

Content page

Module Title: Health Wellbeing and lifestyle ECEY5009

Student number 2517872

For this assignment I submitted

A video of me presenting

An academic poster

Total word count of academic poster: 2,036

I acknowledge the use of Co-pilot to research.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Find me academic resources 2016-2026 on children; s health wellbeing and lifestyle
2. Can you help me ensure my reference list is Harvard style

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

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 Wellbeing and Lifestyles

Introduction

Welsh Government (2024a) have a programme in Wales called 'the Healthy Child Programme (HCWP)' it outlines universal health contacts, screening, immunisations and developmental checks that children should receive for birth up to seven years. Their programme emphasises that investing in the early years has a positive impact on later outcomes in life, helping reduce health inequalities especially children who live in poverty. Welsh Government (2024a) conclude, a Child's early health, wellbeing and lifestyle experiences shape their long-term physical, emotional and social development and by promoting healthy lifestyles, and giving families the support they need and ensuring there are early interventions the HCWP aims to give every child the best a positive start in life and prepare them to be able to reach key developmental milestones.

The Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings emphasises that health and wellbeing is the starting point of learning they explain a child who feels safe, settled and emotionally secure, will explore play and develop, it encourages early years practitioners to build daily routines that help support a child's health wellbeing and lifestyles, they can do this through physical play, good nutritional food and developing self-care skills independently. They also highlight a warm and consistent relationship with key worker, practitioners and peers will help the children to be confident, develop resilience and feel a sense of belonging in the setting. (Welsh Government 2022)

Health

Musgrave (2017) argues that there is no single definition of health, as one definition does not suit everyone. Health is not seen as an absence of illness, factors such as physical, emotional, social and environmental influence health. They highlight the World Health Organization's view, explaining that being healthy means coping with challenges and meeting individual needs, rather than achieving a perfect state of health. In addition, they place a strong emphasis on holistic child development, suggesting that a child's health will depend on the adult support they receive, the environment they grow up in and the systems around them, including family, early years settings and wider communities. Therefore, a professional should see the child holistically, not just their medical condition, and consider their overall wellbeing. In contrast, Dahlgren and Whitehead (2021) describe health as being shaped by layers of influence. A person's health is affected by their environment, including individual lifestyle, community networks and wider living conditions such as housing, education and work. Unlike Musgrave (2017), who focuses more on individual needs and relational support, Dahlgren and Whitehead (2021) show that health is created by personal choices *and* social and economic circumstances, highlighting that good health is not simply being well but having supportive conditions and people around the individual. This suggests that health is not solely the responsibility of healthcare services but of the wider community and society. Similarly, Van Druten *et al.* (2022) explain that health is no longer understood as a perfect state. They refer to the original WHO definition, which described health as a full emotional and physical state, but argue that modern health is about coping with challenges, managing day-to-day life and balancing physical, social and emotional needs. This aligns with Musgrave's (2017) view that health varies between individuals but differs by focusing more on functional ability and personal resilience. Van Druten *et al.* (2022) conclude that health depends on a person's background and experiences, meaning a single definition does not fit everyone, and understanding what health means to the individual is essential for effective communication and care.

The World Health Organization (2026) states that health is much more than having an illness; it includes physical, mental and social wellbeing, regardless of background, beliefs or economic status, everyone has the right to achieve a good standard of health. This global perspective extends beyond the individual focus of Musgrave (2017) and Van Druten et al.(2022), highlighting the need for cooperation between governments, communities and individuals. However, in countries where access to health is unequal, risks increase and infectious diseases spread. The World Health Organization (2026) also explains that a child’s healthy growth requires a supportive environment and access to good medical care, and that governments must ensure adequate health and social systems. This reinforces Dahlgren and Whitehead’s (2021) argument that wider systems and social structures play a crucial role in shaping health outcomes.

