4. Model of Health: [Social Model of Health]

The social model is basically seen as a reaction to the limitations of the biomedical model. This is due to the fact that it focuses on the limitations of the biomedical model and tries to outline the importance of the outside factors that influence an individual’s overall well-being, instead of focusing on just the biological factors. The social model highlights the fact that an individuals’ health and wellbeing is a result of the social, economic, environmental and personal factors. According to Seedhouse, the central conditions needed for health are not only food, shelter and warmth but also factors such as access to relevant information and the ability to assimilate and utilize such information. This means that for those who adhere to the social model, the determinants of health are far more varied and broader in scope than those found in the biomedical model. Due to this, the potential for allocating responsibility for ill-health is much greater. Within the biomedical model, the idea has been that ill-health is an ‘act of God’ and therefore is nobody’s fault, however, the social model gives rise to many possibilities for ill-health being blamed on something closer to home. However, this can result in ‘victim blaming’ or on the other hand, it can be pointing the finger at deficiencies in public policy and the behaviour of business and industry.

An issue with this is the fact that this leads to try to ‘victim blaming’, which means that ill-health is primarily, or even exclusively due to the individual’s actions or inactions. And it can be argued that far more responsibility should be placed on the shoulders of the individuals adopting lifestyles which will minimize the risks of becoming ill. However, there is also a group of people who draw attention to the part played by the government and businesses and believe that they should take the responsibility for public health and this should not be the responsibility of the individual. On this side of the spectrum, it is believed that people are influenced and constrained by the social, economic and physical environment in which they live and the organisational setting within which they work. This means that there could be issues within the government or businesses that result in damaging individual’s health. For example; the council not providing adequate living environments. This model focuses on the idea that health is an issue and responsibility of society as a whole rather than an individual’s sole responsibility.

However, one criticism of this model is the fact that an individual has a choice and do not have to partake in activities that could endanger their lives. For example; smoking or drinking alcohol, or dangerous sports/activities. No matter the advice and intervention of the government or businesses, it is at the hands of the individual to decide to change their eating habits and exercise. However, on the other hand, there are areas of an individual’s life that they do not have control over, for example; council housing. So this could support the idea that the government do need to do more to help promote health and well-being within society.