

Topic: The media and public opinion

Lesson: The media and the NHS	KS or Year Group: Year 9
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 1 – Sky news clip: ‘Hospital deep clean fails to beat MRSA’2. Resource 2 – Making impossible choices3. Resource 3 – Growing old gracefully4. Resource 4 – Your opinion	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils discuss the media’s role in terms of informing the public.• Pupils discuss bias within the media.

National Curriculum

Key Concepts: 1.1b, 1.1d, 1.2c

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.1c, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c, 2.2d

Range and Content: 3d, 3g

Curriculum Opportunities: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4g, 4i

Lesson

Pupils decide whether or not the media have a right and/or an obligation to inform the public about NHS performance. With the NHS in mind, they also discuss bias and influence within the media.

Pupils learn about some NHS issues through watching a news clip and reading two (re-phrased) newspaper articles. Pupils compare the information sources with their own experiences of the NHS. They also take part in a circle-time activity within which bias and influence are discussed.

Starter

- Lesson objectives and outcomes are shared with pupils.
- Pupils are asked to share with the rest of the class their experiences of the NHS. They might wish to talk about the experiences of (anonymous!) friends or relatives.
- Pupils are shown the ‘Hospital deep clean fails to beat MRSA’ news clip.
- Volunteers are chosen to comment upon whether the news clip portrays the NHS in the same way as the pupils have, and whether the clip is positive or negative. Comments should be justified.
- Those pupils who commented are reminded that this will be beneficial to their level in Citizenship.

Main activity

Activity 1:

- In pairs (taking reading age into account), pupils read **Resource 2 – Making impossible choices** and **Resource 3 – Growing old gracefully**. It should be explained that each sheet features a news story.
- A few volunteers are asked to comment upon their first impressions of the articles. Pupils might wish to consider issues such as:
 - Which other NHS-linked information sources have pupils previously accessed via the media?
 - Are there areas within the NHS that are successful and effective? Do they get mentioned in today's sources?
 - Do the articles paint a good impression of the health service? Why (not)?
 - Is the government mentioned?

Activity 2:

- Pupils form a circle of chairs and are given copies of **Resource 4 – Your opinion**.
- The 'essential words' are read out by a volunteer.
- Volunteers respond to the questions on **Resource 4**. (Pupils might need reminding that the questions refer to the news clip as well as to the articles.) Vocabulary that might be of use to the teacher includes: *responsibility, target audience, newsworthy, pessimistic, optimistic, factually (in)correct, freedom of information, sensationalism, human rights, health service and moral panic*.
- Pupils are asked to comment on how successful their peers were when giving feedback.
- For example:
 - Who used key vocabulary from **Resource 4**?
 - Who gave balanced answers?
 - Who justified their opinions?
 - Who used persuasive language?
 - Who spoke at an adequate volume?
 - Who gave eye contact to their classmates while speaking?

Plenary

- Having had time to weigh up *other people's* opinions, pupils are asked to return to their seats and write down their own answers to the questions on **Resource 4**.
- Volunteers are asked to stand at the front and read out one/some of their answers.
- Again, pupils are asked to rate the volunteers according to how confidently and persuasively they presented their arguments.

Aim high

- During the starter, high-achieving pupils should volunteer to talk to the rest of the class about experiences of the NHS.
- During the main activity, high-achieving pupils should contribute to the circle-time discussion.
- During the plenary, high-achieving pupils should justify their opinions about influence and bias.

Assessment

In order for pupils to achieve certain levels within the lesson, the following should be considered:

Level 5:

Pupils can decide whether it is fair for the media to give a negative portrayal of the NHS. Pupils can clearly communicate an argument about whether or not the information sources are biased.

Level 6:

Pupils are aware of the differing opinions within the class about the NHS. Pupils can explain the impact that the media might have upon the NHS and employees/users of the NHS.

Level 7:

Pupils can question some of the media-influenced assumptions about the NHS made by classmates. Pupils can evaluate the roles that journalists might have in terms of influencing health policy within the UK.