Wellbeing

Children’s wellbeing is consistently described across the literature as an emotional and connected experience, yet each study contributes a slightly different perspective on how wellbeing is understood and supported in early childhood. Hong, Ra and Jang (2015) emphasise that children experience wellbeing through everyday feelings of safety, love and happiness, highlighting the importance of joy, comfort and affectionate interactions. However, this focus on positive emotions risks narrowing the concept by overlooking the wider social and structural factors that may restrict children’s opportunities to experience such feelings. Furthermore, their reliance on children’s self-reported emotions, while valuable, may not fully capture the complexities of emotional security in diverse early years settings. Additionally ,Fane *et al.* (2020) reinforce the importance of children’s lived experiences, showing that young children understand wellbeing through feelings such as happiness, safety and connection. Rather than challenging existing wellbeing indicators, their findings demonstrate that children’s accounts align closely with adult-designed frameworks, while also revealing two additional child-identified indicators: opportunities for play and children’s agency. Although the study highlights how central agency and relationships are to children’s wellbeing, it offers little practical guidance on how early years practitioners might embed these principles within settings that face staffing pressures, curriculum expectations or limited resources.

However, Fortuin et al. (2024) extend the discussion by acknowledging that children’s

Lifestyle

Bagordo *et al.* (2017) argue that lifestyle is not an isolated personal choice, it is impacted by social and environmental conditions in which children live. They highlight children from lower-income households experience more exposure, such as passive smoking, traffic pollution and unhealthy food. This includes higher rates of obesity. In contrast children who are from more affluent households are more likely to engage in activities such as sport and consume a healthier diet, showing how this can shape children’s opportunities to develop healthy routines. These patterns are echoed in Dobell *et al.* (2021), who expresses modern family routines, children using screens more and not exploring the outdoors are shifting home habits which is increasingly limiting children’s physical development. The educators in the study describe how children who are starting school are not keen on physical activity as this is not something they have done as families previously. They also note those children from poverty households who do not have opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles will be less physical compared to the affluent households who are well equipped these children tend to be more physically cable. This reinforces the argument that lifestyle behaviours are socially patterned long before children enter formal education.

The Welsh Government (2024b) similarly emphasises that children’s daily lifestyles are shaped by the environment and services available to them. Their plan ensures that early year’s settings offer access to outdoor play, active travel, nutritious meals and become that emotionally supportive community, recognising that improving children’s lifestyles requires addressing the wider social determinants of health. By strengthening these services, the

wellbeing is shaped not only by positive experiences but also by negative ones, such as bullying, arguments and insecurity. This more balanced perspective is important because it recognises that wellbeing is not simply just happiness, but it is also emotional discomfort and challenges. Nevertheless, the study still centres children’s subjective accounts, which, while essential, may not fully reflect the broader ecological influences such as family stress, community deprivation or practitioner–child relationship quality that shape children’s daily experiences.

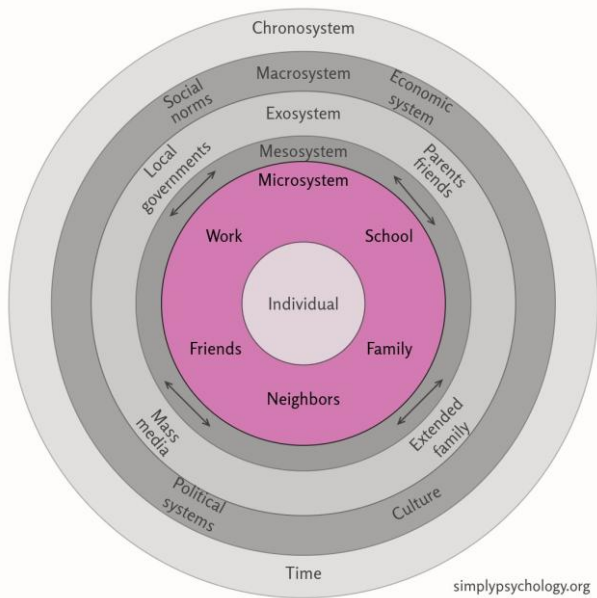
Building on this work, Fortuin et al. (2025) diverge from the other studies by highlighting the conceptual confusion surrounding wellbeing across disciplines. They argue that wellbeing is multidimensional, involving overlapping aspects of physical and emotional health, relationships, learning, rights, safety and living conditions. This broader critique is particularly relevant for early years practice, as it exposes the difficulty of applying a single definition within settings that must balance competing priorities. Additionally, by emphasising both objective and subjective dimensions, they draw attention to the systemic nature of wellbeing, suggesting that practitioners alone cannot meet children’s needs without supportive families, communities and policy structures.

Taken together, these studies show strong agreement on the emotional and interpersonal foundations of wellbeing, yet they differ in how critically they address the wider ecological, disciplinary and structural complexities that shape children’s lived experiences.

