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| **HA Resource Hub Submission Form** | | | |
| **Resource Title: Public Health in 19th Century Britain** | | | **Age Range: 12-16 (KS3/KS4)** |
| **Author name and email contact:**  Tim Lomas  [tlomas@outlook.com](mailto:tlomas@outlook.com) | **Resource Details: (e.g. how many documents does it consist of? In which order?)**  5 sources and a task | | |
| **Necessary prior learning to complete this:**  Ideally some contextual knowledge of 19th century Britain and its industrialisation | | **What does it lead to next?**  Either follow up work on health improvements in UK and elsewhere or as part of a GCSE medicine theme | |
| **Explanation: How should this resource be used?**  **This can be used in various ways:**   1. **As a case study to illustrate attitudes and circumstances in 19th century Britain using the sources to make inferences, reconstruct and assess conditions using concepts and skills such as causation, change, enquiry;** 2. **As a local history study – similar sources are likely to be available for many localities often through the internet. It could lead to a comparison between your local area and this one;** 3. **As support for a GCSE medicine through time theme.** | | | |

**INVESTIGATING HEALTH AND SANITATION IN A 19th CENTURY TOWN:**

**TASK:**

**Read the sources that follow below. They are all concerned with one town, Gainsborough in Lincolnshire, in the first half of the 19th Century. When you have read the sources, try to answer the following.**

1. **What impression do these sources give us about life in Gainsborough at the time?**
2. **How easy is to understand why bad outbreaks of cholera occurred in Gainsborough in both 1832 and 1849?**
3. **Can you think of any reasons why this might not give us a complete picture of public health in Gainsborough?**
4. **Do these sources show us that people did know how they might improve public health?**
5. **If they did, why do you think more was not done;**
6. **Using any resources you can find (such as internet sources) try to find some evidence about what your local area was like at the time. How does it compare with the situation here?**

**Source A: Extract from a recent book on public health in Lincolnshire:**

“The Gainsborough area between 1841-50 was the least healthy part of Lincolnshire.

*The most common feature associated with epidemics in Lincolnshire can be summarised as…severe over-crowding, damp ill-ventilated cottages, bad drainage unsanitary disposal of sewage, lack of uncontaminated water supply and the existence of migrating workers, especially Irish living in the worst possible living conditions.*

*Another common feature worth noting in Lincolnshire epidemics was the rapid transmission of diseases along the Humber and Trentside along which there was a very extensive trade and passenger traffic”.*

**Source B: Census figures for Gainsborough:**

1801: 4506

1811: 5172

1821: 5893

1831: 6658 1633 houses

1841: 6948 1691 houses

**Source C: “Report to the General Board of Health on the Sanitary Conditions of the Town of Gainsborough” (1850).**

The author, William Lee concluded *“it is scarcely possible for a town to be in a worse condition as to drainage…It would be better without any drains than those with which it is presently afflicted”.*

Other witnesses:

*a) “I have been a practicing surgeon in Gainsborough for 36 years….I had some experience of the cholera in 1832: a majority of the cases came under my care at the time. It first broke out in Ashforth’s Yard in Church Street…There are also cases of cholera in other courts in Church Street…indeed in almost every court in the street.*

*I have had very much experience of cholera during the present year (1850); it was most virulent in Church Street…there have been 30 deaths in Ashforth’s Yard and other courts in Church Street within 100 yards of a sewer leading into an open, inefficient and circuitous drain into the Trent. Scarcely any part of the town has been exempt from fatal cases of cholera.*

*From 4 August to the 22 September of 1848 there occurred in this parish 202 deaths from cholera, 31 from diarrhoea and 3 from dysentery – total 236.*

*The greatest mortality occurred in those yards or courts which are closed at one end and through which there could be no through current of air”*

**(Description by Robert Cooke, a surgeon in the town).**

*b) “The courts off Church Street are crowded and the air bad. I have known visitors go to visit the sick and find it impossible to enter the house….There is a great deficiency of water by which people might cleanse themselves. When I asked how they obtained water from the Trent, I found it was got from a place close to the outfall of one of the sewers. Water is also carried about in barrels and the people pay one halfpenny per pail of 3 gallons. There are stone troughs to catch water from the roof of the church and I have noticed that after rain the people show great eagerness to go to the churchyard to obtain it. The water pipes do not go beyond the vicarage and there are many populous courts in Church Street past that point.*

