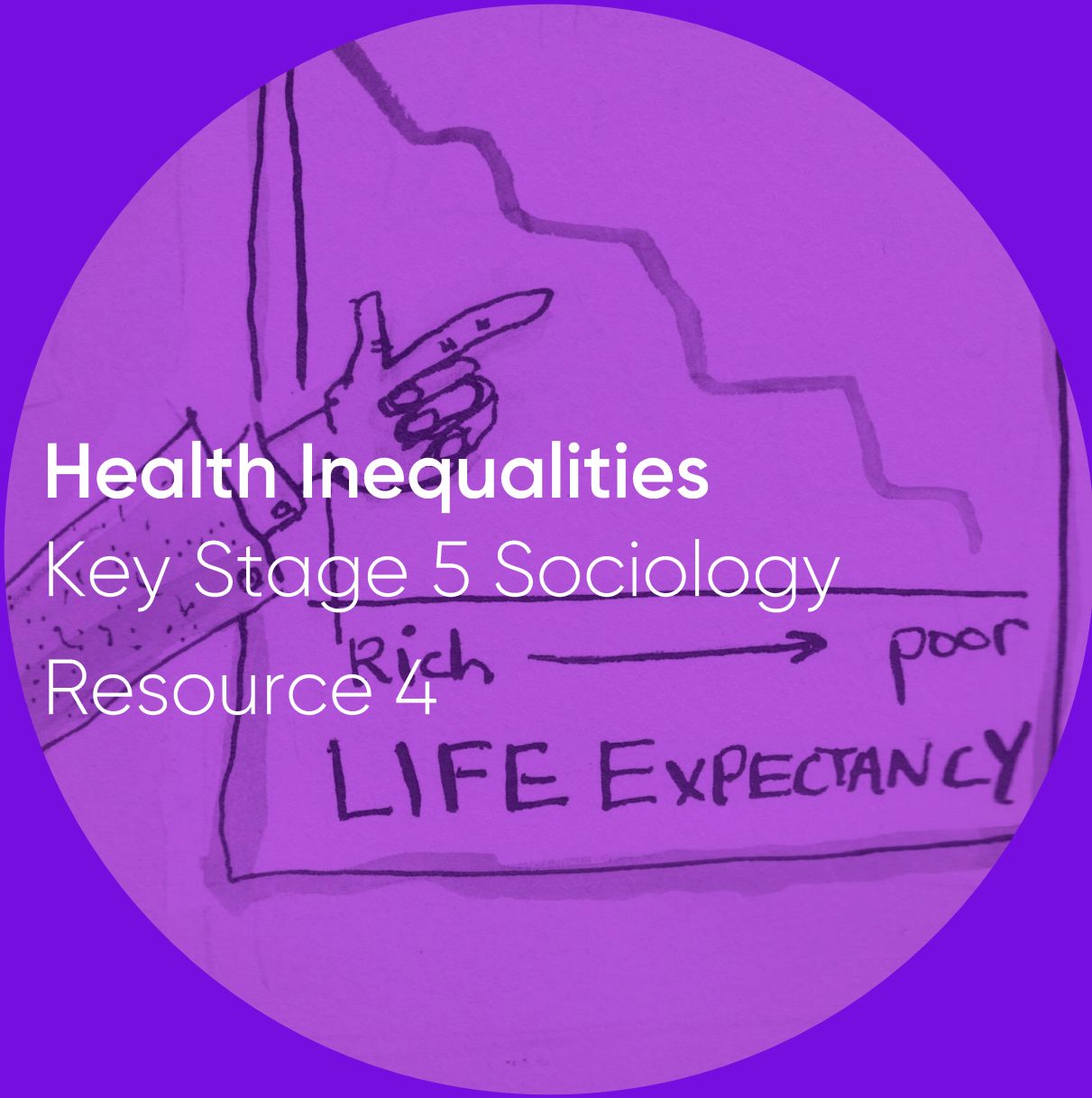


Research
Based
Curricula

Health Inequalities

Key Stage 5 Sociology

Resource 4



A hand-drawn diagram on a circular background. It features a wavy line at the top, a horizontal line below it, and a horizontal arrow pointing from 'Rich' on the left to 'poor' on the right. Below the arrow, the words 'LIFE EXPECTANCY' are written in large, bold, capital letters. A hand is drawn on the left side, pointing towards the 'Rich' side of the diagram.