Welsh Government (2024b) acknowledges that healthy routines and lifestyle changes cannot be achieved through an individual behaviour change alone. However, Lloyd *et al.* (2018) challenge the assumption that educational settings can compensate for these wider structural inequalities. Their evaluation of the Healthy Lifestyles Programme (HeLP) found that, despite strong engagement from schools and families, the intervention did not produce meaningful changes in children’s weight or activity levels over two years. This suggests that behaviour-focused programmes may have limited impact when socioeconomic and environmental barriers remain unaddressed.

Further reinforcing this, Lioret *et al.* (2020) show that lifestyle behaviours developed earlier in childhood tend to set into stable patterns over time. However unhealthy patterns such as high consumption of processed foods and excessive screen time are associated with lower maternal education and social disadvantage. This highlights the need for early, family-centred and community-level interventions, as lifestyle trajectories are shaped long before school-based programmes begin.

Taken together, these studies collectively demonstrate that children’s lifestyles are socially patterned, environmentally influenced and established early in life. This strengthens the case for early years policy and practice to focus on reducing structural inequalities, supporting families and creating enabling environments, rather than relying solely on individual behaviour change strategies.



simplypsychology.org

(Guy-Evans, 2024)

Early year's practice

Early years settings play a crucial role in shaping children's health, wellbeing and lifestyle because they sit within the core layers of influence described by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. At the microsystem level, children's daily interactions with practitioners form the "proximal processes" that shape their routines, emotional security and emerging health behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, as discussed in Lang et al., 2016). The Curriculum for funded non maintained settings, builds on this by emphasising that young children need consistent opportunities for physical activity, outdoor play, emotional support and healthy routines, showing that early experiences directly influence long-term habits and wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2022). National programmes further strengthen this influence: Designed to Smile embeds supervised daily toothbrushing, helping children develop positive oral-health routines and preventing dental decay from an early age (Public Health Wales, n.d.). Similarly, Flying Start supports families in disadvantaged areas by promoting secure relationships, good nutrition, safe home environments and early communication, all of which contribute to healthier lifestyles and improved wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2017). Together, these frameworks and programmes demonstrate that early year's settings do far more than provide care, they actively shape the foundations of children's health, emotional resilience and lifelong lifestyle behaviours through consistent routines, nurturing relationships and targeted public-health interventions.

Conclusion

Overall, the literature demonstrates that children's health, wellbeing and lifestyle are shaped by a dynamic interplay of individual, connected and structural influences. While authors differ in how they conceptualise these domains, they collectively emphasise that no single definition or approach can fully capture the complexity of early childhood (Musgrave, 2017; Van Druten et al., 2022). The evidence also highlights the importance of recognising wider social determinants, as structural conditions and community environments significantly shape children's opportunities and daily experiences (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 2021; Bagordo et al., 2017). Research on wellbeing further reinforces that children's emotional security and sense of belonging are influenced not only by positive interactions but also by their ability to navigate challenges within supportive contexts (Hong, Ra & Jang, 2015; Fortuin et al., 2024). Within Wales, national policy frameworks position early years settings as key environments for promoting equity, prevention and holistic development (Welsh Government, 2022; 2024). Taken together, these perspectives show that improving outcomes in early childhood requires coordinated action across families, communities, services and policy structures. For practitioners, this means adopting a holistic, connected and being aware approach that supports children's development both now and across their future life course.

