

Cover Page

For this assignment I have submitted the following –

Component 1: Infographic to explore Maslow's model.

Component 2: Essay: The concept of holistic child development.

Component 3: Essay: Three examples from Early Years practice.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT ([ChatGPT](#)) on the following dates to find sources of information, assist with proofreading and structure.

Dates –

6/11/25; 10/11/25; 14/11/25; 15/11/25; 17/11/25; 25/11/25; 26/11/25 & 29/11/25.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Give me examples of an infographic.
2. I would like credible sources of information within the last 10 years on Maslow's hierarchy.
3. Does the structure of my work look correct?
4. I would like sources on transitioning within Early Years, they should be real, credible sources within the last 10 years.
5. Can you proofread my work
6. Does my essay flow & is my writing clear?
7. Create me white clip art with a clear background for love, esteem, physiological, self-actualisation and safety.

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.

I acknowledge the use of CoPilot on the following dates to find sources of information, assist with proofreading and structure.

Dates –

17/11/25; 25/11/25.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Provide me with an analysis of my work.
2. Can you put my references into alphabetical order.

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.

1

PHYSIOLOGICAL

According to Maslow people need to fulfil their basic needs before they can progress to higher levels of development. The foundation of Maslow's hierarchy consists of physiological needs which include food and water and shelter and rest according to Huang (2024) and Pichère & Cadiat (2015) and Rojas *et al.* (2023). Humans cannot reach higher levels of the pyramid when their basic needs remain unsatisfied (Huang, 2024; Pichère & Cadiat, 2015). Children who experience hunger and fatigue become unable to maintain social connections or learn new things.. To aid this, it should be ensured that there is access to nutritious meals, rest, and comfortable environments. Early years settings can support these needs by providing rest areas, nutritious meals, and water. Inadequate nutrition impairs cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, energy, immunity, and overall development, affecting concentration, learning, and engagement (Concern Worldwide, 2025). Egersdorff and Mundy (2017) developed a 'living model' for early childhood, showing how Maslow's first four needs map directly onto children's everyday experiences of eating, sleeping, playing, and learning.



2

SAFETY

Once physiological needs have been met, the safety needs become the next consideration. This involves stability, security, and protection from harm (Dar and Sakthivel, 2022). To address this, it is essential to set up routines, provide safe environments, and ensure consistent and nurturing caregiving. Children that have feelings of insecurity due to unpredictable people, environmental hazards, or frequent transitions may develop anxiety and withdrawal behaviours. Consistent classroom routines, safeguarding policies, and emotional stability foster trust and confidence in children (Frei-Landau *et al.*, 2023). To reduce anxiety during separation from primary caregivers, practitioners can use a key person approach to allow the child to build secure attachments (Rojas, Méndez, and Watkins-Fassler, 2023).



3

LOVE & BELONGING

Following on from safety, love and belonging is sought after from humans, alongside friendships, relationships, and acceptance within cohorts (Pichère & Cadiat, 2015). In children this transpires into positive attachments with caregivers such as parents, guardians, and practitioners. Practitioners can nurture this need through inclusive practices that promote belonging. An example of this is when a child feels valued within their setting, they are more likely to take part and show empathy towards their peers. Lundqvist, Westling Allodi, and Siljehag (2019) found that children's sense of belonging correlates with emotional wellbeing and engagement in learning. It is thought that a sense of belonging is the emotional foundation upon which self esteem and social ability are built. Children feel secure in themselves and open to exploration and learning when practitioners prioritise connections, kindness, and inclusion. Huang (2024) explains that Maslow's hierarchy shows that people move through its stages at different rates because their life journey and cultural background affect how they achieve satisfaction. A student who belongs to an underrepresented group might succeed in their academic work but face challenges when trying to build relationships with others. The example demonstrates how people's motivational paths can be flexible and change over time.



4

ESTEEM

Empowerment needs, which are based on the notion of belongingness, include emotions of accomplishment, independence, confidence, and acknowledgement. Maslow distinguishes between two types of esteem: self-esteem (a sense of competence and mastery), and esteem from others (recognition and respect). Children's self-esteem grows when they are encouraged to make decisions, complete tasks independently, and receive praise for effort rather than outcome. A child who is recognised for building a tower of blocks through perseverance gains pride and confidence. According to research, self-esteem promotes resilience by enhancing emotional control; Surzykiewicz *et al.* (2022) discovered that self-esteem mediates this association. According to Maslow, experiences of ability address children's esteem requirements by increasing motivation and emotional control. Practitioners can support this by providing achievable tasks that build confidence and help children progress toward higher levels of development, including self-actualisation.



