

Specimen Response for Study Theme 2

STUDY THEME 2: WEALTH AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN THE UK

Question

To what extent is there a link between income and health?

(15 marks)

Response

When the NHS was set up in 1948 it aimed to reduce inequalities in health years on and the gap is there and widening. The Black Report found that social class was one of the biggest factors in health. Later reports have all agreed with this. There is clear evidence that your income, social position gender and race and the area you live in can affect your chance of achieving good health.

It has been proved that income and wealth is a major influence in Health. The higher and wealthier social classes have better health than that of the lower classes. Government Reports clearly prove this. The Acheson Report of the 1990's stated that while the health of the nation had improved inequality in health between the higher and lowest social classes was widening. This is due to a number of factors. Less than 30% of adults eat fruit once a week. Due to income, some people can't afford to buy fresh food and lead a healthier life.

The North/South divide is also important. Based on the number of constituencies in Britain with a league team in terms of health and wealth, the findings were that the six worse areas in Britain were in Glasgow. Death rates are highest in Scotland followed by the North of England and are the lowest in the South of England.

This does not mean that all people in Scotland have poor health and all people in the south of England have better health. There are poor health areas in London and other English cities and there are people in Scotland with excellent health. Unemployment runs high in the inner cities. Whilst in Bearsden, unemployment is at 7.5% Clydebank is hit by 33%. This means less income for less fresh food. Unemployment can also lead to a number of other problems. It can result in depression

which means they turn to smoking, drink and drugs. Smoking in classes D and E are four times higher than of A and B. The wealthier classes can afford leisure activities, swimming to help them stay healthy. Children in Easterhouse are five times more likely to die before their first birthday than in the rest of the country.

The introduction of private health care has led to a two tier system. It tends to be only the wealthier classes that can afford it and therefore, getting quicker treatment in cleaner facilities. Packages can be arranged where an amount is paid a month for treatment but the unemployed and people on low incomes cannot afford this.

Lifestyles play a part in health standards. Due to income some people can't afford to buy fresh food or join a health club. They eat in McDonalds everyday. Poor people are more likely to be fat. According to the Department of Health only 10% of social class 1 suffer from obesity, for social class v it is 30%.

Prescriptions charges also mean some people are disadvantaged. People just over the threshold for free prescriptions may only be able to afford one out of many items. 12% of prescriptions are now full price.

Income is a major influence in health as it determines the place you live and the lifestyle you can lead and the ways you can stay healthy.