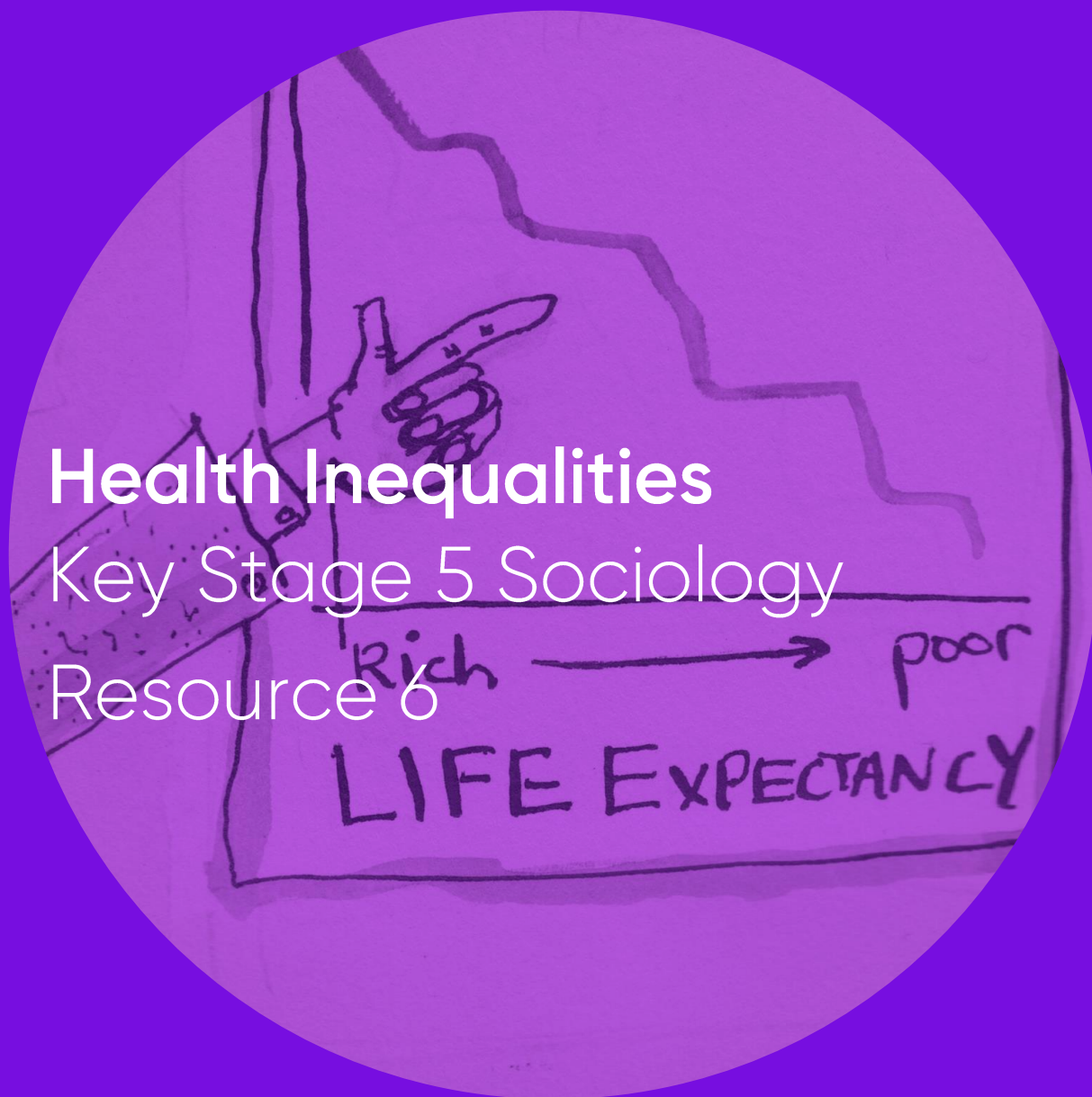


Research
Based
Curricula

Health Inequalities

Key Stage 5 Sociology

Resource 6



2019



Resource Six Overview



Topic Inequalities, Politics and Policy

A-Level Modules Agencies of Social Control - Government

Objectives After completing this resource you should be able to:

- ✓ To gain a brief overview of some of the ways in which politics impacts on health.
- ✓ To consider health and austerity.
- ✓ To learn how the introduction of smoke free legislation led to population health improvements.

