

Cover Sheet

Health, Well-being & Lifestyle

ECEY5009

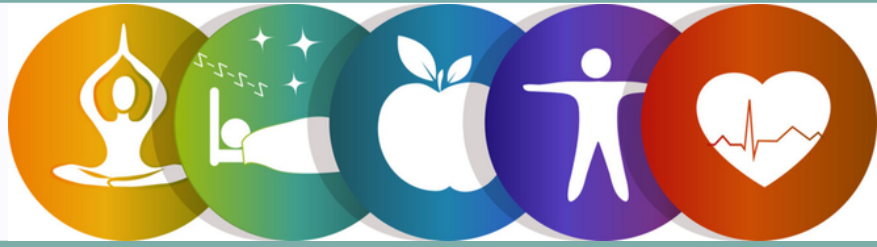
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Content:

- AI Statement.
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Introduction

This poster examines and gives definition to health, well-being and lifestyles. It explores the key factors affecting early years and how practitioners and policymakers can support children and their families through promoting positive lifestyle choices for better health and well-being outcomes.

Health

Musgrave (2017) suggests that health as a concept is difficult to explain as there is no universal definition of what it is, this can lead to different definitions due to perspective such as; how the World Health Organisation (WHO), (2025) defines health as more than just the absence of disease or infirmity, but rather as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. However, Misslebrook (2014) points out that as this definition clearly links health explicitly with wellbeing it implies that health is a positive state rather than neutral as previously implied in the medical term which defined health as an absence of illness or disease.

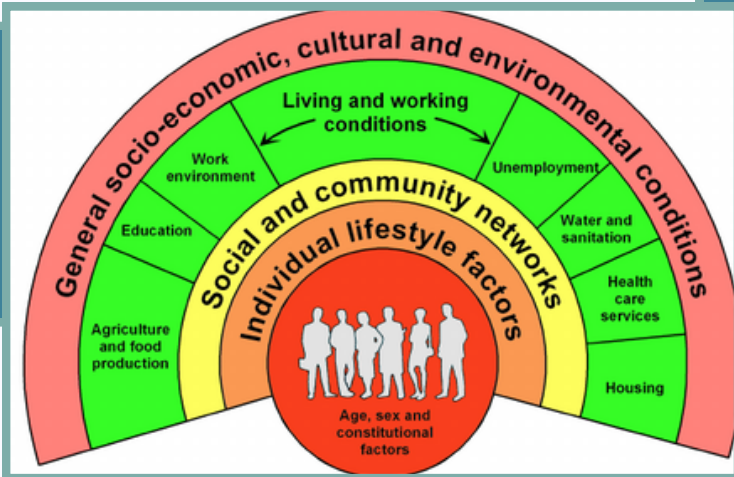
Martino (2017) and Crinson (2007) disagree with the WHO's definition as very few people have complete physical, mental and social well-being all the time and so leaves the rest of the population as unhealthy. Furthermore, Misslebrook (2014) interprets that the WHO's definition implies that anyone with imperfections is in need of medical intervention to achieve complete health and well-being. However, Schramme (2024) defending WHO's definition claims critic such as Misslebrook (2014) Martino (2017) and Crinson (2007) have interpreted the word 'complete' as a quantitative term such as perfect rather than the qualitative meaning of a holistic account of health, featuring all three aspects of wellbeing - physical, mental, social, which he believes was the intention of the WHO.

Huber et al. (2011) definition of health is the ability to adapt and to self-manage however this implies that health is an individual's responsibility rather than a collective one. However, on this point, Martino (2017) and Crinson (2007) agree with the WHO's belief that this responsible doesn't just fall on the individual but to the community and government also. Public Health Wales (PHW), (2023) aims for a healthy Wales where people live longer, healthy lives with equal and fair access to all things that promote good health and well-being. PHW's long term strategy for a healthier Wales by 2035, consists of improving factors that are known to lead to ill health such as better education and a better homelife. PHW statistics show that people from the most disadvantaged areas of Wales can lose over a decade of life lived in good health compare to people from the least deprived areas. This, if not addressed continues through generations. Welsh Government (2024b) also acknowledges the financial cost of healthy food, equipment or payment for physical exercise services and the cost attending appointments, travel expenses and time of work can also be a factor that needs to be considered for many. Other influences/determinants of health as highlighted in the 'Rainbow model' are housing, health care, unemployment, food production as well as other socio-economic, cultural and environment conditions. Rice & Liamputtong (2023) agree culture and community plays a part in an individual's health beliefs, behaviours and how they access healthcare, for example some communities and culture can show preference to more traditional healing practices over modern medicines, diet habits may impact a person's overall health, and religious or spiritual belief may influence or restrict particular procedures or treatment of an individual. Rice & Liamputtong (2023) insist that understanding these factors and the impact they have is crucial for improving health equality and the outcomes for individuals.

