

Module: ECEY4001

Student Number: 2508338

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Components undertaken for module

1. Develop an infographic to explore Maslow's model in depth
2. Explore in depth the concept of holistic child development with links to Maslow's model and other developmental theories
3. Offer three examples from early years practice to highlight Maslow's significance in understanding child development, one of which should link to transitions.

AI Statement

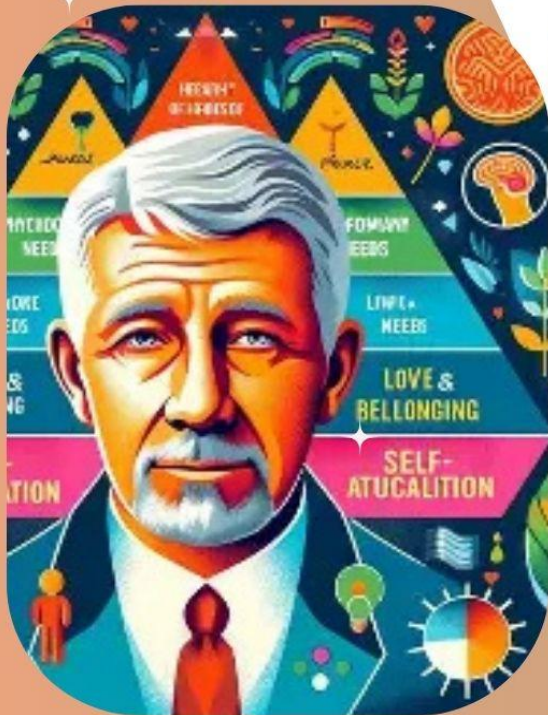
I acknowledge the use of Copilot in line with the guidance given by UWTSD for Module ECEY4001 between 05/11/25 & 29/11/25 to support my research and check for grammatical errors. I used the prompt(s):

1. Find me academic links to articles and published journals on Maslow hierarchy of needs
2. Find me links to articles and published journals on critiques of Maslows hierarchy of needs theory – ensure credible links are included
3. Find me academic publications, policy documents and legislation relevant to Wales on holistic development
4. Check my work for grammatical errors and spelling- Use UK format and do not make any changes to the structure of my sentences
5. Put my Harvard references into alphabetical order
6. Where can I find a source with good visuals of Maslow

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work

I confirm I have retained copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



(Suryavanshi, M. 2025)

Who was Abraham Maslow?

Abraham Maslow was born in Brooklyn New York in 1908. He grew up in a Jewish family with limited means, his challenging childhood shaped his later work on human potential and self actualisation.

Through his profession as a psychologist and philosopher, Maslow developed his key theory work and was best known for his self actualisation theory of psychology (Britannica, n.d).

The Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d) describes Maslow as a humanistic psychologist, and explains that his Hierarchy of needs is a psychological approach that emphasises the uniqueness of each person and advocates for recognising and treating people as distinct, unique individuals.

Maslow's most famous book 'Motivation and Personality' was published in 1954. This book introduced his hierarchy of needs theory, which has become a foundational concept in psychology. The book explores the different levels of human needs and their impact on motivation and behaviour.

The Theory - Hierarchy of Needs

The basis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs consists of a 5 levels of development arranged into a pyramid structure.

In developing his hierarchy of needs, Stoyanov explains in his 2017 publication of *An Analysis of Abraham H. Maslow's A Theory of Human Motivation* that Maslow aimed to demonstrate that human behaviour is primarily driven by the pursuit of a structured sequence of needs, beginning with the most basic physiological requirements that are essential for sustaining life and progressing to needs related to safety.

Starting at the bottom, Maslow believed that humans needed to successfully satisfy the lower levels of the hierarchy to achieve the higher ones. His theory highlights the essential role of meeting children's basic physiological and emotional needs in early childhood, providing a secure foundation upon which higher level cognitive and social skills can develop.