Reference list

- Bagordo, F., De Donno, A., Grassi, T., Guido, M., Devoti, G., Ceretti, E., Zani, C., Feretti, D., Villarini, M., Moretti, M., Salvatori, T., Carducci, A., Verani, M., Casini, B., Bonetta, S., Carraro, E., Schilirò, T., Bonizzoni, S., Bonetti, A., Gelatti, U. & MAPEC_LIFE Study Group (2017) 'Lifestyles and socio-cultural factors among children aged 6–8 years from five Italian towns Available at: [Lifestyles and socio-cultural factors among children aged 6–8 years from five Italian towns: the MAPEC LIFE study cohort | BMC Public Health | Springer Nature Link](#) (Accessed 14 June 2026)
- Dahlgren, G. and Whitehead, M. (2021) 'The Dahlgren–Whitehead model of health determinants: 30 years on and still chasing rainbows', *Public Health*, 199, pp. 20–24 (Accessed 10 June 2026).
- Dobell, A., Pringle, A., Faghy, M.A. & Roscoe, C.M.P. (2021) 'Educators' perspectives on the value of physical education, physical activity and fundamental movement skills for Early Years Foundation Stage children in England', *Children*, 8(5), 338. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/children8050338> (Accessed 14 June 2026)
- Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G. and Gibbs, L. (2020) 'Preschool aged children's accounts of their own wellbeing: Are current wellbeing indicators applicable to young children?', *Child Indicators Research*, 13, pp. 2127–2151. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-020-09735-7> ([doi.org in Bing](#)) (Accessed: 21 June 2026).
- Fortuin, J., van der Velde, J., van der Meulen, M., van der Meulen, E., van der Meulen, R. and van der Meulen, S. (2024) 'Children's perspectives on health and wellbeing: A concept mapping study', *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 75, pp. 1–10. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0882596324003464>. (Accessed 14 June 2026)
- Fortuin, J., van der Velde, J., van der Meulen, M., van der Meulen, E., van der Meulen, R. and van der Meulen, S. (2025) 'Applying conceptualisations of child well-being to early childhood education and care: A scoping review of the literature', *Early Childhood Education Journal*. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-025-01940-9>. (Accessed 14 June 2026)
- Guy-Evans, O. (2024) *Bronfenbrenner's Microsystem Theory*. Simply Psychology. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner-microsystem.html> (Accessed: 21 June 2026).
- Hong, Y., Ra, Y. and Jang, H. (2015) 'A study on young children's perceptions and experiences of happiness', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood* Lang, S., Little, S. and Cronin, A. (2016) *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A guide for practitioners and students in early years education*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/trinity/reader.action?docID=4825055> (Accessed: 14 June 2026).
- Lioret, S., Campbell, K.J., McNaughton, S.A., Cameron, A.J., Salmon, J., Abbott, G. and Hesketh, K.D. (2020) 'Lifestyle patterns begin in early childhood, persist and are socioeconomically patterned, confirming the importance of early life interventions', *Nutrients*, 12(3), 724. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12030724> Accessed (14 June 2026)
- Lloyd, J., Creanor, S., Logan, S., Green, C., Dean, S.G., Hillsdon, M. et al. (2018) 'Effectiveness of the Healthy Lifestyles Programme (HeLP) to prevent obesity in UK primary-school children: a cluster randomised controlled trial', *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 2(1), pp. 35–45. Available at: [Effectiveness of the Healthy Lifestyles Programme \(HeLP\) to prevent obesity in UK primary-school children: a cluster randomised controlled trial - The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health](#) (accessed 14 June 2026)
- Musgrave, J. 2017. Children's Health is Every Professional's Responsibility. In: Supporting Children's Health and Wellbeing. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. 1-8 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529715040.n1> [Accessed 14 Jun 2026].
- Public Health Wales (2024) *Working together for a healthier Wales: Five policy priorities*. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/knowledge-article/working-together-for-a-healthier-wales-five-policy-priorities> (Accessed: 14 June 2026).
- Public Health Wales (n.d.) *Nursery and school toothbrushing programme: Designed to Smile*. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/knowledge-article/toothbrushing-at-nursery-and-school> (Accessed: 14 June 2026).
- van Druten, V.P., Bartels, E.A., van de Mheen, D., de Vries, E., Kerckhoffs, A.P.M. & Nahar-van Venrooij, L.M.W. (2022) *Concepts of health in different contexts: a scoping review*. BMC Health Services Research, 22, 389. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-07702-2> (Accessed: 13 June 2026).
- Welsh Government (2017) *Flying Start Health Programme Guidance*. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/flying-start-health-programme-guidance_0.pdf (Accessed: 14 June 2026).
- Welsh Government (2022) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/1f581142-6b91-41e4-845d-3d6c7765df20/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 21 June 2026).
- Welsh Government (2024a) *Healthy Child Wales Programme: 2022*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/healthy-child-wales-programme-2022-html> (Accessed: 21 June 2026).
- Welsh Government (2024b) *Children and young people's plan*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/children-and-young-peoples-plan-html> (Accessed: 14 June 2026).

World Health Organization (2026) *Constitution of the World Health Organization*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution> (Accessed: 13 June 2026).