The Rainbow model also known as the Dahlgren and Whitehead model replaced the traditional medical model as a framework for understanding the determinants of health. This model has been used for over 30 years and continues to be the most widely used model of its kind (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 2021). This may be due to the fact that the model shows a broader picture of the factors that influence health rather than the traditional medical model which focused on the disease/ illness and treatment. It also supports and encourages multi-agency collaboration rather than the responsibility solely falling to the health sector. The rainbow model can be seen to have a common holistic approach as Bronfenbrenner's ecological system (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 2021), which includes several layers that influence a child's development through direct and indirect interactions of relationships and environments. Dyar et al. (2022) explains that both, the Rainbow model and Bronfenbrenner's ecological system can be used by early years practitioners to better support children in a holistic manner. Realising the impact that family and community have on children in their setting means that they can better involve parents /caregivers and build community engagement (Care learning, 2024).

The Curriculum for Non-maintained Nursey Settings (Welsh Government, 2024a) is underpinned by the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, one of which is supporting children to develop as healthy, confident individuals who have the knowledge and skills to keep themselves physical and mentally healthy. The curriculum aims to do this through supporting holistic development.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), in particular article 24. The government has a responsibility to provide basic health measures such as quality healthcare, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that all children have the opportunity to be in the best possible health. The article also insists on pre-natal and post-natal care for mothers and to provide education on health and well-being.



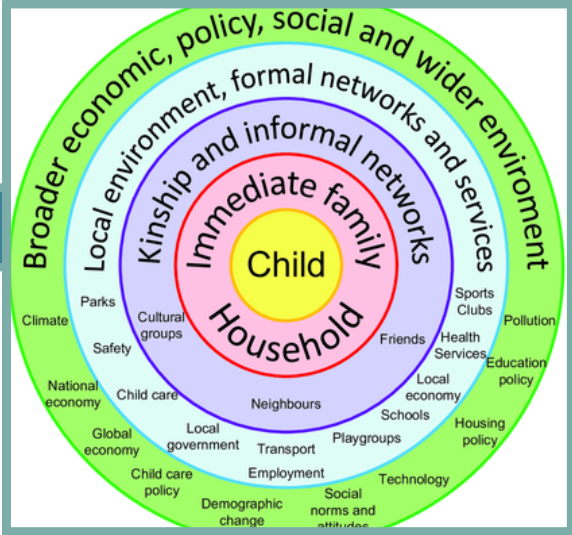
(Source: Patient safety learning, 2021)

Well-being

Felton (2015) describes well-being as how satisfied a person is with their life, their sense of purpose and how in control they feel. However, the WHO (2025) suggests this is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions The difference of opinions is why Musgrave (2017) suggest Well-being is just as difficult to explain as health.

Ryan and Deci (2001) believe there are two different approaches to well-being. The 'hendonic' approach, which focuses on a person's happiness, attaining pleasure and feeling good. The other, 'eudaimonic' approach emphasises personal growth, purpose and fulfilment, usually long-term goals. Ryan and Daci (2001) suggests gaining both perspectives for truer results when researching the topic of well-being. According to Public Health Wales (PHW), (2023) Wales is the only country in the world to establish a legislation that requires public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. The Well-being of the future generation (Wales) Act (2015) acknowledges the need for improvement across Wales, putting ownership on local government to prioritise and ensure that younger generation's well-being is at the forefront of policies and procedures. This is laid out in their seven well-being goals, which include 'a healthy Wales' and 'a resilient Wales' (Welsh Government, 2015). This act may have been put to the test during the Covid19 pandemic as according to the National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (2022) research shows that the pandemic had impacted family relationships, financial situations and parental physical and mental health. Due to the added pressure and the lack of support and services provided, children slipped under the radar as less child protection referrals were made (NSPCC, 2022). Brewerton (2022) adds suffering adverse childhood experiences such as these can affect a child's long-term well-being.