Maslow's theory has also been explored by Naaz and Khalid (2023). They argued that Maslow's theory emphasises the necessity of fulfilling basic physiological and safety needs before individuals can pursue higher-order aspirations. Within an EY setting, this implies that children's' essential needs such as adequate nutrition, physical security, and a supportive environment should be prioritised to establish an environment conducive to learning and developing. Addressing these foundational conditions enables children to fully engage in cognitive processes and social development.

According to Maslow's theory (1954), and as explored by Budzyna and Buckley in the publication *The Whole Child: Development in the Early Years*, (2023), human needs are generally classified into five stages:

- The first level of physiological needs relates to survival. These are essential biological requirements for human life, such as air, food, water, and sleep.
- Safety needs arise once physiological needs are satisfied. These involve the need for order and predictability, protection from harm, physical and emotional security, stability, and freedom from fear.
- The third level of human needs is social and focuses on love and belonging. The need for relationships drives behaviour. Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, giving and receiving affection and love, affiliation, or being part of a group like family, friends, and work.
- Maslow identified the next level, esteem needs, in two forms: self-esteem (such as dignity, achievement, mastery, and independence) and the desire for respect or recognition from others (such as status and social standing).
- When earlier needs are adequately met, a person can pursue self-actualisation realising potential, self-fulfilment, seeking growth, and peak experiences (such as achieving personal goals like playing in an orchestra or writing a novel).



(Suryavanshi, M. 2025)

Exploring each layer and it's link to Early Years....

Self Actualisation

Self actualisation in children involves providing meaningful opportunities that enable them to realise their full potential through access to experiences and resources fostering exploration and creativity. This may include achieving a sense of fulfillment by learning to play a musical instrument or engaging in creative pursuits.

The Welsh Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings (Welsh Government, 2022) emphasises holistic development and creativity, highlighting the importance of enabling learners to reach their full potential and develop as confident, curious, and capable individuals. By fostering ambitious and capable learners, the Curriculum for Wales seeks to nurture a lifelong passion for learning and a commitment to acquiring knowledge, skills, and personal growth within childcare settings and beyond.

Esteem

Young children need to feel valued and capable in the settings they attend as well as in their home environment to develop.

The Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales (2024, p18) reinforces this by saying children's experiences should be considered and designed to promote play while fostering confidence, independence, and a strong sense of well-being and that these experiences should support children's holistic development.

When children feel valued and their independence is supported through positive reinforcement and opportunities to succeed along with recognition of those successes, it strengthens their self esteem and fosters confidence in their ability to thrive.

Love and Belonging

Children require strong meaningful relationships with adults and other children in order to develop a sense of belonging.

This is supported by the ECPLC pathways (2023, p.7) who believe that belonging is vital for happiness and wellbeing, it shapes who babies are and who they become and that babies who feel loved and valued are more likely to form positive relationships throughout life.

Implementing policies and practices that foster belonging such as robust keyworker systems and inclusive environments that embrace diversity helps shape children's sense of identity and reinforces their understanding of who they are.

Safety

Children should feel physically and emotionally safe both at home and within a childcare setting.

The CIW NMS in Wales (2023) has standards in place that ensure that all registered childcare settings must have due regard for the safety of the children they care for, This includes ensuring there is a robust Safeguarding policy and procedures in place, That children have emotional safety through consistent routines and trusted adults, Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure the environment is safe and that all adults are responsible for the safety, welfare and development of children in their care.

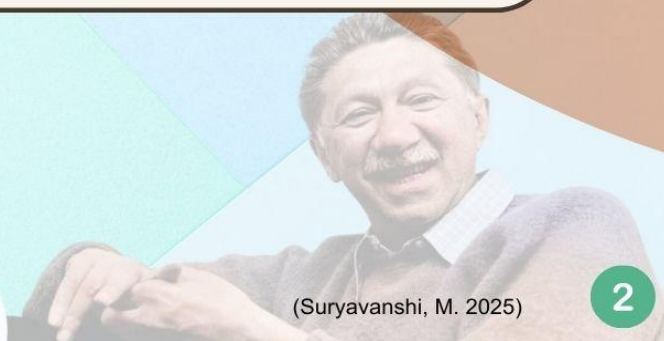
Physiological

Children require basic survival needs such as food, water, warmth, and rest to support their development.

