

ECEY5009/C:
Wellbeing, Care and Healthy living.

The meaning of Health, Wellbeing and Lifestyle.

This poster looks at what health, wellbeing, and lifestyle mean, and why they matter in the early years. It also explores some of the different things that can affect these areas and how they can make a difference in a child's development. Furthermore, different theories will be discussed and linked to early years

Health.

In early years health refers to the overall physical, social health, and emotional wellbeing of young children. As outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (2024), health in early years is not just about avoiding illness, it's about creating the right conditions for children to thrive physically, emotionally, and socially. This includes everything from hygiene and nutrition to emotional support and physical activity. According to the NHS (2025), a child's overall wellbeing depends on the combined support of their physical, emotional, and developmental health. However a child's development and mental health can be affected by factors such as the environment they grow up in, the relationships they form, and the experiences they go through (NHS 2025). Nutrition for children, (2025) discusses that physical health could mean, making surer the child has the right nutrition in a balanced diet and keeping hydrated, but If children don't get the right balance of nutrients in their diet, it can affect how they grow and develop. For example, calcium is important for building strong bones, while vitamin A helps support a healthy immune system. Poor nutrition in childhood can also increase the risk of developing health problems later in life, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Nutrition for children, (2025) also discuss that children are likely to follow the same eating patterns as their parents, so it is very important that the children have good role models and the whole family follows a healthy lifestyle. The NHS explains that children's physical health includes growing at a healthy rate and reaching key developmental milestones, such as crawling, walking, and coordination. These milestones help track how well a child is developing and are usually monitored from birth to age five tracked using centile charts in the child's personal health record book, and developmental reviews help monitor progress (NHS no date). Harvard University, (2022) states that strong health in early childhood supports every stage of a child's development. To support a healthy child's development, it is important to take into consideration the physical activity, as enhancing more movement into a child's day can improve the cognitive function and focus. It is known to be extremely important for their overall holistic development as well as academic performance as all forms of physical activity help support improve brain function, support kids learning with concentration and process emotions better (Kitsaras,2025). Another key aspect to keep supporting the child's health development, is social health which includes, the child's ability to form positive relationships, interact appropriately with others, and develop the social skills needed to function well in group settings. According to the Welsh Government (2021), building positive relationships with others plays a vital role in supporting children's health. Linking this to a theorist called Bowlby where he developed an attachment theory which explains the importance of building those strong relationships which suggests that building those bonds early, especially with primary caregivers, play a vital role in a child's development have long term effects on their emotional and social wellbeing, as children with good emotional health can form better secure attachments and build positive relationships socially (Brodie,2024). However, if a child's health is not properly supported, it can lead to issues such as obesity, poor hygiene, and a higher risk of infections and illness. It is therefore essential that practitioners have a good understanding of children's health and basic needs to help prevent these problems (Gov.uk 2012). Welsh Government (2015) suggests that good health in childhood is essential because it lays the foundation for a child's overall development and future wellbeing. To support this a practitioner's job is to be a positive role model by supporting child health, letting them to have opportunities to go outside, keeping up to date on health care plans and working with other professionals, this is known as a multi-agency approach. Which means, professionals from different services and sectors work together to support a child or family. The aim is to provide holistic care that meets all the child's needs, social, emotional, educational, and other health-related (Department for Education 2025). Article 24 from the UNCRC (1989), states "Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health".

Lifestyle

CDC (2024), Discusses that during early childhood when we look at the meaning of lifestyle it refers to the daily habits, routines, and behaviours that influence a young child's overall health and development. It is key to recognizing a child's lifestyle, as it supports their holistic development. According to TeachKloud (2023), Using a holistic framework for child development helps children thrive in all areas. Recognising the role of lifestyle in this process is essential, as it supports their overall development and well-being. Defining a healthy lifestyle includes considering two key aspects: sleep routines and hygiene practices, both of which play a vital role. A well-structured sleep routine can positively impact the child, making sure they are getting enough rest and having a consistent bedtime. According to Sleephealth (2025), regular sleep patterns support healthy growth, improve concentration, and enhance emotional stability, additionally a well-rested child is more ready to take on daily activities which supports them to thrive academically and contributes to their overall well-being. Sleep also supports emotional wellbeing as well rested children are better at managing emotions, reducing stress, anxiety, and mood swings (NHS Foundation Trust 2024). Sleep is also a fundamental part of boosting the brain function supporting cognitive development, sleep also encourages healthy brain growth (University of Cambridge 2025). However, an article from Today.com (2022), states that studies show that not having an enough sleep can cause delayed brain development as it can impact the brain structure and function, potentially leading to long-term developmental challenges. Another impact of not having enough sleep could cause the increase of obesity as not having enough sleep can disrupt hormones that regulate appetite, leading to unhealthy eating habits (Shuffle 2024). When looking at the second key aspect, many say hygiene practices are essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, as they help prevent illnesses, boost confidence, and promote overall well-being as experts from the Global Hygiene Council (2020), highlights that poor home and personal hygiene are widely acknowledged as the main contributors to the spread of infections such as colds, influenza, and diarrhoea. According to the NHS (2024), maintaining good hygiene is essential for personal comfort and social interactions and poor hygiene can lead to discomfort, skin issues, and lower self-esteem, affecting how individuals engage with others. Research shows that parents who do not maintain a healthy lifestyle may face several challenges that impact both their well-being and their ability to care for their children. As many parents can have a negative Influence on Children (BBC 2019). According to NeuroLaunch (2024), parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's habits and acting as role models, as unhealthy habits may lead children to mirror these behaviours, increasing their risk of long-term health problems. For example, if parents smoke, it is more than likely the children will smoke when they are older or have the aftereffects of second-hand smoking, which can leave serious health effects, such as issues with respiratory which increases the risk of lung infections (NHS 2025). Practitioners can support a healthy lifestyle in children and families in several ways. A few keyways are, practitioners can support a healthy lifestyle by engaging the family and child with services such as Team Around the Family (TAF) which enables a collaborative approach from multi agencies to work together to meet the specific needs of the child (Department for Education, 2017). Practitioners should act as positive role models for children by promoting healthy behaviours and maintaining a positive attitude. They can use curriculum-based activities to teach healthy habits and provide parents with resources to reinforce these practices at home (Early Education, 2012). Department for Education (2014) states that, practitioners should also create a healthy environment that promotes hygiene and safety, encourages positive daily routines, and provides children with plenty of opportunities for outdoor play. This links to Vygotsky's (1978), theory which emphasises that social interaction and the environment play a crucial role in a child's learning and development, and to Bronfenbrenner's (1979), theory which argues that a nurturing, safe, and responsive environment is essential for healthy development.