PHW (2023) whose policy is underpinned by The Well-being of the Future Generation (Wales) Act (2015), describes the mental and social well-being of an individual as the foundations of lifelong health and well-being. PHW (2023) puts the early years at the centre of developing the foundation for mental well-being through the interactions between infant and carer and the relationships at home. PHW (2023) also highlight the importance of individuals feeling a sense of belonging and connection with the wider community and families. Over (2025) agrees and adds emphasises on the importance of meeting a child's need to belong in early development, as infants show signs of interactions as early as 8 weeks old. Over (2025) states a lack of this can be detrimental to children. The importance of belonging can be seen as part of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Being a part of a community or having feelings of connection to family ties can promote social well-being (Pichere & Cadiat, 2015). The need to belong also links closely with John Bowlby's theory of attachment, which Power (2024) describes as a deep-rooted connection between child and caregiver. O'Connor (2018) highlights that stronger attachment experiences can build feeling of safety and security which promotes emotional resilience and supports well-being. O'Connor (2018) agrees with Over (2025) who states, individuals who are part of a larger network are less likely to experience isolation and loneliness and in turn be more resilient to adversity and trauma. The Curriculum for Non-maintained Nursey Settings (Welsh Government, 2024a) puts emphasis on nurturing children's well-being, demonstrating a clear link between well-being and children's development. According to the policy, this is done through a holistic approach placing the child at the centre which replicates ideologies of Froebel and Montessori. Peill (2022) believes that practitioners are responsible for identifying and monitoring children's well-being, which can be done through observations or tools such as the Leuven scale, which uses a five-point scale to measure well-being and involvement. O'Connor (2018) adds that practitioners can support well-being through positive secondary attachments, through caring and responsive interactions.



(Source: ResearchGate, 2025)

sanctioning as traditional behaviourists suggested (Aubrey & Riley, 2022), which is why NHS (2023a) encourages parents and caregivers to be good role models as children learn by example. By instilling good habits in the early years, such as having less than two hours of screen time a day, following a healthy diet and appropriate potion control and being physically active for at least 3 hours of the day (recommendation for under 5's). Another lifestyle habit that can impact children's health is adequate sleep. Lack of sleep can greater the risk of becoming overweight and can also have an effect on children's behaviour and mood.

A healthy lifestyle can offer two types of benefits, something to gain such as more energy or mobility or something to prevent such as weight gain, both need willing participants and effort. However, making negative lifestyle choices can be an active or passive action, meaning a choice to do something such as eating unhealthy foods or to avoid doing something deemed as healthy such as exercising, which can be easily done when not prioritised (BBC Bitesize, 2025). For young children, lifestyle is determined by parental choices. Maia et al. (2025) identifies childhood obesity is more often due to family environment, diet, sleep and mental health with parents being the decision makers of routine and practices at home. Healthy parental habits can encourage positive lifestyle and futures outcomes, while poor routines and stress can often lead to unhealthy weight gain. Currently the data from the National Child Measurement programme (NCMP) show that on average 1 in 5 reception aged children are overweight, with this number rising to 1 in 3 by year six and with additional research showing that overweight children are more likely to be overweight adults, increasing their risk of health issues later in life (NHS, 2023b). According to PHW (2025) the NCMP, which has been running for almost two decades, aims to identify the need for support, sharing data with local councils and local NHS to be able to plan and provide better services. Thomas et al (2020) insists that studies have shown that a healthy diet and exercise is essential for protecting children's mental health, demonstrating that health, well-being and lifestyle are interconnected. Lynch (2024) agrees when highlighting the importance of health promotion and promoting healthy lifestyles as part of holistic learning in schools. In Wales the Flying Start programme was introduced in 2006 to support families in disadvantaged areas. It offered families free childcare, an enhanced health visiting service, parental support, healthy eating advice and a speech and language service. Flying start childcare also follows the healthy food award and oral hygiene scheme to promote healthy habits (Wales Government, 2024c).



(Source: Welsh Government 2025)

Conclusion

From evidence produced it emphasises that the early years are critical for establishing the foundations of health, wellbeing, and positive lifestyle habits. The experiences and environments children are exposed to in their early years significantly influence their physical, emotional, and social development. A holistic approach to early years health and wellbeing ensures that children receive the necessary support to thrive, promoting lifelong benefits.

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