Introduction to
A-Level
Sociology

Name: _____

Dear Sixth Form student,

Welcome to the Sociology department at St Joseph's. Sociology is an excellent choice of subject to study at A-Level and one that you will find exciting, interesting and very relevant to your everyday life.

The topics you will be studying in Year 12 are 'Families and Households' and 'Education'. These are areas you already know a lot about, so you should get off to a flying start in September even if you have not studied Sociology before.

This booklet has been put together to make sure you are fully prepared for the important year that lies ahead of you. There are four activities in total. Work your way through them and bring the booklet along with you to your first lesson.

See you in September!

Mrs Rogan

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Activity 1

A general introduction to Sociology and the key terms we will be using next year

Instructions:

- Read the information on the next few pages.

- Complete the glossary sheet that follows.

- These are the key terms that you will be using during the course of your A Level studies. Write each definition in your own words to help you understand what each term means.

- Try to remember as many of these key terms as possible.

Some key introductory ideas

Socialization, culture and identity

Socialization is the lifelong process by which people learn the culture of the society in which they live. Socialization is carried out by agencies of socialization, such as the family, the education system, religious institutions or the mass media.

Culture is socially transmitted (passed on through socialization) from one generation to the next.

Socialization plays a crucial part in forming our identities. Identity is about how we see and define ourselves – our personalities – and how other people see and define us. For example, we might define ourselves as gay, black, a Muslim, Welsh, English, a woman, a student or a mother. Many aspects of our individual identities will be formed through the socialization process, with the family, friends, school, the mass media, the workplace and other agencies of socialization helping to form our individual personalities. Many chapters in this book refer to aspects of this socialization process and the formation of our identities.

However, while lifelong socialization plays a very important part in forming our identities, individuals also have the free will to enable them to 'carve out' their own personal identities and influence how others see them, rather than simply being influenced by them. Individuals are not simply the passive victims of the socialization process. While individual identities are formed by various forces of socialization, the choices individuals and groups make and how they react to these forces can also have an influence. For example, while the mass media might influence our lifestyles, attitudes and values, and how we see ourselves and how others see us, individuals may also react to what they read, see or hear in the media in different ways. A woman from a minority ethnic background may define herself as black or Asian, but she may also see herself mainly as a woman, a mother, a teacher or a Muslim. Similarly, we have some choices in the consumption goods we buy, the clothes we wear, and the leisure activities we choose to follow. Through these choices, we can influence how others see us, and the image of ourselves we project to them. Individuals may also have multiple identities, presenting different aspects of themselves in different ways to different groups of people. People may therefore not adopt the same identity all the time, and different people will see them in different ways.

Socialization is the lifelong process of learning the culture of any society.

The term **culture** refers to the language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills which make up the 'way of life' of any society.

Identity is concerned with how individuals see and define themselves and how other people see and define them.

Roles, role models and role conflict

Roles are very like the roles actors play in a theatre or television series. People in society play many different roles in their lifetimes, such as those of a man

Roles are the patterns of behaviour which are expected from people in different positions in society.

Activity

1 Suggest *three* ways, with examples, by which individuals learn the culture of society in contemporary Britain.
2 Describe *three* factors that inflence how others define your identity. Explain your answer with examples.
3 Suggest *three* ways that individuals' choices in consumer goods may influence how other people define them.
4 Suggest reasons why people may have difficulty in getting other people to accept whatever identity they wish to project to others.

or a woman, a child and an adult, a student, a parent, a friend, and work roles like factory worker, police officer or teacher. People in these roles are expected to behave in particular ways. The police officer who steals, the teacher who is drunk in the classroom or the parent who neglects his or her children are clearly not following the behaviour expected in these roles, and these examples show how important such expectations of others are.

Roles are often learnt by copying or imitating the behaviour and attitudes of others. Children, for example, will often learn how to behave by copying the behaviour of their parents, teachers or friends. Those whose behaviour we consciously or unconsciously copy are known as role models.

One person plays many roles at the same time. For example, a woman may play the roles of woman, mother, student, worker, sister and wife at the same time. This may lead to role conflict, where the successful performances of two or more roles at the same time may come into conflict with one another.

A woman who tries to balance, and is often torn apart by, the competing demands of being a night-class student, having a full-time job, looking after children and taking care of a dependent elderly mother illustrates this idea of role conflict.

