

Better Healthcare for Mothers and Babies: Understanding The Problem

Aims

To understand about the importance of healthcare for mums and babies. To practise identifying reasons for the lack of healthcare for them in some countries, and its consequences.

Note: This could be a sensitive subject for some pupils who may have had siblings or mums who have died or been very ill. It could also worry pupils whose mums are pregnant or thinking of having a baby, so be sure to emphasise that in the UK it is very rare for women to die giving birth. As always, tailor the lesson to your knowledge of your pupils.

Curriculum links

England	Scotland	Wales
<p>Literacy – Speaking (including offering reasons and evidence); Listening and responding; Group discussion and interaction.</p> <p>Citizenship - Preparing to play an active role as citizens (discussing topical issues, problems and events).</p> <p>Global Citizenship (from Oxfam’s Curriculum for Global Citizenship) – Causes and effects of inequality; Our potential to change things; Recognising and starting to challenge unfairness; Empathy towards others; Growing interest in world events.</p>	<p>English Language – Listening (listening in groups); Talking (talking in groups and talking about experiences and feelings)</p> <p>Personal and Social Development – Independence and interdependence.</p> <p>Global Citizenship (from Oxfam’s Curriculum for Global Citizenship)– Causes and effects of inequality; Our potential to change things; Recognising and starting to challenge unfairness; Empathy towards others; Growing interest in world events.</p>	<p>English – Oracy; Reading</p> <p>Personal and Social Education – Listening and expressing views and opinions</p> <p>Global Citizenship (from Oxfam’s Curriculum for Global Citizenship) – Causes and effects of inequality; Our potential to change things; Recognising and starting to challenge unfairness; Empathy towards others; Growing interest in world events.</p>

What you will need

Photocopies of the Causes and Effects sheet, enough for one between four pupils.

What to do

Before you start this activity you may want to use one of a number of methods to introduce basic ideas about healthcare and parenting, particularly if you teach younger or less able children. You might invite a healthcare professional to give a talk about their work, have books available about people being poorly and visiting doctors, or ask children to find out about their own birth story from their parents. To bring out the idea of family and its importance, you might ask children to bring in a photo of a member of their family for display, and the other children can guess who is related to whom.

Activity 1

1. Tell the class that there are lots of things that people around the world are doing to try and make life better for everyone on the planet. One of the things that needs changing is that lots of people don't have good enough healthcare. Ask pupils what 'healthcare' means to them. They could work in pairs and feed back their ideas to the class. Prompt them with ideas about needing medicines when they're ill, help from doctors and nurses who are well trained, and clean hospitals.
2. Tell pupils that one of the times that people particularly need good healthcare is when mums are having babies. Explain that giving birth is usually very safe in the UK, and that having good healthcare makes it safe. In other countries, some mums don't have the same healthcare, which can make it more dangerous for mums and for their babies.
3. Ask them what they know about when they were born. Was their mum in a hospital or did she choose to give birth at home? Were there any problems when they were born – were they born earlier than expected, for example? If they don't know much about what happened when they were born, encourage them to ask their parents about it.

Activity 2

NB. The concept of causes and effects may be hard for younger or less able pupils to understand. If you wish, you could instead do the activity with the whole class and encourage contributions.

1. Ask pupils to split up into groups of four. Once in their groups, explain that they are going to think a bit more about how important healthcare is for mums and their babies. Tell them you are going to give them a list of statements related to the fact that

sometimes women in poor countries get ill and even die in childbirth and they should decide whether each statement is a *cause of* this, an *effect* of it, or neither.

2. If you need to, help them understand the difference between causes and effects before they start. A cause is a reason why something has happened – it could be introduced using the word ‘because’. You could use an example: Asif eats an apple because he is hungry. Being hungry is a cause. When Asif eats the apple, he is not hungry any more. Not being hungry is an effect – something that happens because of something else happening.
3. Hand out the **Causes and Effects** sheet. Depending on your pupils’ reading level you will probably wish to check they understand the statements. Give them 5–10 minutes to fill in their answers.

Take pupils’ responses and discuss them. Ask pupils what they have learned from the exercise. Use this table to help you draw out more about the importance of maternal healthcare.

	Answers
Giving birth to a baby at home with nobody to help happens a lot to mums in poor countries.	CAUSE Because mums give birth on their own, they are more likely to get ill or die if there are problems during the birth.
Many families are left without their mum.	EFFECT As a result of having no access to healthcare, every minute of every day a mum somewhere in the world dies.
If you are poorly you need medicine and a doctor to help you.	NEITHER This is true all over the world. The problem is that in poorer countries mums don’t get the healthcare they need.
Medicines cost a lot of money and if you are poor it is hard to pay for them.	CAUSE Because poor families can often not afford to pay for essential healthcare, mums give birth in bad conditions.
Many poor countries borrowed money from rich countries in the past. They now spend a lot of money paying the rich countries back,	CAUSE Because of debts, many poor-country governments spend a lot of money on repaying richer countries, rather than

leaving little money to pay for other things.	improving healthcare for mums and babies.
More babies do not live to be very old.	EFFECT Babies born early or in unhealthy conditions do not have the same chances as babies in richer countries.
In poorer countries, there are sometimes not enough doctors and nurses to look after everyone.	CAUSE Because there are fewer doctors and nurses, mums and babies don't get the proper care they need.
Having clean water and keeping germs away is important when giving birth to a baby.	NEITHER Again, this is a fact all around the world.

Extension

Tell pupils that many people are trying to persuade world leaders that they need to help poorer countries to provide healthcare for mums and their babies. There is an important meeting happening in September 2008 where world leaders will talk about this, and, if you wish, you can tell pupils that there is a way they can help to persuade them to do more for mums.

The Beliefs and Changing the World lesson plan will help you set the scene for pupils' participation in the Health and Education For All blanket knitting campaign. If you are happy that pupils already have enough information, you could simply tell them about the knitting project (using the information in the Blanket Knitting Campaign Class or Assembly Script) and use or adapt the Sample Letter for Parents with Knitting Instructions to help them participate.

Alternatively, you can simply tell pupils about the knitting campaign (using the Blanket Knitting Campaign: Class or Assembly Script) without encouraging them to take part. If you prefer, you could ask pupils to design a poster about the importance of healthcare for mums and babies.

Causes and Effects

In some countries, mums get poorly or even die when they are having babies. Their babies may also get ill.

Put a cross in a box on the right to show whether each of the sentences below is a cause of mums and babies getting ill, an effect of them getting ill, or neither.

	Cause	Effect	Neither
Giving birth to a baby at home with nobody to help happens a lot to mums in poor countries.			
Many families are left without their mum.			
World leaders have agreed to work together so fewer women become ill when they have a baby.			
Medicines cost a lot of money and if you are poor it is hard to pay for them.			
Many poor countries borrowed money from rich countries in the past. They now spend a lot of money paying the rich countries back, leaving little money to pay for other things. They have to pay back much more money than they originally borrowed.			
More babies do not live to be very old.			
In poorer countries, there are not enough doctors and nurses to look after everyone.			
Having clean water and keeping germs away is important when giving birth to a baby.			

