

Lesson details

Year Group: Year 10

Subject: History

Where I will find my work: In this document

Do Now Questions

1. Name development in WW1?
2. Name development in WW2?
3. Name all seven factors in Health.

Engage

LO: How did Public Health improve from 1900-1945?

Learn

Read the information in the learn section.

Build

Answer the questions in the build section based on your grade.

Apply

Answer the TEEL question in the Apply section – “Which factor was the most important in improving public health from 1900-1945?”

Review

Did Public health improve?



Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

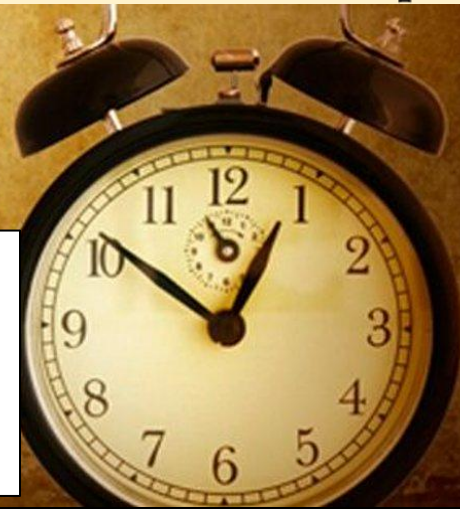
Our History

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Form: _____

Target Grade: _____



Britain: Health and the people: c1000 to the present day

UNIT FOUR: Modern Medicine, 1900 - The Present Day



Section Three: Modern public health: the importance of Booth, Rowntree, and the Boer War; the Liberal social reforms; the impact of world wars on public health, poverty and housing; the Beveridge Report and the Welfare State; creation and development of the National Health Service; costs, choices and the issues of healthcare in the 21st Century.

DO NOW TASK:



- 1. LAST LESSON: What are the 7 factors you can analyze in a 16 mark question ?

- 2. LAST WEEK: Which government allowed for penicillin to be mass manufactured?

- 3. LAST MONTH: Give one reason why there was an increase in exploration in Elizabethan England

- 4. LAST TERM: Explain what a Laissez-Faire government meant

- 5. LAST YEAR : Give one reason why public health was poor in Medieval Towns

LESSON SEVEN

Date:

How did Public Health improve from 1900-1945?



L/O □ To identify change and continuity
To evaluate change and continuity

Before both World Wars, the British fought in a war called the **Boer War (1899-1902)**, this was fought in South Africa.



However:

During recruitment for the war, only around 40% of volunteers were found fit enough to fight. In some large industrial cities, up to 90% of men were rejected because they were too unhealthy.

This shocked the British Army and the government. Many men were suffering from poor diets, disease and the effects of living in overcrowded, polluted cities.

At the same time, tensions in mainland Europe were increasing, and countries such as Germany were building stronger armies. This led to fears that Britain was becoming weaker as a nation, backed up by research from the time by individuals such as Booth and Rowntree (see next page). As a result, the government became more willing to introduce reforms to improve public health and the fitness of the population.

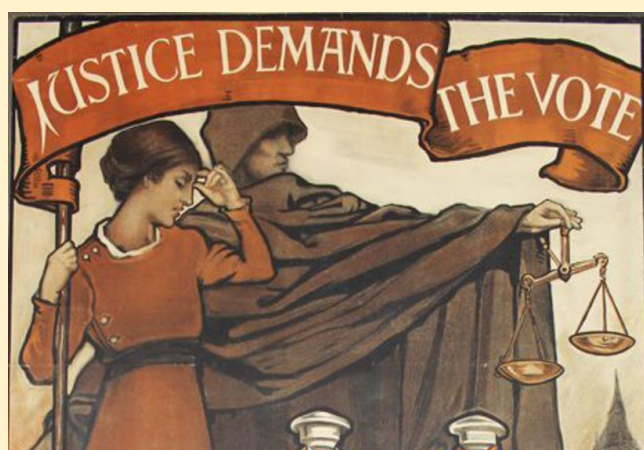


In 1889, **Charles Booth** published *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Booth was not funded by the government — he used his own money to carry out this large-scale investigation because he wanted to find out the truth about poverty. His research showed that around 30% of Londoners were living in poverty and could not afford enough food, even when they had full-time jobs. He also

found a link between poverty and high death rates. Booth's detailed maps and statistics provided clear evidence that poverty was a serious national problem.



In 1901, **Seebohm Rowntree** published *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. Rowntree ran a successful sweet manufacturing company in York and also taught disadvantaged adults, which made him aware of the problems faced by working-class families. His investigation found that 28% of people in York did not have enough money to meet their basic needs at some point in their lives. Rowntree showed that many families lived in “primary poverty”, meaning their wages were simply too low to survive on. However, he also argued that some families were in “secondary poverty”, where limited wages were sometimes spent on non-essential items such as alcohol instead of food and rent.



