



Current Affairs Assembly

KS3 Citizenship and Politics – Accountability

Assembly



Changing the National Health Service

Aim:

To examine proposed changes to the NHS by the coalition government and to try and understand how they will affect us.

Introduction

The National Health Service

The National Health Service was founded by Aneurin Bevan, a Labour politician, on 5th July 1948.

It came into being as the climax of a hugely ambitious plan to bring good healthcare to all. For the first time, hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, opticians and dentists were brought together under one umbrella organisation to provide services that are free for all at the point of delivery.

It was set up with three guiding principles;

- That it meet the needs of everyone
- That it be free at the point of delivery
- That it be based on clinical need, not ability to pay

In July 2000, a modernisation programme was launched and new principles added.

These require that the NHS will:

- Provide a comprehensive range of services
- Shape its services around the needs and preferences of individual patients, their families and their carers
- Respond to the different needs of different populations
- Improve the quality of services and minimise errors
- Support and value its staff
- Work with others to ensure a

seamless service for patients

- Help to keep people healthy and reduce health inequalities
- Respect the confidentiality of individual patients and provide open access to information about services, treatment and performance
- And that public funds for healthcare will be devoted solely to NHS patients

So what is the structure of the NHS?

Primary care: is the first point of contact for most people and is delivered by a wide range of independent contractors, including GPs, dentists, pharmacists and optometrists.

Secondary care; is known as acute healthcare and can be either elective care or emergency care. Elective care means planned specialist medical care or surgery, usually following referral from a primary or community health professional such as a GP.

(taken from <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/nhsstructure.aspx>)

Currently primary care trusts (PCTs) are in charge of primary care and have a major role in commissioning secondary care, providing community care services. This provision uses 80% of the NHS budget.

The coalition government plans to remove this level of administration in England and ask GPs to be the main commissioning agents of the NHS. (There are separate, different plans for Scotland and Wales.)





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Looking Deeper

Opinion is divided as to whether the changes planned by the government will improve the provision, as they say, or whether it will lead to massive reductions in provision and cuts to services, as their opponents say.

Jesus told a story about a man who was going away and who asked his servants to look after his property while he was away. One was given five talents and he went away and made five more talents. (A talent was a unit of money.) One was given two talents and he made two more talents. One was given one talent, but was anxious about his master's response and so hid the talent in a hole in the ground until the master returned. When the master did return he was pleased with the first two servants, but called the third servant a 'worthless slave' and had him thrown out.

The government has been given the NHS to look after (for the people of England). They could choose to invest in it and try to make it better for its users, or they could choose to leave it alone, knowing that people don't like change and changing the NHS could create a lot of criticism.

What Jesus doesn't tell us in the story of the talents is what would the master have said to the first servant who invested the money if the investment had failed and he had given back less than he started with? If the changes to the NHS turn out to be a good thing, will we say well done? And if they try and it doesn't work out, what will we say then? And if they do nothing, will we call them 'worthless' and throw them out?

So as you hear the news of the NHS changes, think for a moment about what the government are trying to do. What story would Jesus tell about their efforts?



Reflection

What is the government trying to do?

Prayer

Lord, help us to see the changes the government are making from your perspective. To look at their intentions and recognise that they are looking after our property.
Amen

Thought for the day

While we have time let us do good to all and make sure it is for all.