2019



Resource Four Overview



Topic Inequalities and Work

A-Level Modules Health and Work

Objectives After completing this resource you should be able to:

- ✓ Explain how employment is linked to health inequality
- ✓ Discuss how health inequalities might be reduced through employment

Instructions

1. Read the data source
2. Answer the questions
3. Undertake the individual tasks
4. Work on the group task



Resource Four

Data Source



Section A

Employment and Health

Employment and health are intertwined. Having a well-paying job with good working conditions has been found to increase life expectancy. Low income often leads to access to poorer quality housing, in a less desirable neighbourhood. Low income limits access to social opportunities, healthier food and sports/exercise opportunities. Lower paid jobs are often associated with worse terms and conditions. People sometimes think that higher paid jobs are more stressful, whilst some indeed will be demanding, it was found that the combination of high demand and low control were the most significant factors for worse health in the well known “Whitehall studies”.

The Whitehall Studies were two studies with civil servants. Whitehall I took place over ten years (1967–1977). It found a relationship between employment grade and mortality, highest mortality was among the lowest grades. Whitehall II took place between 1985 and 1988. It included 10,314 civil servants. It identified the significance of stress on mortality rate. The most significant finding of the research was people in lower status jobs had less control, a more demanding workload and encountered more psychological stress at work. This was found to increase the risk of sickness absence, cardiovascular disease and lower back pain.

Section B

Access to Work

People with disabilities are less likely to be employed than people who are not disabled. When able to access work, the jobs they are employed to do are more likely to be less well paid.

In England the gap is 29.4% between the employment rate of those with a long-term health condition and the overall employment rate.

Resource Four

Data Source



In Barrow, the gap in employment rate is lower at 17.9%. Allerdale (37.9%) and South Lakeland (38.6%) both have a higher gap of employment for those with long term health conditions.

Gap in the employment rate between those with a long-term health condition and the overall employment rate 2016/17

Area	Recent Trend	Count	Value	Gap - Percentage points	
				95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	-	-	29.4	29.2	29.6
Cumbria	-	-	31.8	29.1	34.5
Allerdale	-	-	37.9	31.8	44.0
Barrow-in-Furness	-	-	17.9	10.1	25.7
Carlisle	-	-	27.4	21.4	33.4
Copeland	-	-	35.2	26.2	44.2
Eden	-	-	32.7	26.2	39.2
South Lakeland	-	-	38.6	33.9	43.3

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

Section C

Good Work and Bad Work

Work that is good for health should:

- Offer a fair wage
- Be a secure job
- Offer good working conditions
- Enable a good work-life balance
- Provide training and progression opportunities.

Work that is not beneficial for health can be:

- Poorly remunerated
- Fixed term or unpredictable work (e.g. zero hour contracts)
- Dangerous working conditions
- Very long hours
- No opportunity to progress or train.

Zero hour contracts are a casual contract where the employee is offered work as it becomes available. The employer is not obliged to offer work, nor is the employee obliged to accept offered work. Some people may welcome and want to work in this way if their circumstances allow them to.

Resource Four

Data Source



There are benefits to zero hours contracts, for example they offer flexibility and may lead to permanent work. The downsides for the employee are they do not receive a fixed income, and may struggle to get a mortgage. Crucially, workers on these types of contracts are more likely to report suffering from physical and mental ill health.

Section D

The Living Wage

One way in which employers can improve health and reduce inequality is to pay the real living wage. The real living wage rate is based on a basket of goods and services that represents an acceptable standard of living, based on research involving the general public. The hourly rate is then calculated considering a weighted average of the earnings required for a range of family types (with and without children). It is updated annually and it is a voluntary rate of pay.

Some of the employers in Cumbria which pay the real living wage include Nationwide Building Society; South Lakes Housing; Story Contracting and Cumbria County Council.