5

SELF ACTUALISATION

At the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy is self actualisation, the aspiration to achieve a person's full potential through problem solving, creativity and personal growth (Rojas, Méndez, and Watkins-Fassler, 2023; Huang, 2024.). Practitioners and environments can encourage self actualisation through opportunities for curiosity, imagination, and independence. Useful examples include child led play, role play, and outdoor interactions; this allows children to express concepts, make discoveries, and develop critical thinking skills. Although, Bland and DeRobertis (2020) emphasise that self-actualisation is not a state of perfection but an ongoing process of growth in which children develop their unique abilities and sense of authenticity. Maslow described self-actualising individuals as showing “spontaneous expressiveness,” “aliveness,” and a “real self” rooted in creativity and autonomy (Maslow, 1999, as cited in Bland and DeRobertis, 2020). As this developmental process begins in early childhood, early years experiences provide the foundation for later self-directed learning, confidence, and motivation to explore (Bland & DeRobertis, 2020). Showing early year's stages lay the foundation for lifelong motivation and self-directed learning.



Maslow expresses that the levels are interconnected as each one supports and strengthens the next. A child's potential to achieve self actualisation depends on feeling safe and supported; esteem arises from feeling that they belong. Therefore, holistic practice must address all the levels of need concurrently, rather than individually (Frei-Landau *et al.* 2023; Rojas, Méndez, and Watkins-Fassler, 2023). This approach ensures that physical, emotional, and psychological development are nurtured as one that create the conditions for creativity, resilience and well being. This approach aligns with early years frameworks emphasising the whole child and integrated development. While Maslow's hierarchy stays influential, King-Hill (2015) reminds us that its application must be nuanced, particularly in diverse educational contexts.

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Holistic Child Development

Holistic development requires complete care for children who need support for their academic learning alongside their physical, emotional, social, and ethical growth (Stodden *et al.* 2023). The approach unites separate developmental areas by showing their mutual relationships while proving how environmental factors from family, community, and school affect child development (Stodden *et al.* 2023). The current academic focus centers on well-being models which specifically target children through a complete understanding of their development (Navidmanesh *et al.* 2025). This paper examines holistic child development by using Maslow's hierarchy together with other fundamental developmental theories while conducting a theoretical and empirical evaluation of its advantages and disadvantages.

Framework developed by Maslow presents a flow, starting with physiological requirements followed by safety needs, then belonging and esteem needs before reaching self-actualisation (King-Hill, 2015). The basic requirements of children need fulfilment before they can develop capacity for social learning and creativity according to holistic child development principles (Nikkola, Reunamo, and Ruokonen, 2022; Arnott, 2021). To promote learning, practitioners follow established frameworks such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and contemporary holistic models. These frameworks guide the creation of environments where children's basic needs are met (King-Hill, 2015; Stodden *et al.*, 2023). Research findings from recent studies contradict the structure which Maslow presented in his hierarchy. Research by Rojas, Méndez and Watkins-Fassler (2023) shows that people often express contentment with their belonging and esteem needs while their safety and physiological requirements remain unmet. The discovery challenges the traditional view of linear need progression because needs exist as interconnected elements which cannot be separated (Rojas, Méndez, and Watkins-Fassler 2023). These critiques of Maslow's model align with contemporary educational policy, which increasingly emphasises relational and emotional factors.

The UK government's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (Department for Education 2025) confirms that children's social and emotional development is not dependent on abundant resources. Children develop their social and emotional skills

when they receive support from strong relationships and emotional care. Aubrey and Riley (2019) explain that Vygotsky showed how social interaction and scaffolding help children develop while Bronfenbrenner explained how different systems affect their growth. The psychosocial stages of Erikson demonstrate that children develop trust, autonomy, and resilience through secure relationships (Aubrey and Riley, 2019). The combined understanding from these theories demonstrates that children's development success stems from the quality of emotional and relational support they receive.

