



Health, Well-being and Lifestyle within the Early Years

Student Number 1805798
Word Count - 1868



Intoduction

This poster discusses the concepts of health, well-being, and lifestyle within the Early Years and examines how practitioners can support and promote these areas to improve children's development. The early years are a crucial stage in a child's life as this is where the most development happens. This poster will also discuss the importance of health, well-being, healthy lifestyle, positive behaviours and holistic development.

What is Health

Health is the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of an Individuals. Individuals can improve their health in several ways, including ensuring they eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and connect with others (Felman, 2025). Health in the early years is extremely important, as Public Health England (2016) notes that the first 2 years of a child's life are when the brain develops most.

Factors Influencing health and wellbeing

Several factors influence a child's health and wellbeing, the first one being physical factors; this could be nutrition, poor nutrition can lead to children becoming obese and gaining several health issues and deficiencies (Unicef. no date). For example, a child with a poor diet could lack iron, and that could then cause anaemia, which would lead to the child feeling fatigued and sleepy. Poor nutrition can affect children for a long-lasting period of their life; encouraging and introducing a healthy, balanced diet early on in life will encourage the child to eat healthier. Some children can have poor growth due to their nutritional intake.

A child's emotional and mental health can impact how they feel and function each day; if the child is not receiving the correct emotional support, it can impact their friendship and their overall health (NHS, no date).

Healthy Eating and Screen time

As the Department for Education (2025) notes, healthy eating in nurseries and schools is designed to instil healthy eating habits in children, ensuring they receive the correct nutrition and energy they need. The Department for Education (2025) also emphasises that practitioners and teachers should involve children in their meals, so they feel part of the choices and understand where their food comes from and why it is important. Hassocks (2025) also agrees and states that it's important children learn about nutritious meals and understand why they are an important part of their diet. Within early childhood, it is important that healthy eating is part of their nutrition because it is fundamental for brain development, physical growth and for forming lifelong positive eating habits.

The Education Hub (2026) suggests that children under the age of 2 should avoid screen time unless used for shared activities or conversation. For children age two to five years old, it is advised no more than one hour of screen time a day. The Education Hub (2026) also notes that children under five years old develop 90% of their brain development in these years and a large amount of screen time can affect their social, language and emotional skills.

The UK Government (2026) emphasises the importance of limiting screen time; screens are a major part of modern life, and finding the right balance can be hard. Screens can also be overstimulating for children, so the following are recommended for young children: slow-paced content, content with parental controls so inappropriate content can be blocked, and only age-appropriate content should be watched. The UK Government (2026) also notes that children's brains are like sponges and that they copy the behaviour they see, so parents and practitioners need to be mindful of what programmes and content are being watched.



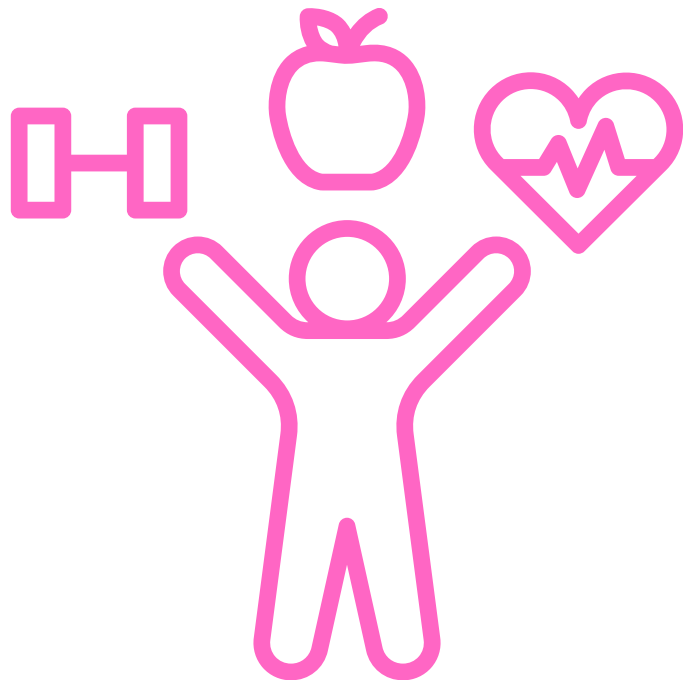
Legislation and Guidance

There are several pieces of legislation, guidance, and curriculum to help settings support children. Welsh Government (2014) provides guidance to settings on providing free breakfast in primary schools, as it continues to emphasise that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and that children who eat a nutritious breakfast before school are more likely to reach their highest level of educational achievement. Department for Education (2025) mentions that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, which supplies the standard for schools and childcare providers, states that the setting must ensure the children develop educationally and that the care for the children is at a high standard to ensure the children are healthy and safe and have the skills needed ready for school.