At the same time, the need for Britain to have a strong fighting force meant that poverty and poor health were becoming serious national concerns. The evidence from Booth, Rowntree and the Boer War suggested that too many men were physically unfit to defend the country.

The government's traditional policy of *laissez-faire* — where it avoided interfering in people's lives — was increasingly seen as outdated. By 1910, around 60% of adult men had the right to vote (women still did not have the vote). This meant politicians had to

pay more attention to public opinion, especially working-class voters who were directly affected by poverty.

Pressure for change increased further after the formation of the **Labour Party** in 1900. The Labour Party grew quickly in popularity and represented the interests of working people. This made it more important for the Liberal government to introduce social reforms if they wanted to keep voters' support.

As a result, the government became more willing to move away from *laissez-faire* policies and take action to improve public health and living conditions.

GRADE 3 - 5: **Identify** 2 reasons why individuals were more important in the government deciding to make changes

GRADE 5 - 7: **Explain** which factor you feel was more important for changes to public health after 1900

GRADE 7 - 9: As above AND link in **wider context** eg fears of other countries, new political parties etc.



What New Laws Did the Government Introduce?



From 1906 onwards, the Liberal government introduced a series of reforms designed to improve living conditions and public health. These reforms marked an important shift away from the traditional laissez-faire approach, where the government avoided interfering in people's lives. Their first focus was on children.

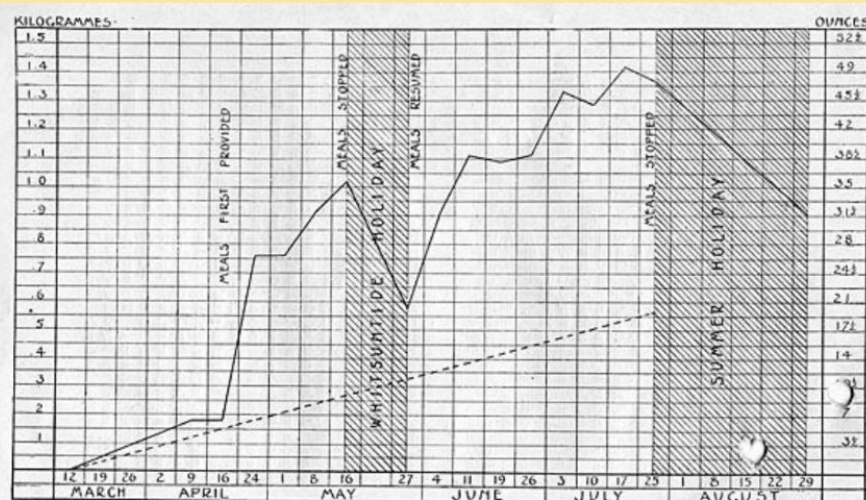
1906 – Education (Provision of Meals) Act

This Act allowed local councils to provide school meals. Poor children could receive a free meal. By 1914, over 158,000 children were receiving free meals each day.

This improved children's nutrition, helping them grow stronger and healthier. Better nutrition reduced the risk of disease and long-term health problems.

However, only around half of local authorities introduced meals. This meant support depended on where a child lived.

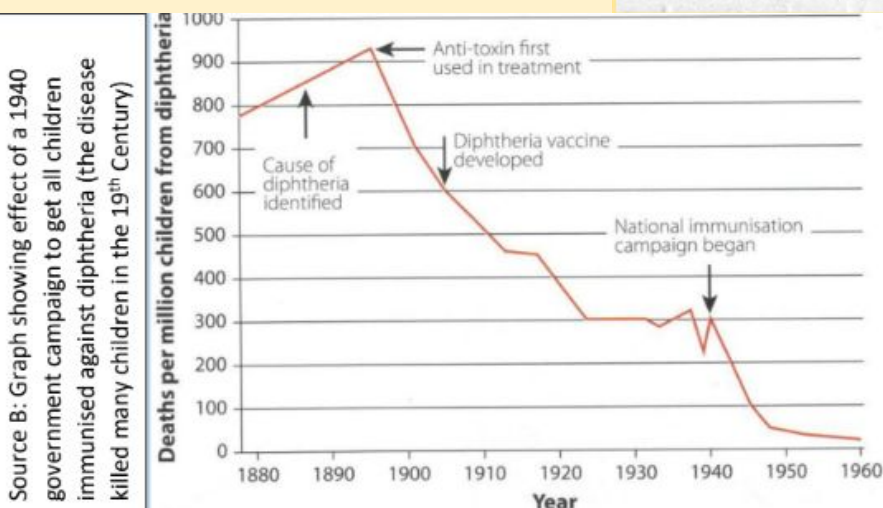
Source A: Graph showing weight gain in children in 1907 as an impact of free school meals



1907 – School Medical Inspections Act

In 1907, councils were required to provide medical inspections in schools. Doctors checked for illnesses such as rickets, poor eyesight and malnutrition. In 1912 the government agreed to pay for treatment at school clinics because many parents could not afford it.