Role models are the patterns of behaviour which others copy and model their own behaviour on.

Role conflict is the conflict between the successful performance of two or more roles at the same time, such as worker, mother and student.

Values are general beliefs about what is right or wrong, and about the important standards which are worth maintaining and achieving in any society or social group.

Laws are official legal rules, formally enforced by the police, courts and prison, involving legal punishment if the rules are broken.

Values and norms

Values provide general guidelines for behaviour. In Britain, values include beliefs about respect for human life, privacy and private property, about the importance of marriage and the importance of money and success. While not everyone will always share the same values, there are often strong pressures on people to conform to some of the most important values in any society, which are often written down as laws. These are official legal rules which are often based on matters that many people think are very important. Laws against murder and theft, for example, enforce the values attached to human life and private property in our society. Laws are formally enforced by the police, courts and prisons, and involve legal punishment if they are broken.
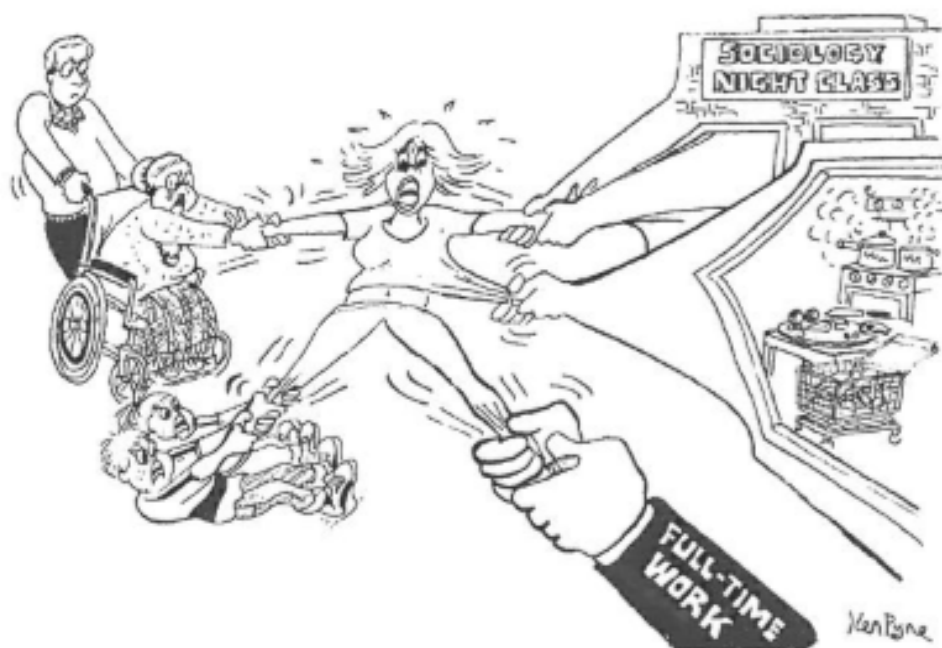
Role conflict for working women

Norms are social rules which define the correct and acceptable behaviour in a society or social group to which people are expected to conform. Norms are much more precise than values: they put values (general guidelines) into practice in particular situations. The norm that someone should not generally enter rooms without knocking reflects the value of privacy, and rules about not drinking and driving reflect the values of respect for human life and consideration for the safety of others. Norms exist in all areas of social life. In Britain, those who are late for work, jump queues in supermarkets, laugh during funerals, walk through the streets naked or never say hello to friends when they are greeted by them are likely to be seen as unreliable, annoying, rude or odd because they are not following the norms of expected behaviour. Norms are mainly informally enforced – by the disapproval of other people, embarrassment or a 'telling off' from parents or others. Customs are norms which have lasted for a long time and have become a part of society's traditions – kissing under the mistletoe at Christmas, buying and giving Easter eggs or lighting candles at Divali are typical customs found in Britain.

Values and norms are part of the culture of a society, and are learned and passed on through socialization. They differ between societies – the values and norms of an African tribe are very different from those of people in modern Britain. They may also change over time and vary between social groups even in the same society. In Britain, living together without being married – a cohabiting relationship – is much more accepted today than it was in the past, and wearing turbans – which is seen as

Norms are social rules which define the correct and acceptable behaviour in a society or social group to which people are expected to conform.

Customs are norms which have lasted for a long time and have become a part of society's traditions.