Health, Well-being and Lifestyle within the Early Years

Student Number 1805798



Well-being

Well-being is how an individual functions and feels in their life. Well-being can include physical, social, mental and emotional, personal growth, environmental and economic factors (Measure Wellbeing, no date). In the early years, well-being is an important factor because it influences the children's development, and how the children learn and interact with others.

The importance of meeting children's needs.

As Care Learning (2024) highlights, children cannot learn effectively if their well-being needs are unmet. A child's learning is influenced by their emotional, social and mental well-being; if one of these is unmet, it can affect the child's learning needs. Care Learning (2024) goes on to mention that poor nutrition, sleep and physical activity can reduce a child's focus and participation in learning activities.

As Guy-Evans (2026) mentions, Maslow emphasises the importance of an individual's basic needs being met to be able to support their development. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs supports this concept with the five-level pyramid, the first level being physiological needs, which are the most basic survival needs. Maslow believed that without these needs being met, the individual is unable to function properly and reach the next level of needs and going on to each level, the level below must be met prior to successfully meeting each level (Betterhelp, 2026).

As Guy-Evans (2025) notes, John Bowlby also focused on the importance of meeting children's needs; he explained in his attachment theory that emotional bonds early on between infants and caregivers help to form lifelong emotional and social development. Secure attachments help for a child to feel protected and safe; when children feel safe and secure it allows them to develop confidence, regulate their emotions and learn to build healthy relationships with others.

Both theories connect as Bowlby's concept of secure attachment links closely with what Maslow's level of safety, love and belonging. When a practitioner provides children with emotional support and comfort it is meeting the child's needs, and if a child's needs are met they are going to feel confident and able to reach their full potential.

Social and environmental factors

As Measure Wellbeing (no date) mentions, well-being is not just how someone looks; it is also how they feel within themselves. Several factors can influence an individual's well-being, one being physical factors, which include nutrition, sleep, exercise, illness and hygiene. (Measure Wellbeing, no date).

Physical and mental health are the most important aspects of overall well-being. Practitioners have a responsibility to promote children's well-being and to recognise any concerns they have identified, as children's well-being is a key aspect of ensuring they are safe and develop into positive young adults. (NSPCC Learning, 2025). A child's mental health can be affected by several different factors, which can include stress, family circumstances, environment, and also abuse and neglect.

Social factors that can influence a child's health and wellbeing include their family environment, school, and friends. A child's family is the main influence on their development; if a child has a nurturing and positive relationship with their family, it will encourage emotional stability and a sense of belonging (RCPCH, 2020). Children who feel loved, supported and safe at home are going to develop positive self-esteem and healthy social skills. However, a lack of support of an unstable home environment can affect a child's emotional wellbeing.

Robson (2026) mentions that children spend much of their time in nursery settings and schools, and they need to be happy in these settings to have a positive learning experience. Positive relationships with the practitioners and teachers can ensure the child feels included and motivated to join in. Practitioners who actively listen and respond to the children help to build trust between each other. Relationships with friends are just as important, as having good friendships can provide emotional support and help build strong ones later in life (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024).

As the Harvard University Center on the Development of the Child (2026) highlights, a child's surroundings shape the child and affect the child's brain development. Even before birth, environmental conditions can affect the child later in life. Factors such as housing condition, access to healthcare, nutrition, stress and the quality of relationships can all influence a child's development.





