

During the 1800s, this attitude began to change. More men now had the right to vote, so the government began passing laws that appealed to the masses. The government knew that if they appealed to normal people, they would be voted into power in future elections.

As well as this, cholera arrived in Britain. The epidemic led to the deaths of thousands of people. The work of John Snow (see page 92) led people to believe that cholera was spread in dirty water, and this theory was backed up by Pasteur's discovery of microorganisms in 1861.

### Extend your knowledge

#### Edwin Chadwick

In 1842, Edwin Chadwick published his *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Classes*. He had spent some time researching among the urban poor, and this book detailed the results of his research. He showed that people living in cities had a much lower life expectancy than people living in the countryside.

Chadwick concluded that this was down to the filthy living conditions in cities. He campaigned for all cities to set up boards of health, who would be responsible for supplying clean water and disposing of sewage.

Chadwick's work did not have much impact on conditions at the time, but it was only one piece of the puzzle. After more evidence emerged, supporting the theory that clean water was vital for a healthy population, the government was more willing to act.

From the 1860s, the government began to take more action to improve living conditions for people in cities.

- In London, 1,300 miles of sewers were built by 1865.
- In Birmingham, slums were demolished.
- In Leeds, a local business obtained a court order to prevent sewage from being drained into the river from which they got their water.

There had been a change in the way people felt about public health. More people began to recognise that it was now everybody's responsibility.

### Extend your knowledge

#### The first Public Health Act, 1848

The aim of the first Public Health Act was to improve the sanitary condition of towns in England and Wales by encouraging cities to set up boards of health and provide clean water supplies. However, it was not compulsory, so did not have much impact on the health of the people. It was not until 1875 that rules were put in place to improve sanitary conditions that were compulsory – they had to be followed.

Developments in understanding...	Factors, c1700–c1900	Factor
<b>CAUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germ theory.</li> <li>• The development of work on identifying microbes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of technology (microscopes).</li> <li>• Role of science of chemistry.</li> <li>• Role of individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>TREATMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better hospitals and nursing thanks to the work of Florence Nightingale.</li> <li>• Improvements in surgical treatment, because of anaesthetics and antiseptic surgery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of individuals.</li> <li>• Role of science of chemistry.</li> </ul>
<b>PREVENTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of vaccinations begun by Edward Jenner.</li> <li>• Improved water supply and drainage, with two Public Health Acts in 1848 and 1875.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of individuals.</li> <li>• Role of government.</li> </ul>

In response to this change in attitude, the government passed the **second Public Health Act** in 1875.

City authorities had to follow the rules it set out. The responsibilities included:

- providing clean water to stop diseases that were spread in dirty water
- disposing of sewage to prevent drinking and washing water from becoming polluted
- building public toilets to avoid pollution
- employing a public officer of health to monitor outbreaks of diseases
- ensuring new houses were of better quality, to stop damp and overcrowding

- providing public parks for exercise
- inspecting lodging houses to make sure they were clean and healthy
- creating street lighting to prevent accidents
- checking the quality of the food in shops to make sure that it didn't contain anything that could cause somebody harm. For example, some bakers mixed chalk into flour to make bread whiter.

The government had taken solid steps to prevent the spread of disease – and it worked. The last cholera epidemic in Britain was in 1866–67, and it had a lower mortality rate than previous epidemics, due to some of the new measures that had been put in place.

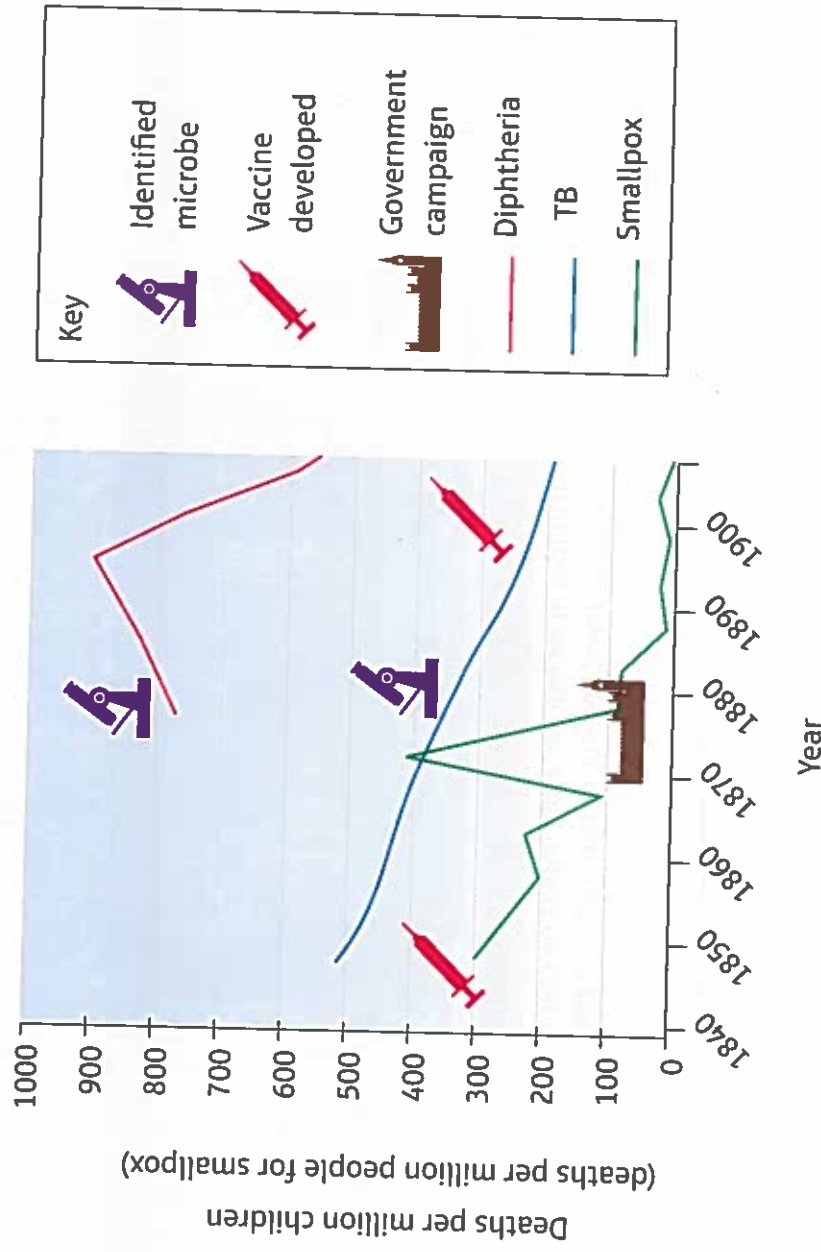


Figure 3.10 Mortality rates of major diseases, 1840–1900.