Norms control behaviour in nearly all aspects of our lives, with positive and negative sanctions to enforce them. Try jumping queues to see the sanctions that follow

normal dress among Sikh men – would be seen as a bit odd among white teenagers.

Social control

Social control is the term given to the various methods used to persuade or force individuals to conform to the dominant social norms and values of a society, and to prevent deviance – a failure to conform to social norms.

Processes of social control may be formal, through institutions like the law or school rules, or they may be informal, through peer group pressure, personal embarrassment at doing something wrong, or the pressure of public opinion.

Sanctions are the rewards and punishments by which social control is achieved and conformity to norms and values enforced. These may be either positive sanctions, rewards of various kinds, or negative sanctions, various types of punishment. The type of sanction will depend on the seriousness of the norm: positive sanctions may range from gifts of sweets or money from parents to children, to merits and prizes at school, to knighthoods and medals; negative sanctions may range from a feeling of embarrassment, to being ridiculed or gossiped about or regarded as a bit eccentric or 'a bit odd', to being fined or imprisoned.

Social control is the term given to the various methods used to persuade or force individuals to conform to the dominant social norms and values of a society.
Deviance is the failure to conform to social norms.
Sanctions are the rewards and punishments by which social control is achieved and conformity to norms and values enforced.
Positive sanctions are rewards of various kinds.
Negative sanctions are various types of punishment.

1 Identify three important values in Britain today and three norms relating to these values. Suggest ways in which these norms and values are enforced.
2 Identify at least four roles that you play, and describe the norms of behaviour to which you are expected to conform in each case.
3 Describe the sanctions you might face if you failed to conform to the norms you have identified.
4 Identify how the successful performance of one role might conflict with the successful performance of another.

Social class, social mobility and status

Social class is a term you will read a lot about in sociology, including in this book. Social class is generally associated with inequality in industrial societies. It is often used in a very general and imprecise way, but generally refers to a group of people sharing a similar economic situation, such as occupation, income and ownership of wealth.

Often, occupation, income and ownership of wealth are closely related to each other and to other aspects of individuals' lives, such as how much power and influence they have in society, their level of education, their social status, their type of housing, car ownership, leisure activities and other aspects of their lifestyle.

An individual's social class has a major influence on his or her life chances. Life chances include the chances of obtaining things like good quality housing, a long and healthy life, holidays, job security and educational success, and avoiding things like unemployment, ill-health and premature death. Social mobility refers to the movement of groups or individuals up or down the social hierarchy, from one social class to another.

To help you to understand the different social classes in modern Britain, the following simplified classification will suffice for the purposes of this book:

* The working class is one of the largest social classes, referring to those working in manual jobs – jobs involving physical work and, literally, work with their hands, like factory or labouring work.
* The middle class is also a large class, and refers to those in non-manual work – jobs which don't involve heavy physical effort, and which are usually performed in offices and involve paperwork or ICT (information and communication technology) of various kinds. Some argue that those in the lowest levels of non-manual work, such as supermarket check-out operators and those in routine office work, should really be included in the working class, as their pay and working conditions are more like those of manual workers than like those of many sections of the middle class.

