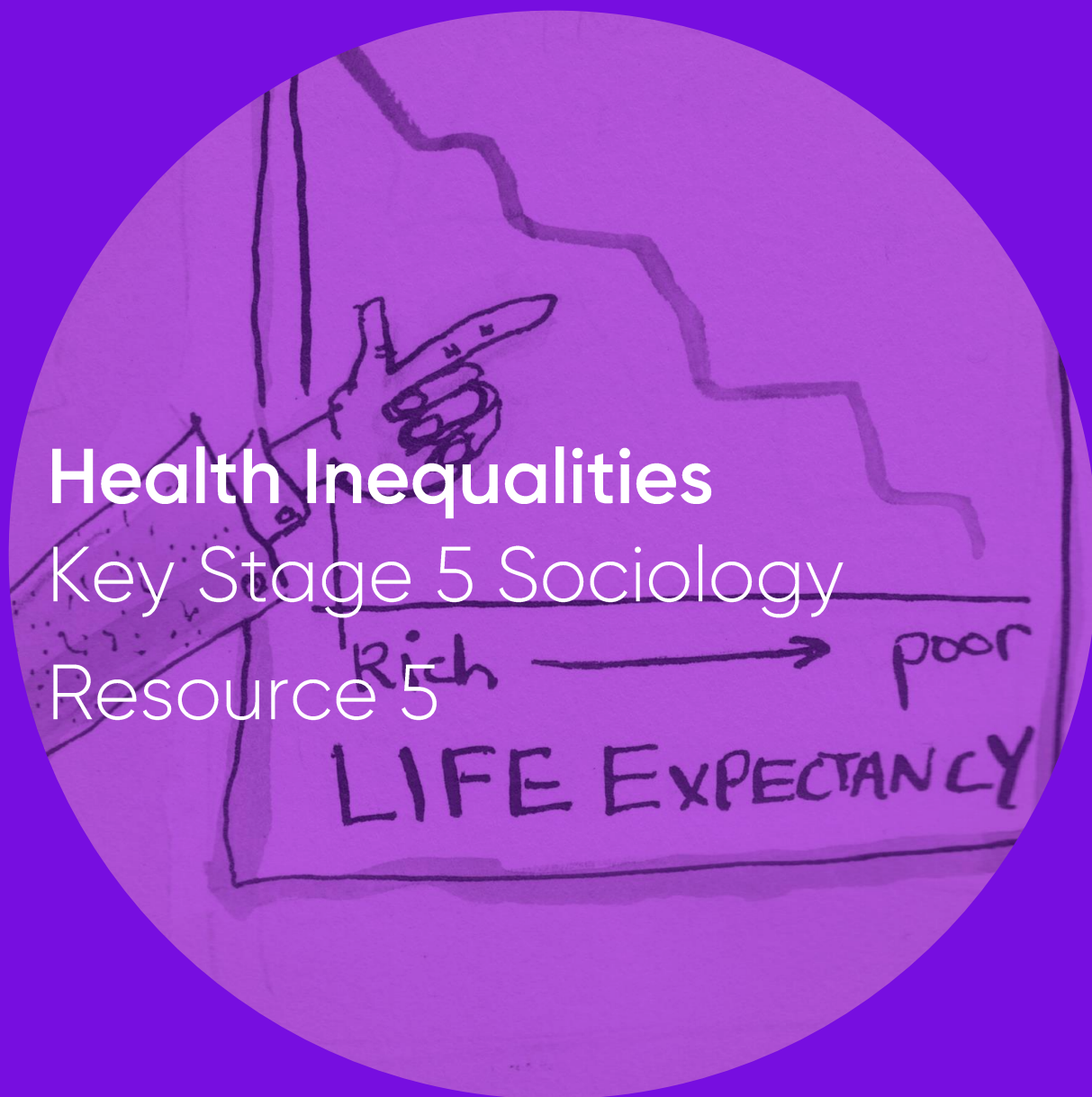


Research  
Based  
Curricula

# Health Inequalities

Key Stage 5 Sociology

Resource 5



2019



# Resource Five Overview



Topic Inequalities and the Medical Profession

A-Level Modules Health and the medical profession

Objectives After completing this resource you should be able to:

- ✓ Discuss the role of doctors can play in tackling health inequalities.
- ✓ Discuss unequal access to a medical career and current policies to address this

Instructions

1. Read the data source
2. Complete the written activities
3. Explore the further reading



# Resource Five

## Data Source



### Section A

#### The Role of Doctors

General Practitioners treat common medical conditions and refer people to specialist services, when necessary. Health inequalities are very relevant to GP's, as it has been estimated that approximately one fifth of all GP appointments has a social root. Doctors with a good understanding of the social determinants of health have been found to be more emphatic towards their patients (Babbel et al, 2017).

