Healthcare is an issue within that UK that is constantly being debated and discussed, particularly due to its changing nature. Whilst the UK has its own problems, the global community also faces issues such as disease control, as highlighted by the outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2014. With life expectancy increasing, a number of challenges lie ahead in terms of managing diseases, as well as with the healthcare demands of the elderly. This section aims to introduce students to some of the main debates within the topic and to explain some of the problems that will continue to develop in the global community within their lifetime.

The first sample lesson will consider the implications faced by the world’s ageing population. The second sample lesson looks at global pandemic outbreaks and the difficulties in managing both long term diseases and sudden deadly outbreaks. These lessons aim to improve students’ literacy and communication skills, along with their creative and innovative skills and critical thinking abilities.

These topics tie in to other areas within the section of Health, and could be taught in conjunction with other appropriate subject areas.

Other topic areas that could be covered in this section include (but are not limited to):

- Disease control
- Private v public healthcare
- Gene therapy
- Foreign aid and overseas health crises

**Sample Lesson – Ageing Population**

**What is an ageing population?**

By 2033, the proportion of over 65s in the UK is expected to have risen to 23%, from 16% in 2008 (UN, 2008). In 2007 the number of over 65s in the UK began to outnumber the under 16s (Office of National Statistics, 2008).

An “ageing population” is one where the average age of the population is increasing – the proportion of elderly people is increasing, compared to a decrease in the proportion of under 16s.

There can be a number of different contributing factors to this, including:

- Increased life expectancy due to breakthroughs in healthcare.
- Falling birth rates due to later marriages, better education about contraceptives etc., women choosing to pursue careers before having children.
- People choosing to have smaller families reduces the proportion of young dependents.
Whilst improving life expectancy is not necessarily a bad thing, the shift in age proportions towards an ageing population can cause a number of issues for a country, although there can also be some positive effects.

Implications of an ageing population:

- Pressure on healthcare services.
- Decreasing numbers of economically active people in the population.
- Retired people continue to pay taxes.
- Importance of “grey vote” in politics.
- Increase in tourism amongst older people.
- Change in retirement age – more people working for longer.
- Increased employment in elderly people.
- More support services needed.
- More suitable housing needed – retirement homes, sheltered accommodation etc.
- Increasing poverty in older population.
- People stay healthier for longer.
- Changes in pension legislation.
- Potential for slower economic growth long-term.

Activity 1 could be incorporated here.

Geographical distribution

The UK’s age distributions are not necessarily the same across the country. For example, some areas of the country are popular with people choosing to move when they retire (e.g. Dorset, Devon, Cornwall etc.) and this can alter the age distribution. Therefore, the issues caused by an ageing population (as detailed above) may not necessarily be felt in all areas of the country.

Students should be asked to consider the impact that “retirement migration” has on areas that over 65s leave, and areas that they move to. A number of newspaper articles have been published on this subject and could be included in this section.

e.g. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2810841/Seaside-towns-struggling-cope-ageing-population-figures-areas-65.html

http://www.fleetwoodtoday.co.uk/news/blackpool-more-cases-dementia-anywhere-else-county-1-7265720

http://www.cityam.com/212221/uks-ageing-population-use-interactive-map-see-countrys-average-age-getting-older

Activity 2 could be incorporated here.
Approaches to resolving ageing population issues

The ageing population issue is one that is faced by many countries, not just the UK. Many MEDCs are facing an ageing population imbalance, and this could have a number of implications (as discussed above) if it is not addressed. This is in comparison to many LEDCs, where a youthful population is more likely.

In order to address the potential issues brought about by an ageing population, some countries have adopted different policies. France, for example, adopted a pro-natalist approach that put the following policies into place:

- Monetary incentives for mothers to stay off work for one year following the birth of their third child.
- Subsidised daycare for children under 3 years old and full time school places for over threes.
- Lower rates of income tax dependent on the number of children in a family – e.g. the more children, the lower the rate of tax.
- Three years paid parental leave to be used by either parent.
- Train fare reductions for large families.

France currently has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe, as many families considered having more children.

The UN has suggested that “replacement migration” could be a viable solution for countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US and the UK (UN, 2000).

Activity 3 could be incorporated here.

Changing the retirement age has been often suggested as a method for solving some of the ageing population issues – i.e. if people work longer they will continue to contribute to the economy and to the country’s productivity for longer. This has divided opinion and there are a number of positives and negatives:

- Higher tax revenue – if people work for longer, they will continue to pay income tax for longer.
- Increased flexibility – people who are forced to retire from professions with a fixed retirement age would be able to continue working longer.
- Difficulties in continuing work in manual positions.
- Difficulties in finding work in later life.
- Does not resolve issues in the short term, particularly if the age is raised gradually.