These are a minimum requirement by CIW NMS (2023) and include ensuring that children have access to appropriate nap areas, clean drinking water and that they receive meals and snacks that are safely prepared and nutritionally balanced.

This is further backed up by the UNCRC Article 24 (United Nations,1989) that states that 'Children have a right to the best possible health, and to be provided with health care, nutritious food, a clean environment and health and well-being education'.

The hierarchy model worked from the bottom up



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The Concept of Holistic Child Development

Holistic development derives from Jan Christiaan Smuts' theory of holism in his book *Holism and Evolution* (1926). Smuts described nature as tending to form 'wholes greater than the sum of their parts', meaning a child is not just a "sum" of skills or traits; their development is a complex process where emotional health, relationships and cognitive abilities influence each other.

'Holism' provides the philosophical foundation, and 'holistic' is its practical application within childcare and education. This concept went on to be shaped by early childhood pioneers such as Maslow, Froebel, Dewey, and later Steiner into what we recognise today as holistic development.

The concept of holistic development refers to a multidimensional approach that, as outlined by the Department for Education (2024), considers the child, encompassing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral, ethical, and creative growth. It recognises the interconnection of these and emphasises that learning and wellbeing are most effective when all aspects of development are nurtured.

In EY every experience plays a vital role in shaping the whole child. Learning opportunities that stimulate cognitive growth, language development, and creative exploration all work together with social interactions to foster emotional resilience and interpersonal skills. These opportunities do not operate in isolation, they blend to support holistic development by ensuring that physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs are all met. By embracing this integrated approach, EY practitioners create a foundation for lifelong learning, adaptability, and wellbeing, preparing children not only for academic success but for the complexities of life beyond settings.

According to the Curriculum for Wales (2022) for this to be successful it relies on the three enablers to be embedded into practice. This is considered as effective practice and is key for supporting holistic development. According to the Curriculum these are identified as enabling adults, engaging experiences and effective environments. They work together to create a system where developmental pathways; physical,

cognitive, emotional, and social are carefully considered and nurtured in an integrated way allowing children to develop.

In high quality EY settings, holistic development is central to the work of practitioners. This approach recognises the critical role that adults, the learning environment, and experiences play in shaping children's growth. Each of these elements interacts to influence physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, ensuring that all aspects of learning and care is nurtured holistically.

The Flying Start program (2023) implements the principles of holistic development by providing a high-quality all-round approach to EY. This is achieved by offering enhanced health visiting, and targeted support for language and parenting. Practitioners act as enabling adults who build secure relationships and guide development, while play based and language rich activities offer engaging experiences alongside purposefully designed settings that provide effective environments promoting safety, inclusion, and exploration.

The concept of holistic development aligns closely to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Both emphasise the importance of the multiple dimensions of development. Just as (Maslow, 1943) tells us that physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation needs must be met for optimal development, holistic development supports the nurturing of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development simultaneously.

By creating environments that meet all the child's basic needs while fostering belonging, confidence, and opportunities for creativity EY practitioners can implement these theories into practice. Together, holistic development and Maslow's model underscore that development is not linear or isolated but an integrated process that supports multiple stages.

However, Maslow's hierarchy theory assumes that individuals have access to sufficient resources to progress beyond their basic survival needs, a premise that does not hold true for large proportions of the population especially many of those living in poverty or under conditions of insecurity in the South Wales valleys.

Additionally, Ivtzan (2008) claims that the concept of self-actualisation is rooted in individualistic Western cultural assumptions and may not be applicable to collectivist

cultures such as the travelling communities that prioritise interdependence over independence.

Beyond Maslow, the principles of holistic development in EY education also align closely with the philosophies of Rudolf Steiner and John Dewey, both of whom championed educating the ‘whole child.’

Steiner’s Waldorf approach (1996) promotes integrated growth across cognitive, emotional, and physical domains, encouraging creativity and imagination through play, rhythm, and nature-based experiences.