A **social class** is a group of people who share a similar economic situation, such as a similar occupational level, income and ownership of wealth.
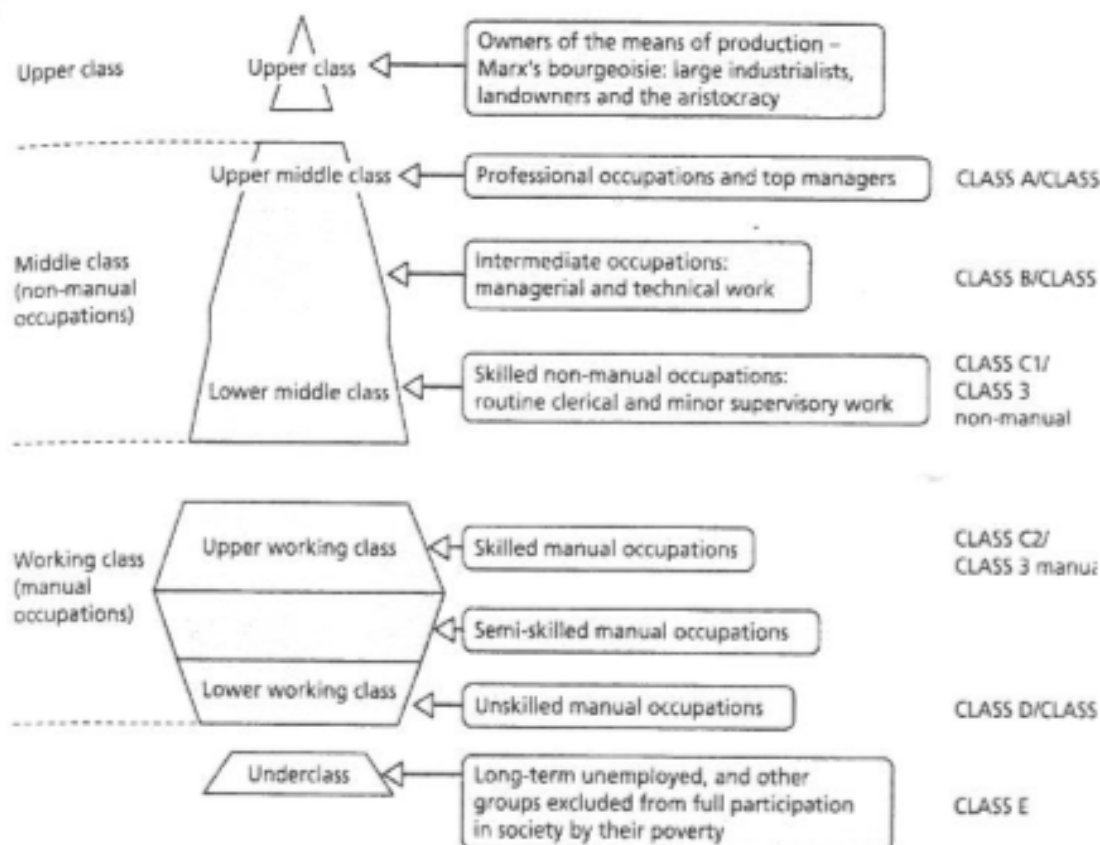
Life chances are the chances of obtaining those things defined as desirable and of avoiding those things defined as undesirable in any society. **Social mobility** refers to the movement of groups or individuals up or down the social hierarchy, from one social class to another.

The **working class** consists of those working in manual jobs, involving physical work and, literally, work with their hands, such as factory or labouring work. The **middle class** consists of those in non-manual work – jobs that don't require heavy physical work and are usually performed in offices and involve paperwork or computer work.

Figure 1.1 The class structure

Upper class	Upper class ◁ — Owners of the means of production – Marx's bourgeoisie: large industrialists, landowners and the aristocracy	
Middle class (non-manual occupations)	Upper middle class ◁ — Professional occupations and top managers	CLASS A/CLASS
	Intermediate occupations: managerial and technical work	CLASS B/CLASS
	Lower middle class ◁ — Skilled non-manual occupations: routine clerical and minor supervisory work	CLASS C1/ CLASS 3 non-manual
Working class (manual occupations)	Upper working class ◁ — Skilled manual occupations	CLASS C2/ CLASS 3 manual
	Semi-skilled manual occupations	
	Lower working class ◁ — Unskilled manual occupations	CLASS D/CLASS
	Underclass ◁ — Long-term unemployed, and other groups excluded from full participation in society by their poverty	CLASS E

The **upper class** consists of those who are the main owners of society's wealth. It includes wealthy industrialists, landowners and the traditional aristocracy. The **underclass** is the social group right at the bottom of the social class hierarchy, consisting of those who are in some ways cut off from or excluded from the rest of society.

Status sometimes refers to the role position someone occupies in society, but more commonly refers to the amount of prestige or social importance a person has in the eyes of other members of a group or society.

- The upper class is a small class, and refers to those who are the main owners of society's wealth, including wealthy industrialists, landowners and the traditional aristocracy. Often these people do not work for others, as their assets are so large that work is not necessary to survive.
- The underclass is a small class, and refers to a group of people who are right at the bottom of the class structure, and whose poverty often excludes them from full participation in society. The term 'underclass' is used in different ways, and is a controversial concept. It is discussed more fully in chapter 4 on wealth, poverty and welfare.

Figure 1.1 above illustrates the class structure of modern Britain, and is a useful guide to the use of social class in this book.