Wellbeing.

According to Buckinghamshire Council (nodate), "Children's wellbeing is, without doubt, at the centre of the Early Years Foundation Stage". Wellbeing is central to a child's development, it refers to emotional, social, physical, and cognitive aspects of a child's life. Admin (2025) discusses that during the early years having a healthy and balanced lifestyle is necessary for their personal wellbeing, achieving and maintaining growth as well as obtaining a holist development. Furthermore, understanding the basic human needs that will help them to appreciate how and why they are significant in their life. According to theorist Maslow hierarchy of needs, he believed that children have a set of basic needs that must be met for them to grow, learn, and thrive. If these basic needs aren't met, it can seriously affect a child's development and well-being (Libretexts 2023). When children experience early positive well-being, they are more likely to feel safe, confident, and ready to learn, this supports their ability to form healthy relationships, explore their environment, and reach their full potential, supporting them to develop holistically and grown into cable adults for a brighter future (Unicef 2025). On the other hand, if a child's well-being is not supported, it can negatively impact their development and quality of life, such as lacking love, safety, or emotional support (NSPCC Learning no date). Children benefit deeply from love and safety because these two elements form the foundation of healthy development. Bowlby suggests the importance of a secure emotional bond between a child and their caregiver, as a child who feels safe ad loved develops secure attachment, which supports the child with social and emotional development. His research was key to understanding how early relationships affect lifelong mental health (McLeod 2025). While McLeod (2024) also discuss that the theorist Piaget focused more on how children think and learn, he highlighted that a supportive and safe environment is essential for healthy cognitive development. Additionally, research supports the idea that poor well-being in childhood can increase the risk of mental health issues later in life, including anxiety, depression, and difficulties in forming relationship (McGarvie 2024). In 2015 the future Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act was introduced, which is a piece of legislation passed by the Welsh government to ensure that public bodies in Wales think about the long-term impact of their decisions on both current and future generations. The Act aims to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. This Act is also considered one of the most forward-thinking pieces of legislation globally (GOV.UK 2015). According to Department for Education (2014), To support children's wellbeing, caregivers and practitioners should take a child-centred approach by getting to know each child individual, recognizing what they enjoy and the experiences that bring them happiness. Practitioners also need to have an awareness of the Bronfenbrenner theory to have an awareness of the impact different people have on a child and having the correct understanding of child development and wellbeing (Brodie 2025). University of Oxford (2021) states that practitioners working with children need to have a positive attitude, as positivity plays a huge role in supporting children's wellbeing. It fosters a sense of safety, belonging, and self-worth along with creating a positive environment, so that practitioners can help children feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. However, the impact of not having these positive influences can be significant to children as they may experience increased anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulty forming relationships, and challenges in managing their emotions (Public Health England 2021). Over time, this can make it harder for children to build friendships, manage their emotions, and do well in learning, both in school and in everyday life. Additionally, Mental Health Foundation (2015) discuss that practitioners can support this by using mindful techniques, to get the child to forget about things, and learning coping strategies to use in everyday life. Furthermore, practitioners can encourage children to follow the Five Ways to Wellbeing promoted by NHS Wales, which can massively enhance their mental and emotional health These five encourage practitioners to connect by building relationships, be active by engaging in physical activities, take notice of the movement, support them to keep learning, and show them how to give kindness. These five ways are widely used across the UK to support mental wellbeing in schools, communities, and healthcare settings (NHS Wales nodate).

To summarise we can see health, wellbeing and a child's lifestyle are all important to consider in terms of supporting their holist development. Research also suggests that there is a link between all 3 putting an emphasis on the important of understanding them in practice.

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