To learn more about the history of the real living wage, watch this video: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/history>

In April 2016 the government introduced a higher minimum wage rate for those aged over 25 years old. It is not based on the cost of living. Instead it is based on a target to reach 60% of median earnings by 2020. The national living wage (over 25s only) is £7.83 per hour. The real living wage is £9.00 per hour (outside of London). At present over 6 million people in the UK are paid less than the real living wage.

A better rate of pay for those on low wages should result in improvements in health and opportunity for those that benefit. However, low wages are not the only explanation of inequality. Action is also needed in terms of taxes, benefits and either reducing the wage gap or redistribution to reduce inequality.

Resource Four

Data Source



Section E

Better Health at Work Award

In Cumbria, many employers have signed up to the Better Health at Work Award. The purpose of signing up to the award is to create a healthier workforce. The benefits for the business could include: better retention of staff, decreased turnover of staff, less sickness and stress and increased productivity. Employees receive health information they perhaps wouldn't have done otherwise, improved health and they will also benefit from the employer having policies which improve the working environment.

Once signed up employers can work through bronze, silver, gold and then platinum levels of the award. As part of the award the employer needs to setup a trained network of health advocates. They also need to get feedback from staff on what the priorities should be. Further they must have policies in place which support health. For example, these policies could include flexible working, ability to purchase annual leave; career break and an alcohol policy.

In Cumbria, employers signed up to the award include private employers such as Spirit Energy at Barrow; Sealy UK at Wigton and TSP Engineering, Workington; and public employers including local councils and NHS trusts.

Resource Four Activities



Activities

1. Outline and explain the major findings of the Whitehall studies.
2. What is the difference between the real living wage and the national living wage?
3. What are the business benefits of taking place in the Better Health at Work award?
4. What are the employee benefits of taking place in the Better Health at Work award?
5. Imagine you work for a business with 500 employees in Cumbria, who are all office based. You have been tasked with organising a Health and Wellbeing Week. Design a programme of activities that you would run as part of the week of activities.
6. The real living wage is currently £9.00 per hour across the UK (except London). Find five job adverts in your local area that offer a wage higher than this and find five job adverts which pay a lower rate than this. What similarities and differences do you notice between the job adverts you have found? Write a 250–300 word summary of your findings.



Group Activity

7. Imagine you are living in a household of two adults and two children. One child is at nursery (age 3) and one is at school. Both parents work 30 hours per week, and they earn £9 an hour across 4 days each. Create a monthly budget for the family based on the things you believe are reasonable to expect out of life. You will need to consider your income and outgoings.

Resource Four Activities



Income

Earnings – run their earnings through a tax calculator to take off tax, national insurance, childcare vouchers and pension (if you are allowing them to have a pension)

Benefits (this may include child benefit, tax credits and nursery hours – approx. 21-22 hours is funded per week)

Outgoings

Rent – look at average prices where you live for an appropriately sized property

Council Tax – check your local council's website

Water

Childcare costs - Nursery (you will need more hours than the parents work to allow for collection/drop off and their lunch break) and also breakfast/after school club

Electricity/Gas

House insurance (if you are allowing this)

Transport costs

Food

Telephone/Internet/TV

Clothing

Big purchases (car, furniture, washing machine etc) – you may not purchase every month, but may need to allocate some money to this category

Leisure (meals out, cinema, gym, activities with children, holidays)

Presents

Savings



8. Divide up the categories and research realistic costs. You will be able to find some on the internet, your parents/guardians may be able to help you with costs of bills. Write a two page report on your findings from this activity. You could use the questions below as a starting point:

- Did any of the costs surprise you?
- Do you think you could manage a household with two earners on £9 per hour and children?
- Did your family have to sacrifice anything?
- Did you come up with any creative solutions to reduce costs?

Resource Four

Further Reading



- Explore**
1. Marmot et al (1991). Health inequalities among British civil servants: the Whitehall II study. *The Lancet*. 337 (8754): 1387-1393.
 2. The Living Wage Foundation Website:
<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>
 3. The Better Health at Work Award website:
<http://www.betterhealthatworkne.org/>
 4. Danny Dorling (2017). *Do we need economic inequality?*



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100 Black Prince Road
London, SE1 7SJ



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