Similarly, Kathy Brodie (2024) describes Dewey’s progressive education model as prioritising experiential learning, social interaction, and reflective thinking, and viewing education as a democratic and interactive process that nurtures intellectual, social, and emotional capacities.

Both theorists opposed fragmented, assessment driven teaching, advocating instead for pedagogical approaches that nurture curiosity, critical thinking, and moral growth. These principles resonate with contemporary frameworks, such as Wales’ Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, which aim to equip children for lifelong learning and active engagement in society.

While the philosophies of Steiner and Dewey strongly align with holistic development, similarly to Maslow they too present certain challenges when applied in contemporary practice.

Steiner’s approach delays formal literacy and numeracy and discourages early exposure to technology, which conflicts with the Curriculum for Wales’ emphasis on developing cross curricular skills such as digital competence and numeracy.

Similarly, Dewey’s experiential, child led approach can be demanding in terms of resources and consistency, raising concerns about progression and assessment within statutory frameworks. Project based learning requires substantial time, materials, and highly skilled practitioners posing challenges for underfunded settings already facing recruitment and retention difficulties (Social Care Wales, 2024).

As noted by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002), challenges may arise in addressing the holistic needs of children with additional needs.

Fragmented multi-agency support and inadequately adapted environments lacking appropriate resources or trained staff underscore the critical need for inclusive practice and coordinated systems to nurture children with AN.

The non-maintained curriculum (2022) explicitly states that provision must be 'suitable for learners of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes' and provide 'appropriate progression for all learners', ensuring that children with AN are fully included in authentic learning experiences across the developmental pathways.

This study has identified that holistic development is more than an educational approach, it is a philosophy that recognises the interconnected nature of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth shaped by influential thinkers.

It emphasises that children thrive when all aspects of their development are nurtured together and while these theories provide valuable insights, their practical application in contemporary EY settings sometimes requires adaptation to meet statutory requirements, resource constraints, and modern cultural contexts.

Frameworks such as the Curriculum for Wales and initiatives like Flying Start value the importance of holistic principles by ensuring that it remains a cornerstone of high-quality EY education, affirming that each child should be supported as a whole learner within an ever-changing world.

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Transitions

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) offers a valuable theoretical perspective for understanding child development during transitions in early years settings. Maslow proposed that children must have their basic physiological and safety needs met before progressing to higher-order needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. This principle is particularly significant during periods of transition, which can temporarily destabilise a child's sense of security and predictability. These disruptions may lead to heightened anxiety or behavioural challenges, as the child's focus shifts toward re-establishing safety and emotional connections (Maslow, 1943).

An example from practice can be seen in Blaenau Gwent Flying Start settings, where the Early Years team has implemented a robust transition policy in line with the Flying Start Transition guidance (2019) to support children moving from setting to school. Recognising that transition is a critical period for emotional wellbeing, the policy requires planning to begin at least a term before the move. This includes collaborative meetings between practitioners, parents, and multi-agency professionals to ensure continuity of care and familiarity for the child.

Strategies such as maintaining consistent routines, introducing school staff gradually, providing opportunities for children to visit their new environment are prioritised ensuring the child's voice remains at the centre of these processes. These measures directly address Maslow's lower-tier needs, physiological comfort and safety, while fostering a sense of belonging through parental involvement and relationship building with new caregivers (Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, 2023; Flying Start Guidance, 2019).

By embedding these practices, Flying Start ensures that children's foundational needs are met before expecting them to engage in new learning experiences. This approach reflects Maslow's assertion that higher order development, such as confidence and resilience, cannot occur until basic needs are satisfied. Supporting children through transitions in this way promotes emotional security, reduces stress, and enables them to continue their developmental trajectory toward readiness for school and long-term wellbeing (Maslow, 1943; Howe, 2011).

Attachment and relationships

Attachment and relationships are fundamental to early childhood development, shaping a child's ability to regulate emotions, build social connections, and engage in learning. Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) emphasises that secure attachment to a consistent, responsive caregiver provides a "secure base" from which children can explore the world confidently.

