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**Module: Well-being, Care and Healthy Lifestyle.
(ECEY5009)**

Part 1: Academic poster 2,021 words

AI Cover Sheet

I acknowledge my use of Canva to create the academic poster.

I also acknowledge the use of Copilot to help with finding specific research. I used the following prompts:

*Find me articles, research of journals that links health, well being and lifestyle to early years.

*Find me information on health, wellbeing and early years

*Find me information on lifestyle

These was used from the 1st of June 2025 -25thof June 2025

I confirm I have 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.

Health, Well-being & Lifestyle

Introduction

The early years of life play a crucial role in shaping long-term health and well-being. Research emphasizes that early childhood is a critical period where physical, emotional and social development is influenced by key lifestyle factors, including nutrition, physical activity, sleep and family environment (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). Establishing healthy habits during this stage can lead to better outcomes and help reduce health inequalities later in life (Public Health England, 2018). Social determinants such as income, education and environment also significantly impact health disparities, highlighting the need for equitable access to resources that support early development (World Health Organization, 2018a; UK Government, 2017). Preventative healthcare is essential for fostering resilience and promoting long-term well-being, with early intervention and accessible support systems playing a key role in strengthening mental health and overall health outcomes (Welsh Government, 2025a). This poster explores the connections between early childhood health, lifestyle choices and long-term well-being, emphasizing the importance of early support in reducing disparities and fostering a healthier society.

According to Department of Health (2014) well-being and health are closely connected, influencing each other in both directions. Many people consider health to be one of the most significant factors contributing to overall well-being. While both physical and mental health play a role in shaping well-being, mental health and well-being are distinct concepts. Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness, as individuals can experience mental disorders while still having a high level of well-being, and others may struggle with low well-being despite not having a diagnosed mental illness.

World Health Organization (n.d.) publication on social determinants of mental health emphasizes how economic, social and environmental conditions shape mental health outcomes across different life stages.



Health

Health encompasses multiple dimensions, including physical, mental and social well-being, rather than merely the absence of illness or medical conditions (World Health Organization, 2023). The right to the highest attainable standard of health is recognized globally, ensuring that individuals receive equitable healthcare regardless of race, religion, political views or socioeconomic status (World Health Organization, 2023). Achieving global health requires collaboration among individuals and nations to address disparities and improve access to essential health services.

The Department of Health and Social Care (2023) identifies health as a fundamental component of well-being, listed among the ten domains outlined by the Office for National Statistics. While many associate good health with overall life satisfaction, the relationship between health and well-being is complex. Some individuals experience low well-being despite good health, while others report high well-being despite facing health challenges. (Public Health England, 2018).

Health inequalities are heavily shaped by social factors such as income, education and environmental conditions, with individuals in disadvantaged areas facing significantly poorer health outcomes compared to those in more affluent regions (UK Government, 2017). Addressing these broader societal factors is crucial for improving overall well-being and ensuring equitable access to health resources (NHS England, 2023). Research highlights that prioritizing mental health and emotional well-being in early life fosters resilience and lays the foundation for lifelong well-being.

Early intervention, supportive relationships and strong social systems play a vital role in promoting mental health (Public Health Network Cymru, 2025).

Welsh Government (2025a) emphasizes the importance of preventative healthcare, focusing on early intervention and accessible support systems to strengthen mental resilience and enhance overall well-being. Social determinants, including education, income and environment, strongly influence health disparities. Chronic stress has been linked to cardiovascular diseases and other health complications (Smith, Brown, and Taylor, 2021), emphasizing the need for proactive health strategies. Recognizing these factors, governments and health organizations advocate for early intervention strategies to reduce disease prevalence and enhance quality of life (NHS England, 2023). Policy, education and community engagement remain essential in fostering a healthier and more equitable society.



Health, Well-being & Lifestyle

Well-being

Well-being is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that encompasses physical, emotional, social and psychological health. According to the UK Office for National Statistics (2025), well-being is measured through various indicators, including life satisfaction, financial stability and mental health. The Welsh Government (2025a) describes well-being as the ability to maintain physical fitness and mental resilience, emphasizing the importance of holistic health.

Recent studies highlight different forms of well-being. Eudaimonic well-being is deeply connected to personal growth, autonomy and the pursuit of meaningful experiences, which contribute to long-term life satisfaction and psychological resilience (Schmitz, Burk, and Wiese, 2025).

In contrast, hedonic well-being focuses on pleasure and enjoyment, achieved through activities that bring personal satisfaction (Huta, 2015). Both forms contribute to overall well-being in distinct ways.

Care learning (2024) argue that emotional resilience and mental health are key components in nurturing holistic well-being. These elements are essential not just for adults, but also for children in early years settings. The NHS (2025) supports this view, stating that children with higher well-being tend to have improved self-esteem and cognitive function.

Giving every child the best start in life is essential for reducing health inequalities, as early childhood experiences shape physical, intellectual and emotional development (Marmot et al., 2020).

However, recent findings suggest that well-being is increasingly influenced by broader societal factors. The OECD (2024) highlights that economic stability, environmental conditions and digital engagement play a growing role in shaping individual well-being.

Additionally, the UK Measures of National Well-being (2025) notes that trust in government and social fairness significantly impact overall life satisfaction. These insights indicate that well-being is not solely an individual experience however is deeply connected to societal structures and policies.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains relevant in understanding well-being, as McLeod (2025) explains that basic needs must be met before individuals can achieve higher levels of fulfilment. World Health Organization (2018a) support this by stating young children require nurturing care, including a safe and supportive environment, appropriate nutrition and responsive interactions to achieve their full developmental potential.

