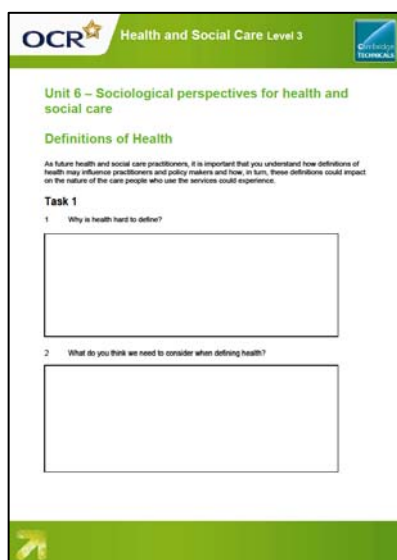# Unit 6 – Sociological perspectives for health and social care

Definitions of Health

Instructions and answers for Teachers

These instructions should accompany the OCR resource 'Definitions of Health', which supports the OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Certificate in Health and Social Care Unit 6 – Sociological perspectives for health and social care

Associated Files:
Definitions of Health task sheets

Expected Duration:
Task 1 – approx 30 minutes
Task 2 – approx 30 minutes
Task 3 – approx 30 minutes

Definitions of Health is a range of tasks that enables learners to investigate and demonstrate their knowledge of different definitions of health.

Explain to your learners that the way we define health often determines how society manages illness. Therefore, it has become increasingly important to try to find a definition for health that can encompass all aspects of health and well-being and could be used by practitioners from all occupational backgrounds.

As future health and social care practitioners, it is important that your learners understand how definitions of health may influence practitioners and policy makers and how, in turn, these definitions could impact on the nature of the care people who use the services could experience.

This resource contains three tasks.

Task 1

1   Why is health hard to define?

> Learners may refer to some of the information listed below, or they may answer this question with additional responses.
> - It is difficult to exactly identify what constitutes 'health'.
> - Health could refer to a variety of categories such as physical, social, emotional and or other categories, which makes finding a single definition difficult.
> - Health could mean different things to different people from different cultures, generations or backgrounds.
> - Health could mean that you are not ill and this excludes categories of people who have long term conditions but, who are not ill.

2   What do you think we need to consider when defining health?

> Learners may refer to some of the information listed below, or they may answer this question with additional responses.
> - Physical aspects of health
> - Wellbeing- Intellectual aspects of a persons life
> - Social aspects of a persons life
> - Emotional aspects of a person's life

3   What is your definition of health?

> Learners should identify their own personal definition of health here. They may wish to discuss this with their colleagues.

4   What is the World Health Organisation's definition of health (1948)?

> "A state of complete physical, social and mental wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"
>
> *http://definitionofwellness.com/dictionary/health.html*

5   The definition above received much criticism; why could this be?

> The learners may identify some criticisms from those listed below, or they may identify further criticisms.
> - The definition is vague
> - We are not told what a state of complete wellbeing is
> - Emotional wellbeing is excluded from the definition

6   Outline the WHO definition of health (1984)

"Health is seen as a resource for everyday life, not an object of living. It is a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities. The extent to which an individual or (group of individuals) is able, on one hand to realise aspirations and satisfy needs, and on the other hand to change or cope with the environment."

http://archive.suite101.com/article.cfm/medical_student/62292

7   Is this definition any better? Why?

The learners may identify some of the reasons listed below.
- This definition acknowledges that health is not the aim of living.
- This definition acknowledges that health means different things to different people.
- Refers to a range of aspects of health.
- This is a positive concept as it does not focus on illness and infirmity.
- 'Realise aspirations and satisfy needs' acknowledges that people have different perspectives when it comes to health.
- This definition does not specify an environment and therefore recognises that peoples definition of health maybe shaped by their environment- therefore leaving the definition sufficiently vague in order to be transferable to different environments.

The learners may offer additional reasons to those listed above, this is not a comprehensive list. Explanations of why may vary.

Allow 30 minutes for this task.

Task 2

Additional models of health are identified below. Learners should define each of these models and discuss at least one positive and negative feature of each.

Models of Health	Definition	Positive feature	Negative feature
The Medical Model	Health is viewed as the absence of disease. The medical model describes the approach to illness which is dominant in Western medicine. It treats the human body as a very complex mechanism and advocates the treatment of symptoms through the use of medical intervention and procedures. This model focuses on cause and effect scenarios. For example it was this formulae that led to the wide spread use of electro convulsive therapy earlier this century to treat mental illness.	This approach examines cause and effect and this has led to significant research and advances in many areas, such as cancer.

Many illnesses can be treated via medical intervention. | This approach focuses on cause and effect. Therefore the approach is used to treat illness instead of educating individuals about health before the onset of an illness.

This approach is very narrow in its focus- it does not consider other factors that cause illness; it only considers abnormal bodily functions. |
| The Social Model | This model has become more dominant in society, where the focus has become prevention rather than cure. The social model emphasises the importance of addressing the origins of ill health i.e. social conditions. The focus of this approach is on the cause of illness linked to societal factors not abnormal bodily functions. | This model focuses on all aspects of an individuals lifestyle in order to understand ill health

This model focuses on explaining and addressing the root causes of ill health and therefore trying to address these rather than waiting for a person to become ill and treating the illness/ symptoms. | It is difficult to identify single causes of illness due to the focus being on many causes and explanations.

It is difficult to generate a complete definition of health when so many factors and variables need to be considered. |

The teacher could consolidate the positive and negative features with the wider group in order to further support learner knowledge.

Allow 30 minutes for this task.

Task 3

Many people argue that it is impossible to have one universal definition of health. Learners could discuss the statement below and consolidate their views by producing an essay.

It is impossible to have one single definition of health

Agree it is impossible to have one universal definition	**Disagree** it is possible to have one universal definition
Definitions of health are used in different environments and therefore how health is defined will always be subject to the environment. Definitions are used by a variety of practitioners and they focus on different aspects of the human anatomy or wellbeing and one definition could not address all of these areas. Health means different things in different cultures and therefore a definition developed in the Western world may not be useful in the East due to varying cultural beliefs about what constitutes being healthy.	The definition can be vague in order to make it useable in a number of different environments. A universal definition will enable all sections of society and the world to develop policies to support citizens universally. In order to have one universal definition, key organisations could collaborate and share views and this would support a more universal approach to health care in society.

Allow 30 minutes for this task.

These activities offer an opportunity for English skills development.

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