Health, Well-being and Lifestyle within the Early Years

Student Number 1805798



What is Lifestyle

Promoting a healthy lifestyle in the early years setting includes promoting healthy eating by encouraging children to try new foods and providing them with a nutritious diet (Early Years Alliance, no date). A healthy lifestyle needs to be promoted early on in a child's life; physical activity is important for children as it strengthens the muscles and bones, which is crucial for healthy growth and motor skills development (Battelley, no date).

Positive Behaviour

Promoting positive behaviours within the early years setting is important for children's overall development and helps to recognise their emotions (Sword, 2021). To help children learn appropriate behaviour and develop social and emotional skills, practitioners can promote positive behaviours by role modelling. Children copy the behaviours they see and are exposed to. If they see practitioners being polite, sharing and using respectful communication, it will encourage them to copy that behaviour and create an environment where children can feel safe and confident (Care Learning, 2025).

As World Health Organization (2026) mentions, for children to develop and grow, they need adequate nutrition to be healthy. They also need to feel safe and secure and to receive nurturing care.

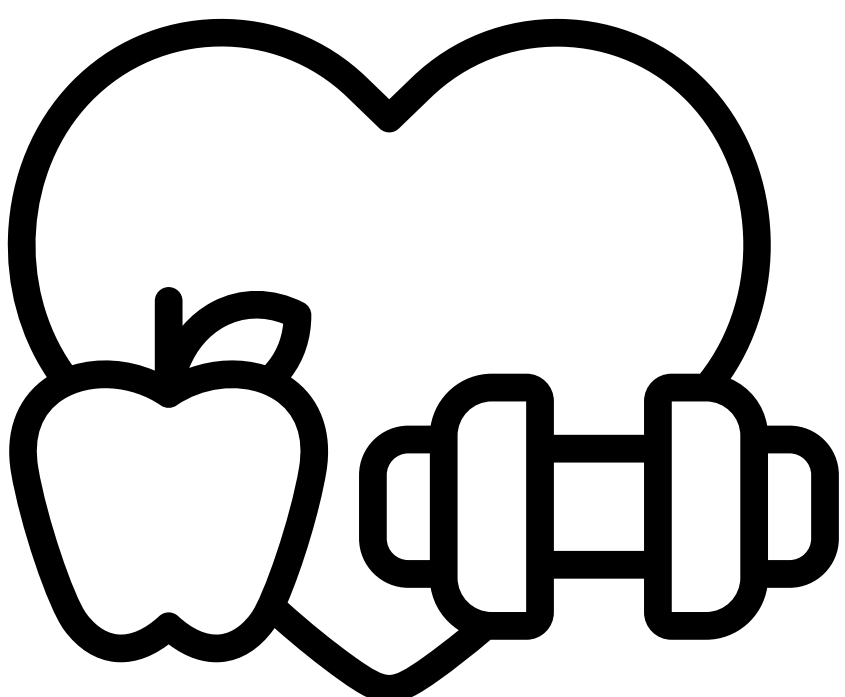
Holistic Development in Early Years

For a practitioner to recognise the holistic nature of health and well-being within the early years, they must understand the children and how they develop physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially, and spiritually (Care Learning, 2024). Holistic development recognises that each area of development is interconnected and that every child grows and learn at different levels, and each individual grows in their own way. By fostering a holistic approach, it ensures the children thrive and help promote each individual's overall well-being for future hurdles and educational success (Birth to 5 matters, no date).

Conclusion

In conclusion, health, well-being and lifestyle are closely linked and are fundamental to supporting children's growth and development in the early years setting. Good health involves the child's physical, mental and emotional well-being; well-being also reflects on the children's behaviour, how they feel and how effectively they engage with daily tasks and experiences. By the practitioners encouraging healthy choices, such as eating healthily and taking part in regular physical activity, sleep and developing positive relationships, practitioners help to build a strong foundation for the children's development.

Early years practitioners play a key position with supporting the children's health, well-being and providing a positive, nurturing and safe environment. By the practitioners using a holistic approach, it help to understand how physical, emotional, social and environmental factors impact children's development. It was shown that children's health and well-being are modelled by factors such as nutrition, family circumstances, education and emotional health. Therefore, practitioners need to recognise any concerns and provide the correct support.