This was important because it meant the government was now actively identifying and treating health problems in children.



However, medical services varied across the country and were not always consistent.

1908 – Children and Young Persons Act

This Act made it illegal to neglect or abuse children. It introduced juvenile courts and aimed to protect children's welfare. This showed that the government was beginning to accept responsibility for protecting vulnerable members of society. **However**, child poverty and neglect did not disappear.

GRADE 3 - 4: **Identify** two ways children's health would have improved due to government action

GRADE 5 - 6: **Explain** which Act you believe had the biggest impact on children and why

GRADE 7 - 9: **Evaluate** how effective overall these acts would have been and why.





Once reforms for children were in place, the government widened its intervention, introducing measures to protect adults from poverty, illness and unemployment — further moving away from laissez-faire policies.

1908 – Old Age Pensions Act

People over 70 with no other income could receive 5 shillings per week (around £20 in today's money). This reduced extreme poverty among the elderly. The number of older people relying on charities fell by over 80,000. This was significant because, for the first time, the state was providing direct financial support. **However**, 5 shillings was a small amount and did not guarantee a comfortable life.

1911 – National Insurance Act

This Act required workers, employers and the government to contribute weekly payments into a national insurance fund. In return, workers could receive:

- Up to 26 weeks of sick pay
- Free medical treatment from a panel doctor
- Limited unemployment benefit (up to 15 weeks in certain trades)

This helped prevent workers from falling into poverty if they became ill. By improving access to medical care, it directly improved public health.

However:

- Workers had to pay from their own wages and their families were not covered
- Unemployment payments were small
- It did not cover all workers

It was a major step forward, but not a complete welfare system.

Housing and Town Planning Act 1919

The government spent several decades improving housing. Back-to-back housing, common during the Industrial Revolution, was banned, reducing the number of people living in overcrowded, filthy, disease-ridden slums.

In 1918, under the **Maternity and Child Welfare provisions**, local councils were required to provide health visitors, clinics for pregnant women, and day nurseries, improving care for mothers and children.

By 1930, a major slum clearance programme had begun. Old, unsafe houses were demolished and replaced with modern homes, removing many of the conditions that had contributed to the spread of disease. These improvements helped reduce mortality, particularly from diseases like tuberculosis and other illnesses linked to poor sanitation, showing that the government was beginning to take responsibility for public health rather than leaving people to cope on their own.

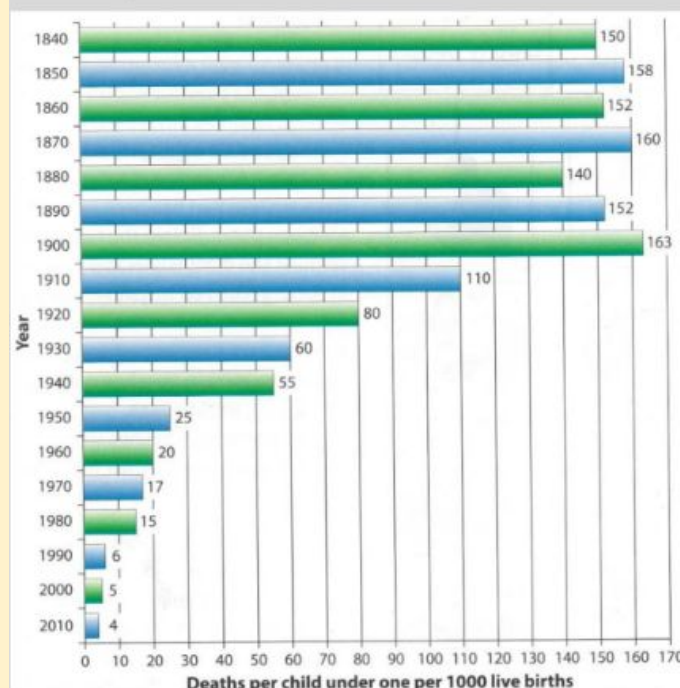
How Much Impact Did the Liberal Reforms Have?

One clear sign of improvement was the fall in infant mortality. In 1900, around 163 out of every 1,000 babies died before the age of one. Today, the figure is around 4 per 1,000.

Improved maternal care, health visitors, school meals, nursing support and better awareness of hygiene all helped reduce infant deaths in the early Twentieth Century.

However, poverty was not eliminated. Many reforms were limited, locally controlled and depended on contributions from workers. The government had begun to accept responsibility for public health, but it was not yet providing universal support.

Source C: Bar graph showing infant mortality rates in Britain, 1840 - 2010



GRADE 3 - 5: **Identify** two ways public health was improved after 1908 due to government actions.

GRADE 5 - 7: **Explain** which Act would have had the biggest impact on public health and why

GRADE 7 - 9: **Evaluate** how effective overall these acts would have been and why.

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Which factor was the most important in improving public health from 1900-1945?

Challenge: Which was the second most important factor, and why was it not as important?

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Peer Assessment

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EBI

