

LIVING WELL A LIFE-COURSE APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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Introduction

Health inequalities can begin before birth and affect the entire lifespan

- Health develops across the lifespan (**Ben-Shlomo et al., 2014**).
- Influenced by biological, social & environmental factors
- Early experiences shape later outcomes (**Kuh & Ben-Shlomo, 2004**).
- Health inequalities are significant (**Marmot, 2015**).

Aim:

- Explain life course approach
- Analyse impact across life stages
- Evaluate and recommend improvements

Understanding the Life Course Approach

- Health shaped over time, not one event (**Kuh et al., 2003**).
- Interaction of biological, behavioural & social factors (**Ben-Shlomo & Kuh, 2002**).

Key principles:

- Timing of events
- Linked lives
- Social context (**Elder et al., 2003**).



Key concepts:

- Critical periods (**Gluckman & Hanson, 2006**).
- Accumulation of risk (**Blane, 2006**).
- Social determinants (**Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006**).

Early Life: Pregnancy, Infancy and Childhood

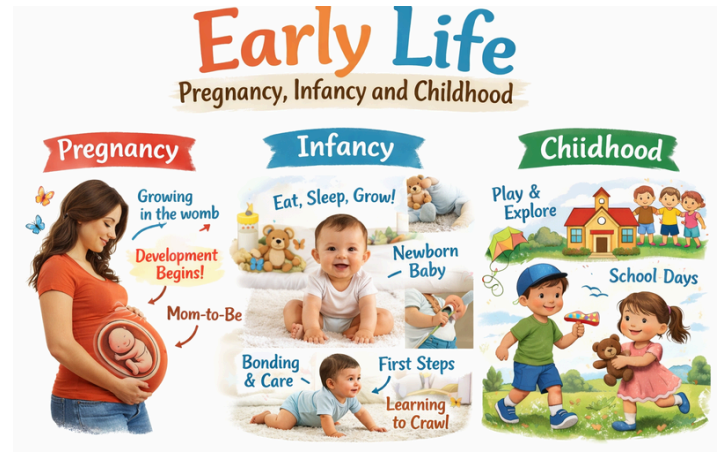
- Most important stage for long-term health **(Marmot, 2015)**.
- Rapid brain development **(Shonkoff et al., 2012)**.

Positive factors:

- Maternal health
- Nutrition
- Secure attachment
- Education **(Gluckman & Hanson, 2006)**.

Negative factors:

- Poverty
- Poor housing
- Adverse childhood experiences **(Felitti et al., 1998)**.



Early experiences influence behaviours and health outcomes in later life stages

Early Life Interventions

- Early investment = highest returns **(Heckman, 2006)**.

Examples:

- Antenatal care
- Parenting programmes **(Allen, 2011)**.
- Healthy Start / Sure Start **(DHSC, 2021)**.

Reduces inequalities & improves outcomes



Adolescence and Early Adulthood

- Key transitional stage (Coleman, 2011).

Positive influences:

- Education (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2010).
- Family & peers

Risks: Smoking, alcohol, poor diet (Sawyer et al., 2018).

Mental health issues (Mental Health Foundation, 2023).

50% of disorders start before age 14

- School mental health services (Weare, 2015).
- Early support programmes

Prevents long-term health problems

These behaviours often continue into adulthood, increasing long-term health risks



Adulthood and Midlife

- Shaped by earlier life + current conditions (Blane, 2006).

Positive factors:

- Employment & income
- Relationships (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

Negative factors:

- Stress
- Unemployment (Marmot, 2015).

Increased risk of chronic illness

ADULT INTERVENTIONS

- Workplace wellbeing (Public Health England, 2019).
- Smoking cessation

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- Smoking cessation

Improves population health



These accumulated risks impact health in later life

Later Life and Healthy Ageing

LATER LIFE

- Higher risk of illness & isolation (**Kuh et al., 2014**).

Positive factors:

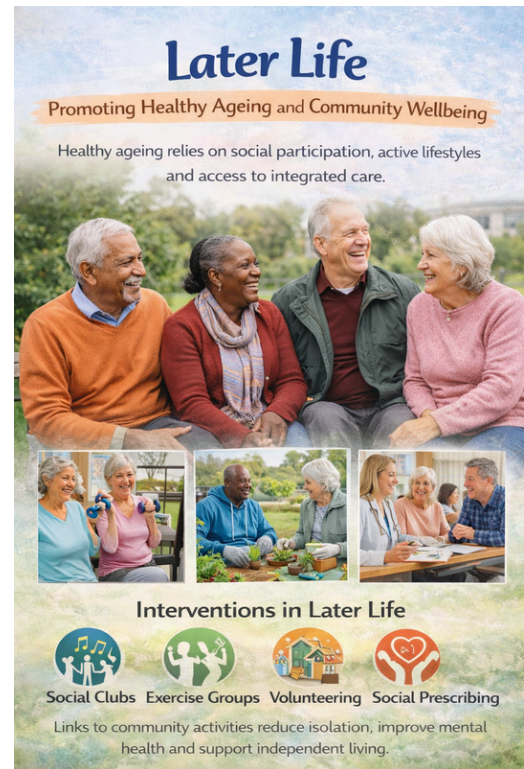
- Social engagement (**Victor, 2010**).
- Physical activity
- Healthcare access (**WHO, 2020**).

Healthy ageing is achievable

LATER LIFE INTERVENTIONS

- Social prescribing (**NHS England, 2023**).
- Community support

Improves wellbeing & reduces loneliness



Interventions Across the Whole Life Course

- Health must be addressed across all stages

Interventions:

- Early years support
- School services
- Workplace health
- Older adult support

Needs long-term investment (**Marmot et al., 2020**).

Overall, health is shaped by factors across all stages of life



Critical Evaluation

Strengths:

- Holistic approach (**Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006**).
- Focus on prevention
- Considers social context (**Elder et al., 2003**).

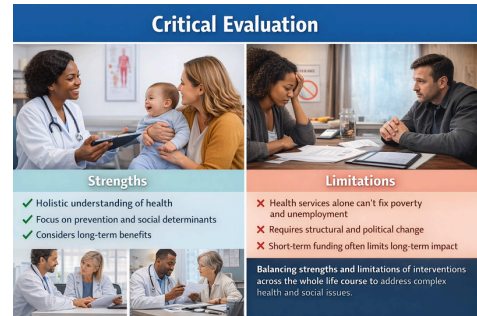
Limitations:

- Health services alone cannot address poverty (**Graham, 2007**).

Needs policy change (**Dahlgren & Whitehead, 2007**).

- Inequality still key issue (**Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010**).

Individual lifestyle choices also influence health outcomes, not only social factors



Recommendations

Invest in early childhood (**Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000**).

Improve school mental health (**Weare, 2015**).

Expand workplace wellbeing (**Black, 2008**).

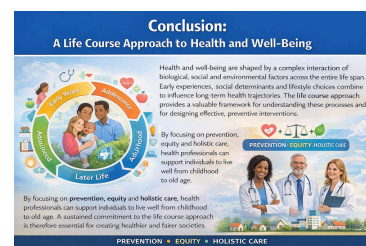
Increase social prescribing (**South, 2015**)



Improve collaboration (**Glasby & Dickinson, 2014**).

Conclusion

- Health shaped across the lifespan (**Ben-Shlomo & Kuh, 2002**).
- Early experiences strongly influence outcomes
- Social determinants are crucial (**Dahlgren & Whitehead, 2007**).



The life course approach is essential for reducing inequalities

This highlights the importance of early intervention and long-term public health strategies