Reference list

- Battelley, H. (no date) Physical activity for Early Years – Its vital role explained. Available at: [Physical activity for Early Years – Its vital role explained | Learning and Development | Teach Early Years](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Betterhelp. (2026) How The Levels Of Maslow’s Hierarchy Of Needs May Contribute To Mental Health. Available at: [Self-Actualization And Mental Health: Maslow's Hierarchy | BetterHelp](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Birth to 5 matters. (no date) Holistic development and learning. Available at: [Holistic development and learning – Birth To 5 Matters](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Care Learning. (2024) 1.2 Describe the holistic needs of the child as they prepare for school. Available at: [1.2 Describe the holistic needs of the child as they prepare for school – Care Learning](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Care Learning. (2024) 2.1 Explain how children’s wellbeing and individual circumstances can affect their learning and development. Available at: [2.1 Explain how children’s wellbeing and individual circumstances can affect their learning and development – Care Learning](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Care Learning. (2026) How to Promote Positive Behaviour in Early Years. Available at: [How to Promote Positive Behaviour in Early Years – Care Learning](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Center on the Developing Child Harvard University.(2026) Developmental Environments. Available at: [Developmental Environments - Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#) (Accessed 30th May 2026).
- Department for Education. (2025) Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Available at: [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 06th July 2026).
- Department for Education. (2025) School food standards practical guide. Available at: [School food standards practical guide - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 03rd June 2026).
- Early Years Alliance. (no date) Healthy and Active Lifestyle – top tips for early years settings. Available at: [Healthy and Active Lifestyles - top tips for early years settings | www.eyalliance.org.uk](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Education Endowment Foundation. (2024) Supporting school attendance. Available at: [Build a culture of community and belonging for pupils | EEF](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Felman, A. (2025) What is good health. Available at: [What is health?: Defining and preserving good health](#) (Accessed 27th May 2026).
- Guy-Evans, O. (2025) Attachment Theory In Psychology. Available at: [Attachment Theory In Psychology Explained](#) (Accessed 2nd June 2026).
- Guy-Evans, O. (2026) Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Available at: [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).
- Hassocks. (2025) Why Healthy Eating Practices are important in Early Years. Available at: [Why Healthy Eating Practices are important in Early Years](#) (Accessed 03rd June 2026).
- Measure Wellbeing. (no date) Wellbeing Measures Bank. Available at: [What is wellbeing, and what matters? – Evaluating wellbeing](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Measure Wellbeing. (no date) What is wellbeing, and what matters?. Available at: [What is wellbeing, and what matters? – Evaluating wellbeing](#) (Accessed 28th May 2026).
- NHS. (no date) Looking after a child or young person’s mental health. Available at: [Children's mental health - Every Mind Matters - NHS](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- NSPCC Learning . (2025) Promoting mental health and wellbeing. Available at: [Promoting mental health and wellbeing | NSPCC Learning](#) (Accessed 28th May 2026).
- Public Health England. (2016) Health matters: giving every child the best start in life. Available at: [Health matters: giving every child the best start in life - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 28th May 2026).
- RCPCH. (2020) Child Poverty. Available at: [Child poverty - RCPCH - State of Child Health](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Robson, L. (2026) Why Positive Relationships are Essential for Improving Behaviour and Wellbeing at School. Available at: [Behaviour and wellbeing can be improved through positive relationships at school](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Sword, R. (2021) Promoting Positive Behaviour in Early Years: A Guide for Nurseries. Available at: [Promoting Positive Behaviour In Early Years: Guide For Nurseries](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- UK Government. (2026) New advice for parents on screen time for young children. Available at: [New advice for parents on screen time for young children – The Education Hub](#) (Accessed 03rd June 2026).
- Unicef. (no date) Early Childhood nutrition. Available at: [Early childhood nutrition | UNICEF](#) (Accessed 02nd June 2026).
- Welsh Government. (2014) Free breakfast in primary schools. Available at: [Tile: Useful Documents/Dogfennau Defnyddiol | Well-being, care and healthy living/Lles, gofal a byw'n iach \(ECEY5009/C\) | Home](#) (Accessed 06th June 2026).
- World Health Organization. (2026) Child Health and Development. Available at: [Child Health and Development](#) (Accessed 29th May 2026).