Holistic development depends on attachment as its core element as children need secure early relationships to develop emotional stability which supports their resilience, self-regulation and learning engagement. Wilson-Ali and Knaus (2019) explain that children develop stress management abilities through responsive caregiving which enhances their emerging social emotional skills. MacDonald, Healy and Tinney (2019) explains that children who experience secure attachment develop stable emotions and learn to build cooperative bonds with others. Research proves that children develop better exploration skills and learning adaptability when they feel safe in their relationships (MacDonald, Healy and Tinney 2019). The research by MacKay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) demonstrates that attachment functions as part of a larger developmental system which shows how initial relationships create foundations for future emotional, social and cognitive abilities.

The holistic development perspective receives support from early brain development as neural growth during this period occurs at a fast pace while remaining highly adaptable and directly influenced by social interactions. The brain develops rapidly during infancy while forming functional networks according to Haartsen, Jones and Johnson (2016). Functional networks for social interaction, emotional processing and attention development become more specialised through early experiences (Haartsen, Jones & Johnson, 2016). The brain creates excess synapses before it eliminates unneeded connections which makes early social interactions and responsive communication essential for building emotional control and learning abilities (Harvard University, 2025). The development of brain structures depends on Maslow's physiological and safety needs because brain development requires stable environments and responsive caregivers who provide predictable care (Haartsen, Jones & Johnson, 2016). The development of social emotional circuits during infancy

follows from love and belonging needs while multiple relational environments according to Bronfenbrenner shape developmental outcomes (Altenburger and Soldatova, 2021). These theories align closely with neuroscience.

Children in Gaza who participated in research studies showed that continuous conflict breaks down the fulfilment of needs which follow Maslow's hierarchy. The research by Qutishat (2025) demonstrates that safety needs along with physiological, belonging and esteem needs experience simultaneous disruption. Abed Alah (2024) argues that the pyramid structure fails when instability persists. Research indicates that needs exist as interconnected elements which depend on cultural context (Qutishat, 2025; Abed Alah, 2024).

The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner expands the holistic model by demonstrating how development emerges through environmental interactions at various levels (Antony, 2022). The microsystem contains family, peers and early years practitioners who create the direct environment which affects children's emotional stability and learning actions (Navarro and Tudge, 2025). Antony (2022) explains that the mesosystem shows how different settings like home and school maintain communication. Children develop through multiple interconnected systems which include community resources, cultural norms, and national policies (Tudge *et al.* 2016; Antony, 2022). The ecological framework supports holistic development because it demonstrates that children develop through their social connections with others.

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky helps us understand learning because it shows how social interactions and teamwork affect learning processes (Rubtsov, 2024). Nicholas, Veresov and Clark (2021) show that children reach better comprehension levels when they take part in guided activities with adult and peer support. They contend that the best way to improve comprehension is for educators to purposefully scaffold a little above what a child can achieve independently before progressively removing the support. When scaffolding around play, research shows that children incorporate cultural norms and when in their zone of proximal development children can attain tasks they may not have achieved independently. Samuelsson (2020) shows that practitioners use meaningful play routines to scaffold children's understanding of social practices. Most recent work by Masoumi *et al.* (2024) shows

how scaffolding in play and mark making helps children develop social, emotional, and linguistic competence. The learning process benefits from scaffolding because it serves as a cognitive and relational tool which demonstrates that emotional and social development creates the base for effective learning (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

Looking holistically at child development shows children develop through relationships, environmental responses, and cultural backgrounds. Children's development depends on relationship quality, environmental responsiveness, and their social and cultural environment. The various perspectives show that children need support through relational care, emotional attunement, and responsive communication throughout their entire ecosystem. The holistic approach to child development provides a stronger evidence-based framework which supports children's learning and overall well-being.

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Child Development and Maslow's Hierarchy in Early Years Settings

Introduction

Theories of child development help practitioners understand child behaviour patterns to determine their requirements (PACEY, 2016). This essay looks at how understanding the various levels of need according to Maslow's hierarchy enables practitioners to support children's engagement resilience and their holistic development UK research evidence that children's learning abilities relate they well-being and self regulation (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023; Welsh Government, 2020). The Welsh Early Years Framework implements Maslow's safety concept through its 'Feeling safe' outcome which supports his safety needs theory (Welsh Government, 2015). The first part explains methods for meeting children's fundamental physical requirements and safety needs followed by the second part which explains how to support their sense of belonging and self-esteem and the third part examines how these needs impact children during transitions. The Welsh Early Years Framework reflects Maslow's safety concept through its 'Feeling safe' outcome, which aligns with Maslow's safety needs theory (Welsh Government, 2015). The first section considers how practitioners can fulfil children's basic physical and safety needs, the second explores how to support their sense of belonging and self-esteem, and the third examines how these needs affect children during transition periods.