Hapus (2025) states that mental well-being shapes how we think, feel and respond to challenges. Maintaining it is vital for overall health, as positive actions and connections help build emotional resilience. Taking time for activities that bring joy strengthens mental and emotional energy.



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory diagram (n.d.)

Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers to the patterns of behaviour, choices and routines that shape an individual's daily life. Oxford University Press (2025) supports this by saying lifestyle is the way in which people live and work.

According to Department of Health and Social Care (2024) the UK Government's Best Start in Life review (2024) states a child's early experiences including their home environment, nutrition, physical activity and emotional support play a critical role in shaping their long-term health, development and educational outcomes. Anderson (2024) support this by stating lifestyle refers to the patterns of behaviour, choices and habits that define how individuals or groups live. It encompasses areas such as diet, physical activity, work-life balance and social interactions. According to the World Health Organization (2015) lifestyle factors significantly influence health outcomes and quality of life. A healthy lifestyle marked by regular exercise, balanced nutrition and stress management can reduce the risk of chronic diseases and improve mental well-being. Lifestyle is not only personal but also shaped by cultural, economic and environmental contexts.

The early years are a formative period where lifestyle habits begin to take root. As highlighted by Public Health England (2021), factors such as access to outdoor play, balanced diets and consistent sleep routines are essential for promoting physical and mental well-being in young children. These habits not only support healthy growth but also enhance cognitive development and emotional regulation.

Research by Ofsted (2024) emphasizes that high-quality early year's settings can positively influence lifestyle behaviours by fostering environments that encourage active play, social interaction and healthy routines.

Moreover, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework advocates for a holistic approach to child development, recognising the interconnectedness of physical health, emotional security and learning readiness. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory remains a valuable lens through which to understand how lifestyle is shaped by multiple layers of influence, from family and caregivers to community resources and cultural norms. Recent studies by Department for Education (2023) reaffirm that nurturing relationships and safe, stimulating environments are foundational to a child's sense of identity and well-being.

In summary, promoting a healthy lifestyle in the early years is not only about individual choices but also about creating supportive systems that empower children and families to thrive.



Health, Well-being & Lifestyle



Application to Early years and Practitioners role

Bedford & Coussins (2024) believe health and wellbeing are essential pillars of early childhood development. The early years are a critical window during which children form habits, emotional resilience and social skills that influence their lifelong outcomes. Well-being encompasses more than just physical health it includes emotional security, positive relationships, and opportunities for exploration and play. When children feel safe and supported, they are more likely to thrive cognitively, socially and emotionally.

Early years settings play a vital role in embedding these principles into daily practice. The UK Department for Education (2024) encourages settings to promote wellbeing through activities such as outdoor play, healthy eating, and emotional literacy exercises like feelings check-ins or mindfulness sessions. These practices not only support physical health but also foster emotional regulation and social competence.

For example, sensory food education and oral health routines can be integrated into mealtimes to promote healthy habits from a young age (Early Years Careers, 2023).

Peill (2022) believes that practitioners are not only educators but also caregivers who must observe, assess and respond to each child's holistic needs. Practitioners should model healthy behaviours, create inclusive environments, and work closely with families to ensure consistency between home and setting. They must also be equipped to identify signs of low wellbeing and intervene early, using tools such as the Leuven Scale or SHANARRI indicators.

In addition, practitioner well-being is equally important. A supported and emotionally resilient practitioner is better able to nurture children's development. The Anna Freud Centre (2023) recommends using an ecological model to understand how individual, team, and societal factors influence practitioner and child wellbeing alike.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the foundational years of a child's life represent a pivotal window of opportunity to promote lifelong health, resilience and well-being. The evidence overwhelmingly indicates that early childhood is not only a period of rapid development but also a time when interventions can have the most significant and lasting effects. The interplay between lifestyle factors such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep and the broader family and social environment deeply influences a child's physical and mental health outcomes. Early habits formed in this period often persist into adulthood, shaping future behaviours and health trajectories.

Furthermore, the impact of social determinants of health, including income, education, housing, and access to healthcare, cannot be overstated. These factors create unequal starting points for children, often reinforcing cycles of disadvantage. Without targeted interventions and equitable access to supportive services, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to face poor health outcomes that extend into later life. Addressing these disparities requires coordinated efforts from governments, healthcare providers, educators, and communities to ensure that all children, regardless of background, can thrive.

Preventative healthcare and early intervention are therefore not optional but essential components of public health strategy. By identifying and addressing risks early whether through improved maternal care, early years education, mental health support, or access to nutritious food and safe environments we can significantly reduce the burden of disease and improve quality of life across the lifespan. Importantly, support systems must be inclusive, culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse families.

This poster has highlighted the critical role of early life experiences in shaping long-term outcomes and the importance of fostering environments that promote healthy development from the very beginning. The links between early health behaviours, social conditions, and future well-being underscore the urgency of investing in early years support as a means of building a healthier, more equitable society.

Ultimately, prioritizing early childhood health is not just about individual benefit it is a societal imperative. By nurturing strong foundations for health and well-being in the early years, we lay the groundwork for more resilient communities and reduced healthcare burdens in the future. Through collaboration and continued commitment, we can ensure every child has the best possible start in life.

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