Activity 4 could be incorporated here.
Conclusions

This lesson aims to introduce students to the issues of an ageing population demographic and to some of the proposed solutions to this problem.

Students should have a greater understanding of this issue faced by many MEDCs, and the potential implications.

Activity 1

Implications of an ageing population

Aims

To understand what an ageing population means for its country.

Time 5 – 10mins

Resources

None required, although students could be asked to brainstorm ideas on large paper to present to the class.

Task

Ask students to consider the implications that an ageing population has. This could be an individual or a group activity, but students should be asked to feedback to the class so that a complete list of effects can be discussed. It is likely that they will only consider negative implications, and could be directed to think of positive aspects – or this could be left until the end of the exercise to see how students respond without prompting.

Activity 2

Area case studies

Aims

To understand the differences in population in different areas of the UK.
To understand how to use and interpret statistics.

Time 30mins – 1hr (or to be set as homework).

Resources

Students should be allowed to use computers with internet access to research their area. The interactive population graphs produced by the Office for National Statistics should be used as the basis for this activity (http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc134_a/)
Task

Students should be divided into small groups to research the population structure in a specific area. Students could either be given the choice of area or could be assigned an area at the teacher’s discretion. Whilst it would be possible to consider only areas in Wales as part of this exercise, more contrasting changes could be highlighted if comparing a broader range of locations across the UK. In particular, different types of areas – large urban cities, rural areas, coastal areas etc. – should be selected.

The Neighbourhood Statistics website has an interactive tool for comparing population distribution (by age) in different areas in the UK. For this task, students should compile a case study of an area, looking at the distribution of the population, how it has changed between 2001 and 2013, how it compares to other areas and to the UK as a whole.

It’s important that areas with different distributions are selected to highlight how areas can have broadly different proportions. For example, when comparing Ceredigion to Conwy a number of differences can be identified, including a much larger proportion of 19 – 22 year olds in Ceredigion and a smaller proportion of over 90s.

There are many ways that this resource could be utilised, but students should be instructed to look at general trends and changes and to provide a degree of interpretation. Students should be encouraged to consider changes in proportions of over 65s in their selected area. For example, if this section of the population appears to decrease over time, this could imply “retirement migration” and visa-versa. Decreasing numbers of under 16s should also be highlighted, where applicable.

Students should be asked to compile their findings and report back to the class. This could be done in presentation format, including information about the location of the case study area, as well as other notable information (e.g. the presence of a large University in a small area), or could be presented as a poster.

Activity 3

Solving the ageing population problem

Aims

To encourage students to consider different methods that could be adopted to resolve the issues caused by an ageing population.

Time 15 – 30mins

Resources

Students could be given access to computers with the internet to research for this task, but this is not a requirement.
Task

Ask students to discuss and brainstorm possible solutions. They should take the role of government ministers and put together a list of 5 policies to help combat the ageing population problem. They should be encouraged to think of policies that cover a number of different aspects – e.g. all five policies should not be confined to just encouraging families to have more children.

Activity 4

Raising the retirement age

Aims

To allow students to view differing sides of the debate to draw their own conclusions.
To encourage students to look at bias in newspaper/media sources

Time 20 – 30mins

Resources

Newspaper articles on the retirement age debate will be utilised in this activity. Some examples can be found here:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-103952/Retirement-age-raised-70.html
http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/dec/05/state-pension-age-raised-to-70-autumn-statement
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/retirement-age-set-to-increase-by-six-months-each-year-9779618.html
http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/retirement-age-rise-70-work-2891294

Task

Students should be asked to consider a number of newspaper articles on raising the retirement age and to compile a list of arguments “for” and “against” raising the retirement age. Students should also be asked to judge which standpoint the articles take and to judge whether they feel they make a well-reasoned argument.
Resources

21st Century Challenges – Britain’s ageing population
http://www.21stcenturychallenges.org/60-seconds/britains-ageing-population/
http://www.21stcenturychallenges.org/challenges/britains-population-timebomb/

21st Century Challenges – The challenges and opportunities of an ageing society

BBC GCSE Bitesize – Managing population change
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/population/managing_population_rev4.shtml

BBC News – Ageing population ‘to strain NHS’
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4512934.stm

Economics help – How to deal with an ageing population

United Nations – New Report on Replacement Migration Issued by UN Population Division

House of Commons Library Research – The ageing population