For children in areas of deprivation, such as Blaenau Gwent, the importance of secure attachment is amplified. Socio-economic stressors, family instability, and limited resources can compromise caregiving quality, increasing the risk of insecure attachment patterns and long-term implications for emotional wellbeing and resilience (Bowlby, 1969; Howe, 2011).

An example of how EY practitioners can support this can be seen in Blaenau Gwent Flying Start settings, where practitioners implement a key person approach and conduct home visits before a child starts nursery. These strategies promote continuity and trust, ensuring children experience predictable relationships and emotional security during transitions. Practitioners also work closely with parents to strengthen attachment at home, recognising that emotional availability is essential for development (Flying Start Guidance, 2019).

The Circle of Security framework builds on Bowlby's principles, highlighting the caregiver's role in meeting a child's need for both safety and autonomy (Powell et al., 2013). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) complements this by illustrating that emotional security and belonging are not optional extras but essential foundations for all other aspects of development.

Maslow identified safety needs such as protection from harm, stability, and predictable routines as critical for reducing anxiety and enabling children to focus on exploration and learning. When these needs are unmet, children may exhibit heightened stress responses, clinginess, or withdrawal, which can hinder cognitive and social development. Equally important are love and belonging needs, which Maslow placed immediately after safety. These encompass strong, positive relationships with caregivers and peers, fostering trust and emotional resilience.

In practice, Flying Start addresses these needs by ensuring safe, nurturing environments, consistent key adults, and opportunities for positive social interaction. Meeting these needs creates the conditions for children to progress toward esteem and confidence, ultimately supporting readiness for school and lifelong wellbeing (Maslow, 1943).

Poverty and Socioeconomic deprivation

Poverty is one of the most significant barriers to positive outcomes for children in EY settings. In areas such as Blaenau Gwent, socio-economic deprivation can affect every aspect of a child's development, from physical health to emotional wellbeing and educational attainment.

The Institute of Health Equity and Gwent Public Services Board (2022) reports that 'the poorest children in Gwent start school 10 months behind their more affluent peers', highlighting the profound effect of socio-economic deprivation on early cognitive development, language skills, and long-term educational outcomes.

Flying Start, a Welsh Government initiative, seeks to mitigate these disadvantages by providing targeted support for families with children under four years old. Central to this approach is addressing basic needs such as nutrition, safety, and emotional security which are foundational for learning and development.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) offers a useful framework for understanding why meeting these needs is critical. Maslow argued that physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before higher-order needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation can be achieved.

For children living in poverty, these foundational needs are often compromised. Inadequate housing, food insecurity, and parental stress can create an environment where children struggle to feel safe and secure (Maslow, 1943).

Flying Start settings address these challenges by providing free childcare, nutritious meals, health support, and parenting programmes that promote stability and wellbeing. For example, practitioners in Blaenau Gwent work closely with health

visitors and social services to ensure families receive both practical and emotional support, reducing stress and improving home environments.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) reinforces this perspective by highlighting that poverty interacts with family dynamics, community resources, and broader socio-economic structures. Practitioners therefore adopt a holistic approach, engaging multiple agencies to address the wider determinants of poverty (Tudge et al., 2009).

Attachment Theory also intersects with many poverty related challenges. Bowlby (1969) emphasised that secure attachment depends on consistent, responsive caregiving; however, financial hardship can increase parental stress, reducing emotional availability (Howe, 2011). Flying Start interventions, such as home visits and parenting support, aim to strengthen caregiver and child relationships, recognising that emotional security is as essential as physical provision.

Although these theories provide important perspectives, they are not without limitations.

Maslow's model has been criticised for its rigid hierarchy and cultural bias (Neher, 1991) and attachment theory for overemphasising maternal care and underestimating resilience (Rutter, 1995; Rothbaum et al., 2000). These critiques remind practitioners to apply theory flexibly and contextually based on the child and families' individual needs. By embedding these principles into practice, Flying Start creates conditions for children to thrive, even in the face of socio-economic disadvantage.

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