Example 1: Meeting Basic Needs in Nursery

Children who arrive at settings without sufficient rest or nutrition struggle to focus and maintain positive emotions (Grimmer, 2022). A two-year-old child displays persistent irritability and withdrawn behaviour. The child often misses breakfast and lacks a consistent bedtime schedule, according to practitioner observations. All learning and development depend on the fulfilment of children's basic needs according to Maslow's hierarchy (Featherstone, 2016; MacBlain, 2023). Research conducted in the UK shows that children who have unmet physical needs often develop negative behavioural patterns and struggle to take part in activities (Duncombe & Preedy, 2021).

The EYFS framework requires staff to support children's health needs through

individualised care (Department of Education, 2025). To prevent any child from feeling excluded, the Department for Education (DfE, 2025) requires all children in the setting to receive nutritious meals. The Welsh Government supports early basic need fulfilment through Flying Start, which creates better learning conditions (Welsh Government, 2020). The setting should also create designated areas that allow children to achieve adequate rest (Welsh Government, 2022). Children need emotional security as much as physical security, which can be achieved through daily routines that create feelings of safety (Pound, 2018).

Consistent support of children's basic needs enables them to become more alert and engaged in their learning. Children who receive stable basic-needs fulfilment develop better social skills, improved emotional control, and stronger attention during activities (Whitebread, *et al.*, 2019; EEF, 2021).

Example 2: Building Belonging and Confidence

A child in this example shows reluctance to join their peers during playtime. The child receives adequate physical care but demonstrates signs of self-doubt and limited social interaction with peers. Children need to feel that they belong within their community to achieve both emotional wellbeing and learning outcomes (Allen, *et al.*, 2025; Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). Children need to experience acceptance and value from others to develop their self-esteem and motivation according to Maslow's framework (MacBlain, 2023).

Joining small group activities tailored to their interests allows children to benefit. These groups reduce peer pressure and enable gradual participation at their own pace, as highlighted by Bonetti (2018). Research conducted in early years facilities demonstrate that working in small groups enables children to develop communication skills and maintain relationships (EEF, 2021). The Education Endowment Foundation recommends that children work with peers who demonstrate confidence and kindness, as they serve as positive role models (EEF, 2021).

Practitioners should use positive reinforcement through praise when children try to speak or join their peers, as this enhances self-confidence and supports esteem development (Featherstone, 2016). Practitioners who want to enhance children's sense of belonging should give them minor responsibilities within the setting (DfE, 2025). Research indicates that children who develop strong feelings of belonging

show increased emotional resilience, improved social skills, and greater engagement (Kutnick & Colwell, 2024).

Example 3: Transition to Primary School

Parents and guardians observe their children experience extreme emotional distress when they transition from nursery to primary school according to ESTYN (2024).

Children require safety and security and a feeling of belonging when they experience changes according to Maslow's framework (Featherstone, 2016; Pound, 2018). The child demonstrates anxiety because they are leaving familiar adults and environments to join a new classroom.

The child's transition process becomes simpler when practitioners schedule visits to unknown spaces and create time for settling in according to ESTYN (2024). The child can discover the new setting and encounter their teacher through these visits which studies demonstrate help decrease transition-related anxiety (Moir & Johnson, 2021). Storybooks about school help children learn about school procedures which Straker (2024) states leads to decreased anxiety levels. The child will feel more secure when practitioners create a customised booklet containing their new classroom's photographs (Hannant, 2025). The EYFS Framework requires practitioners to establish open communication and follow regular routines because these methods help children feel secure during transitions (DfE, 2021). The child's sense of security requires multiple agencies to exchange information about their strengths and needs for continuous support (Welsh Government, 2024).

Conclusion

The framework of Maslow's hierarchy continues to serve as an essential tool for early childhood settings to understand and meet children's requirements (Bradbury & Swailes, 2022). Practitioners create supportive learning environments for children through their understanding of safety requirements and their ability to foster belonging and esteem (Bradbury & Swailes, 2022). Children who receive security and value and support tend to develop into independent learners who build strong relationships and enhance their emotional strength (Whitebread, *et al.*, 2019; EEF, 2021). The implementation of Maslow's framework helps practitioners build enduring learning experiences which simultaneously promote children's complete health and development.

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