There are several different ways that doctors can act on health inequalities and the wider determinants of health. These include:

**Taking social histories** – this is where a GP would ask questions (sometimes over a period of time), it may include questions that reveal a person's social circumstances. If the GP has this information they can judge risk likelihood of disease/likelihood, and potentially intervene as described below.

**Social prescribing** – the approach of referring patients to non-clinical services such as further education, horticulture, book groups, sports, arts organisations or finance advice services. Referring to non-clinical services acknowledges that health is determined by social, economic and environmental factors.

**Medical education** – teaching practical skills and competencies for health equity, and ensuring consideration of health inequalities is embedded throughout the curricula.

**Advocating for individuals and communities** – for example if someone attends with asthma, a social history could be taken, which then revealed the patient lived in damp rented housing. The doctor could then write to the housing association or landlord asking for improvements to be made.

# Resource Five

## Data Source



**Action as an employer** – Across the UK GP's employ thousands of people in a number of different roles including nurses, health care assistants, pharmacists and admin staff. Doctors as managers of their surgeries can advocate for staff to be paid the real living wage (the minimum amount needed to meet basic needs).

**Advocacy for policy change** – doctors are a professional group which are highly trusted by the population, they are well placed to open debate, promote action on health inequalities and attempt to influence policy.

### Section B

#### Inequalities within the medical profession and career opportunities

'It is only by selecting the best applicants, in the fairest way, that the UK can continue to produce world-class doctors'  
BMA council chair Mark Porter

Health inequalities are not just relevant to the work of a medical professional, but also to those who enter the profession. In the UK 20% of the schools provide 80% of the applicants to medicine. 50% of secondary schools have never had an applicant apply to medicine. Doctors from less affluent socio-economic groups and comprehensive schools are underrepresented in the profession.

When doctors have qualified they are also more likely to work in more affluent areas. The most deprived areas of the country have the least amount of medics. This also results in older and white people having better access to health care, with the young and BME groups having worse access. Whilst access to health care is not the main cause of ill health, it is identified as one of the influencing factors (Dahlgren and Whitehead diagram, resource one). Reduced access to care further exacerbates inequalities.

# Resource Five

## Data Source



There is currently a shortage of doctors in the UK. As a result, 1,500 new medical school places have been allocated across the country over the next three years. The shortage includes General Practitioners. The government is currently offering a £20,000 salary supplement to GP trainees to work in areas of the country where there have been vacancies for several years. The current locations include North Cumbria and South Cumbria locally, and further afield Durham; North Yorkshire; Lancaster and many others.

Universities are currently working to encourage applications to medicine which better represent society. This is known as "widening participation". Every medical school has a widening participation scheme, though these do vary. Some examples include:

Edge Hill University, Southport – A series of free events designed to support applications to medicine.

King's University, London – Offer a medicine degree which takes six years instead of five. This is to offer a more graduated introduction to medicine. It includes additional support in the first two years

Lancaster University – Host a range of open days, school talks, taster days and summer school activities. They also run a "contextual offer" scheme. Where participants which meet the widening access criteria may be offered a lower grade entry requirements.

# Resource Five Activities



## Activities

1. Outline how doctors can act on health inequalities.
2. Visit <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/gp-topics/education/in-full-the-1500-new-medical-school-places/20036374>.article Which region has the highest number of new medical places?
3. Which three groups of people have better access to health care?
4. Imagine you are a GP working in the area that you live in. You have noticed an increase in the number of children visiting your surgery with respiratory diseases and mental health problems. You have taken a social history of the attendees and you have noticed that they live in rented accommodation, and many of these houses have problems with damp. Write a draft letter which could be sent to the housing provider on behalf of your patient, including the information you think would be important to encourage the provider to improve the standard of housing offered.

## Advocacy Project



*Providing  
evidence*

## Medicine Career Project



*Creativity*

5. Pick one of the two individual research projects below, and write up a one page document of your findings:
  - Research different widening participation schemes available at medical schools.
  - Look up the role of a Physician's Associate, consider how the work is different to a GP.

# Resource Five

## Further Reading



- Explore**
1. Doctors for Health Equity Report (2016) by the World Medical Association and the Institute of Health Equity:  
<http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/resources-reports/doctors-for-health-equity-world-medical-association-report/doctors-for-health-equity-wma-full-report-pdf.pdf>
  2. Social Determinants of Health – what doctors can do (2011). Guidance from the British Medical Association.



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