The term status is used in sociology in two main ways. It is often used to refer to the role position someone occupies in society, like a father, worker or consumer. It is also sometimes used to refer to the ranking of individuals in society according to the differing amounts of prestige or respect given to different positions by other members of that group or society – people's social standing in the eyes of others. Ascribed status is status given by birth or family background, while achieved status is status that is achieved by an individual's own efforts or talents.

Activity 1
Glossary of Key Sociological Terms

Social Institutions	
Social Structure	
Socialisation	
Primary Socialisation	
Secondary Socialisation	
Culture	
Values	
Norms	

Social Control	
Social Class	
Working Class	
Middle Class	
Upper Class	
Social Mobility	

Activity 2
An Introduction to Unit 1: Families and Households

Instructions:

- Answer the questions using the information available in the 'Item' provided.

- Where the question does not refer to the 'Item' try to use your own knowledge and experience to answer it

- If you are unsure of how to answer any of the questions that require your own knowledge, think about the question logically. For example, question 3 – there could be a rise in people living alone because people are now getting married later in life or because there is an ageing population

- Write the answers in the spaces available

Unit 1: Families and Households

Item F

Changes in Household Type – 1971 to 2006

Number of Households
(Millions)

Type of Household

□ 1971   ■ 2006
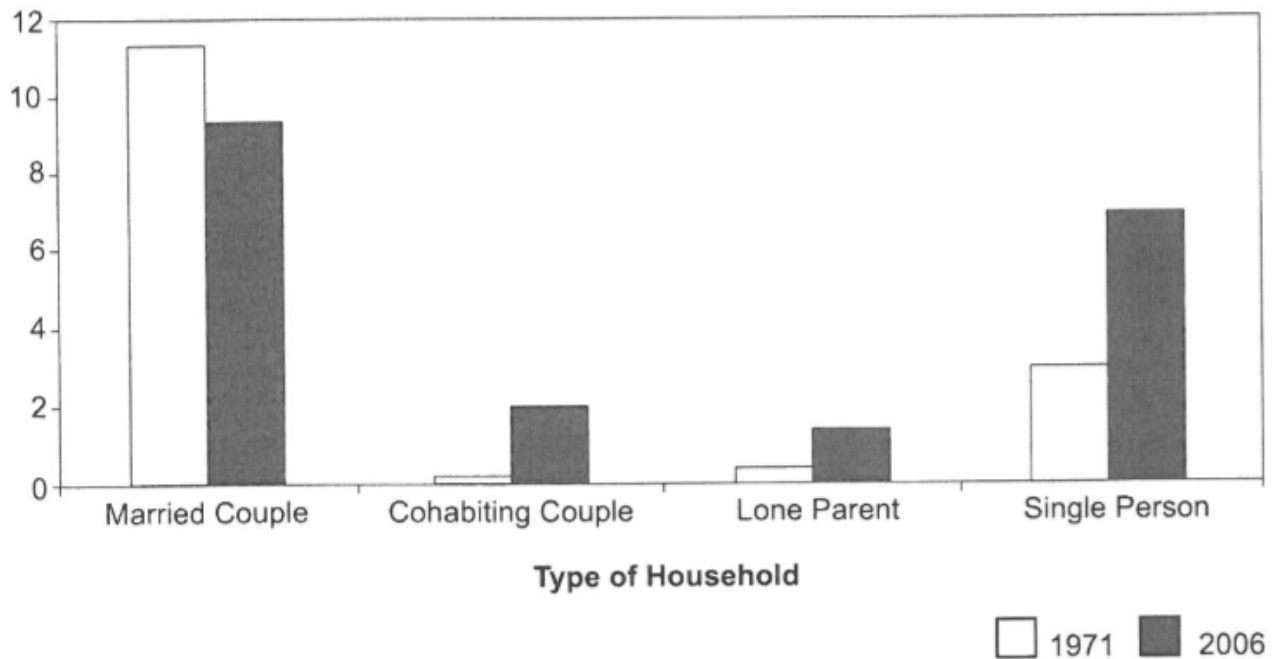
Item G

Power and Control in the Family

A recent survey found that one incident of domestic violence is reported by women to the police every minute in the United Kingdom. Other research has also found that women were more likely to suffer domestic violence than men. Seventy per cent of reported domestic violence is by men against their female partners.