Level 8:

Pupils can make perceptive observations about the types of bias that the media demonstrate. Pupils can ask challenging questions about the influence that the media can have over politicians who work directly with the health service.

Check the web

www.nhs.uk

<http://news.sky.com>

Summary of key learning

- Pupils can describe what media bias is.
- Pupils can spot examples of one-sidedness within media-based sources.

Resource 2 – Making impossible choices

Ms Shelley O'Halloran has publicly blamed an Oxford hospital for the death of her premature baby. She claims that her daughter, Kezia, could not get access to specialist surgery because all of the incubators were full.

Ms O'Halloran believes that doctors were put in the unfortunate position of having to choose between babies that day. She believes that Kezia was *not* chosen by the doctors because she had poor chances of survival due to being born 16 weeks early.

Kezia passed away at the age of three weeks because of a bowel infection that could not be treated; there was not enough room.

Following her daughter's death, Ms O'Halloran made the following comment: 'At the end of the day it's up to the doctors. They are the ones with the choice. They are the ones that play God with your child's life. Kezia didn't get chosen. We need to get the politicians involved and say why are there not enough beds. Why are certain premature babies being seen as more important than other babies? Why?'

There **are 3,500 incubators** around England. Every week, premature baby units have to turn babies away (due to either not having **enough cots** or not having **enough staff**).

Premature baby units should ideally only be 70 per cent full in order to deal with emergencies. However, **many premature baby units are 100 per cent full** for most of the time. Obviously this puts enormous strain on the hospital staff and also puts the lives of premature children at risk. Some families with premature babies are told that they will need to stay at home until a hospital is found with empty incubators. These families might then be asked to **travel for an hour** in order to find a hospital in another town.

It costs **£1,000 a day** to run an intensive care cot. As such, the NHS has stated that it cannot afford to have spare cots available in *all* areas. According to the **Department of Health**, nearly 300 extra cots have been provided recently. Despite this, the Department of Health do accept that further improvements are required.

Resource 3 – Growing old gracefully

According to research, the NHS is not caring properly for many people over the age of 50 (especially those who are old and frail).

Patients with osteoarthritis, incontinence and osteoporosis have been neglected in some cases. However, doctors *have* apparently been making an effort to deal with patients who have heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Some people argue that this is because doctors earn more money for dealing with these kinds of patients.

Many over-50s with osteoarthritis seem to have been treated quite badly within the NHS. For example, some were not given advice about which kinds of exercise to do or given adequate pain relief. Others were not offered joint replacements or talked to properly about their condition.

Some research has indicated that the way in which the old and frail are treated within hospitals **varies** substantially. This has led the charity Age Concern to argue that **age discrimination** exists within the NHS and that many people aged 50 or over are being failed by hospitals.

The Department of Health has commented that older people *do* have a right to high quality care and that it is unacceptable for over-50s to receive worse care than that of younger people. It has also stated that the treatment and care of older people is improving, but that there is still room for further changes. It recognises that better care is needed in terms of dealing with falls, fractures and osteoporosis.

Resource 4 – Your opinion

Essential words

biased: supports or opposes something unfairly

e.g. ‘That commentator was biased against Manchester United.’

influence: affect or change how someone thinks

e.g. ‘Under his influence, I began to think that cocaine was safe.’

1. Describe an **experience** that you or one of your classmates has had with the **NHS**.
2. Which of the sources did you find the most **informative**? Explain why.
3. Give **one fact** from each of the three information sources (i.e. three in total).
4. In your opinion, how **informative** were the three information sources?
5. In your opinion, how **biased** were the three information sources?
6. In your opinion, should the media have a **right** to tell the public about NHS performance? Why (not)?
7. In your opinion, should the media have an **obligation** to tell the public about the NHS performance? Why (not)?
8. Give examples of the kind of facts that the media might use about the NHS in order to **portray it more positively**.