*I examined the waterworks, the property of Mr William Crabtree and Mr Samuel Grunhill. There is a suction pipe laid from the Trent into a building where a gin is fixed and a horse works 3 pumps. The horse works 4 hours a day.*

*The pipe is of lead 3 inches in diameter. The place is in the middle of the town and some privies empty into the river just above the end of the pipe. A common sewer has its outlet nearby. The privies undoubtedly pollute it when the tide ebbs and flows. There is no filtration of the water and I found it very discoloured in the cistern.*

*I have also observed with much grief the great uncleanliness in many of the courts. I have been told that persons living in the courts come out at night to obey the call of nature; that is the result of the inadequate number and filthy condition of the privies….I have noticed the unhealthiness of the people in the courts and especially the great mortality of children”*

**(Comments of the vicar of Gainsborough).**

*c) “The drain of the yard passes under the floor of our house and the next door. We have to get a prop and push it through or the water would gather and rise to the floor. It is a year and a half since the floor was taken up. The drain smells very bad when full. We have one low room and one chamber occupied by myself, husband and a daughter aged 23. A woman died of cholera next door. The drain is between our door and that. At the next door but one a man died and there were 11 cases in the yard.*

**(Views of Mrs Howett, a poor person living in Smith’s Yard).**

*d) “I believe that the churchyard especially on the eastern side is crowded with bodies. As I have passed down the street I have observed a man probing with an iron rod to find a place to bury in”.*

**(Methodist Minister, Reverend William Worsley).**

**Source D: Gravestones in North Warren Cemetery, Gainsborough opened in 1846:**

* 1. *in affectionate remembrance of:*

1. *William Stothard died Dec. 13 1854 aged 4 \weeks;*
2. *Harry Stothard, died Feb. 29th 1857, aged 5 weeks;*
3. *Walter Stothard, died June 18th 1862, aged 8 weeks;*
4. *Kate Stothard, died September 4th 1869, aged 11 weeks;*
5. *Alfred Stothard, dioed Feb. 11th 1870, aged 9 months;*
6. *Arthur Stothard, died May 18th 1872, aged 14 months.*
   1. *Sacred to the memory of Thomas, son of John and Susanne Inspkip, who died May 5th 1853 aged 16 years.*

*By sudden death I’m snatched away. Death scarcely left me time to say “The Lord Have Mercy on My Soul” so absolute was his control. Reflect when thou my grave see. The next that’s made may be for thee.*

*Also of Joseph their son who died at Hull April 28th 1856, aged 26 years.*

* 1. *Felix Mears. Died Feb. 19th 1854 aged 6 days;*

*George Mears. Died June 21st 1856. Aged 14 years;*

*Lilian Mears. Died April 4th 1858. Aged 10 months;*

*Harold Mears. Died Dec. 27th 1862. Aged 6 years;*

*Ernest Mears. Died April 17th 1866. Aged 7 years;*

*Eliza Mears, their mother. Died Jan 29th 1873. Aged 53 years;*

*George Mears. Died Nov.21st 1880. Aged 67 years.*

**Source E: Report to the General Board of Health on the Sanitary Condition of the Town of Gainsborough” (1850). Description of some Gainsborough streets and yards.**

*“Ashforth’s Yard – there are 2 privies under the same roof with one pit for 20 houses. Something has been done to improve this place but the drainage still lies stagnant in front of the 2 derelict houses”;*

*“Scolding Yard and Beast Market – the refuse from pigsties and a slaughter house runs past the houses along the surface of the Beast Market. There were 5 deaths from cholera…in Beast market the courts are crowded, the houses mixed with slaughter houses and pigsties and there was no sewerage at all even though the Beast Market is one of the main streets in the town”.*

*“Rae’s Yard – there is a tap from the waterworks and a spring well pump. Both are bad. The Trent water is sometimes only on half an hour and for 2 or 3 days a week. Mr Joseph Partridge reported that people have to stand 3 or 4 hours for a bucket of water from a tap in the passage”.*

*“Church Street – there is a sewer under the footpath with a large quantity of offensive matter in it. The depth from the surface is only a few feet and they are covered entrances at short distances close to the houses, used for taking out the filth by hand labour”.*

*“Many people residing near privies are obliged especially in hot weather to keep their windows and doors closed to prevent offensive smells from coming into their houses”.*