1. From Item F, were there more lone parent households in 1971 or in 2006?

2. From Item G, identify how often an incident of domestic violence is reported to the police by a woman?

3. Identify **two** reasons for the rise in single person households from 1971 – 2006 (this is one of the questions you will have to use your own knowledge to answer)

4. What is an extended family?

5. Describe **one** way a grandparent might provide for a family **and** explain how this would help the family

6. Describe **one** way that the government might provide help for lone parent families **and** explain how this would assist them

Activity 3
## An Introduction to Unit 2: Education

Instructions:

- Answer the questions using the information available in the 'Item' provided.

- Where the question does not refer to the 'Item' try to use your own knowledge and experience to answer it

- If you are unsure of how to answer any of the questions that require your own knowledge, think about the question logically.

- Write the answers in the spaces available

Unit 2:   Education

Item D

Percentage (%) of Children under 5 in School
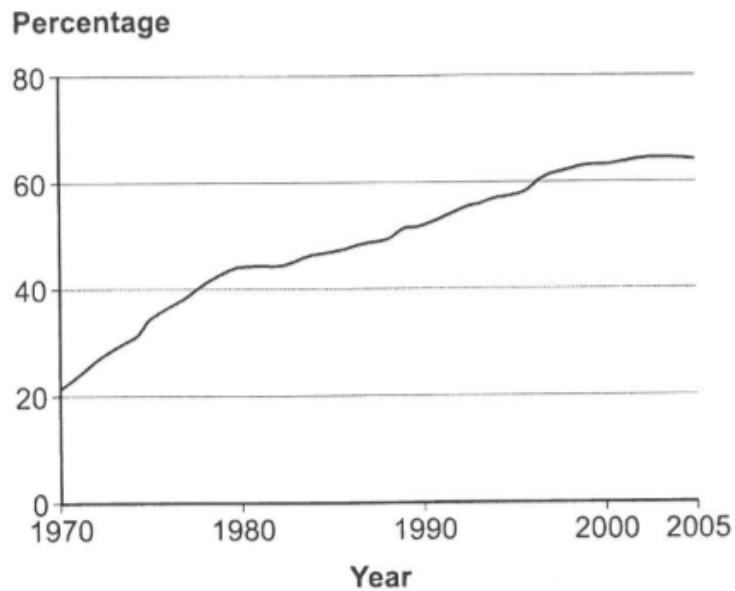
Percentage

Item E

Academic Achievement in Year 11 – England 2006

Key characteristic		Percentage (%) with 5 or more GCSE A* – C grades
Parental qualifications	Degree Below A-level	83 46
Free school meals	No Yes	61 31
Truancy in Year 11	Persistent truancy No truancy	13 67
Type of school attended	State comprehensive Independent	57 86

1. From Item D, what is the overall trend between 1970 and 2005 in children under 5 attending schools?

2. From Item E, what percentage of children who receive free school meals obtained 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE?

3. Identify **two** reasons why parents may or may not wish to send their children to a particular school

4. Explain what is meant by the term curriculum

5. Identify **one** way parents can help their children do well at school **and** explain how it could help

6. Identify **one** way the government can check what happens in schools **and** explain what effect this type of monitoring might have on the school

Activity 4

How would you take charge in a world wide pandemic?

Instructions:

- Imagine you are the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and you need to protect the country from a world-wide pandemic that threatens life as we know it. The only way to do this is to stop everyone living their normal, everyday lives.

- Your task is to plan how you would protect everyone and stop the spread, with particular reference to the issues on the next few pages

- Think carefully about each issue raised and jot a few ideas in the space below

- Remember – your ideas about how to tackle each issue need to be in line with the aims and beliefs that you say should be important in your society. For example, you can't say that it is important that your society is fair and equal and then say the richest people get the biggest share of the food and resources.

How Would You Respond in a World-Wide Pandemic?

1. What were the shared aims and beliefs of your society <u>before</u> this pandemic? What was everyone working towards?

2. How will you make sure these aims and beliefs are maintained throughout the pandemic?

3. Who do you protect first? Which group/groups of people are your priority? Why?

4. When measures are introduced to minimise the threat of the pandemic how do you ensure everyone knows about them and follows the new rules?

5. How do you think people will respond to this new way of living?

6. How would you deal with the people who broke the rules?

7. How are you going to make sure that vulnerable groups e.g. children and old people are properly cared for?

8. How would you make sure food and other things necessary for survival are produced?

9. How do you ensure everyone gets what they need to survive?