Instructions

1. Read the data source
2. Answer the questions
3. Take part in the debating activity
4. Explore the further reading



Resource Six

Data Source



Governments have immense power when it comes to health. They create policies and legislation which influence the wider and social determinants of health. They also allocate monies to public services.

Section A

Health, Recessions and Austerity

The recession which started in 2008 has been referred to as “the great depression” as it was longer and deeper than any other recession, including the “great depression” of the 1930’s.

During a recession the effect on health is mixed. People are less likely to die in a car accident or from other hazardous behaviours (smoking and alcohol consumption may decrease).

The negative effect on health is very much on mental health, as people fear losing their jobs, levels of stress and depression in the population increase, as does the suicide rate.

The government’s policy response to recession has a significant impact on the nation’s health during and following a recession. Austerity is a term used to refer to measures taken by the government to reduce deficits through spending cuts, tax increases or a combination of both.

There have been significant cuts to local government, the police, and other public services, this included cuts to legal aid (and justice), educational maintenance allowance, libraries, social care, youth services, road maintenance, children’s centres and welfare (benefits). These cuts have the most impact on the most vulnerable.

Over the last decade there has been increase in break downs, a tripling in injuries and deaths amongst cyclists, increase in homelessness, an increase in food bank usage and reduced access to education and justice for those with fewer resources.

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Data Source



Austerity is seen as having a negative impact on population health over the last decade, a report in 2017 found there to be excess of over 45,000 deaths in the UK between 2010–2014 as a result of spending cuts.

Section B

Smoke Free Legislation

Governments have the power to create healthy environments. One example of this is smoke free legislation that was introduced in 2007. This made it illegal to smoke indoors in workplaces, this included pubs, restaurants and work vehicles. The smoking ban, as it became known, led to:

- An increase in numbers of people attempting to quit smoking
- An increase in the numbers of people successfully quitting as it became easier to avoid smoking
- There are fewer young people smoking ten years later
- Fewer hospital admissions for heart attacks a year later
- Reduction in asthma admissions to hospital from children in the three years after the ban
- People who work in bars and pubs (which traditionally offer lower levels of pay) had fewer respiratory illnesses.

Whilst smoking rates have decreased, the gap between smoking rates in the wealthiest and poorest still exists. This shows that measures which improve population health, do not necessarily lead to a reduction in health inequalities.

The Royal Society of Public Health described the legislation as “one of the biggest public health interventions we’ve seen in the last 15 years”. The general public and businesses had a very high level of compliance with the legislation, with very few breaches.

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Data Source



There has now been further legislation introduced regarding smoking, including an increase in the age of purchase from 16 to 18, picture warnings included on packaging, standardised packaging and a ban in sales from vending machines.

Laws have also been introduced to prevent anyone from smoking inside a car with a person under 18. The purpose of introducing this legislation is to prevent children from being exposed to the chemicals in cigarette smoke which lead to cancer, bronchitis and pneumonia.

There have been criticisms of the legislation as there have been very few people caught and fined by the Police, however from a public health perspective this sends a strong message that smoking in a car with children will damage their health. This shows how legislation can be used to improve health.

Resource Six Activities



Activities

1. What is austerity?
2. How does austerity impact health?
3. Explain how spending cuts to a public service have impacted health.

Debate

4. "If society puts people in such a position that they die an early and unnatural death, it is murder" (from Tomley and Hobbs, 2015) based on the concept of "social murder". This was described by Friedrich Engels as an act committed by the political and social elite against those with the least power. Do you agree or disagree? Discuss and debate this statement.

Resource Six

Further Reading



- Explore**
1. *The body economic: eight experiments in economic recovery from Iceland to Greece* by Stuckler and Basu (2014). This book provides an insight into the health impact of the financial crisis. It shows how different nations have responded to financial crises.
 2. *How politics makes us sick, neoliberal epidemics* by Schrecker and Bambra (2015). This book talks about how different policy approaches have left to differences in population health.
 3. *Health Inequalities: Critical Perspectives* by Katherine Smith and Claire Bambra (2016). This book is very good and includes chapters on why we don't tackle health inequalities; neoliberalism; how politics impact health and many other topics also discussed in this research pack



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