

Health, Wellbeing and Lifestyles

No AI has been used in this assignment.

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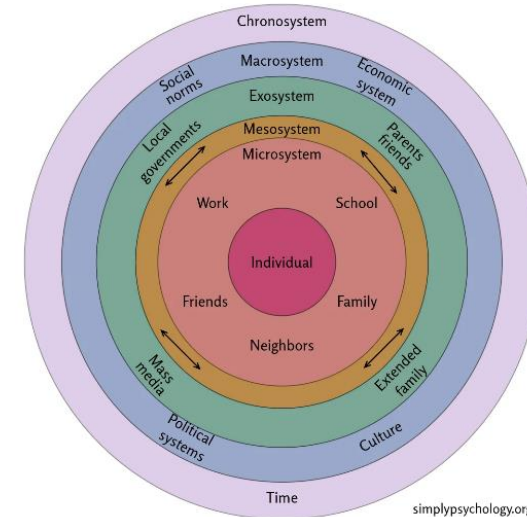
1. Health, Wellbeing and Lifestyles

Introduction

This poster will explore three key concepts: health, wellbeing, and lifestyle, and it will discuss how different factors can influence and affect the development and everyday lives of children and young people. It will highlight key theories that help individuals understand and support children's wellbeing in a more holistic way. This poster will also show how early years practitioners can use policies, laws, and the curriculum to support children's health, wellbeing, and lifestyle choices through their daily practice. According to UNICEF (no date) children need good health, strong support systems, and consistent care from the people around them in order to grow, develop and reach their full potential.

Health

According to The World Health Organisation [hereafter, WHO] (no date), health is when an individual feels well in their body, their mind, and in their relationships with others, and is not just about being free from illness or injury. WHO (no date) also highlights how important it is to support and protect the health of children. Whilst fewer children are dying today compared to in the past, many children still lose their lives from causes that could be easily treated or avoided with the right care and support in place. Good health in children includes more than just avoiding sickness, but involves living in a safe and stable environment, having nutritious food, and being given opportunities for learning and developing. Giving children what they need to thrive in their health helps build a better future for everyone. Underdown (p. 1, 2007) explains that children's health can be influenced by where they live, how financially secure their family is, and the care and support they get from the people around them. A warm, loving and safe home, and a supportive community can make a big difference on how a child feels and develops. NSPCC (2025) also adds that a child's environment, relationships and everyday experiences are all factors which play a role in their overall health. Children's rights, which are outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), play an important role in supporting their health. According to UNICEF (no date), Article 24 states that 'every child has the right to the best possible health'. This means that governments must make sure children have access to health services, healthy food, safe environments and an education about staying healthy. Article 27 states that every child has the right to a standard of living that meets their basic needs and supports their development. Governments must offer support if families cannot afford this. The UNCRC is a legal agreement that 196 countries have signed and have promised to follow. Henry (2025) supports this view, stating that early childhood is a crucial time that shapes a person's future. Having a happy and healthy start to life supports both physical and brain development and encourages children to form healthy habits and lifestyles. According to Underdown (p. 4, 2007) children who are healthy in their bodies and emotions have more energy and are more likely to play, learn, explore and build relationships. Meeting basic needs, such as having enough sleep, eating well, having clean water and being given some independence can help lay the foundations for good health.



(Simply Psychology, 2025)

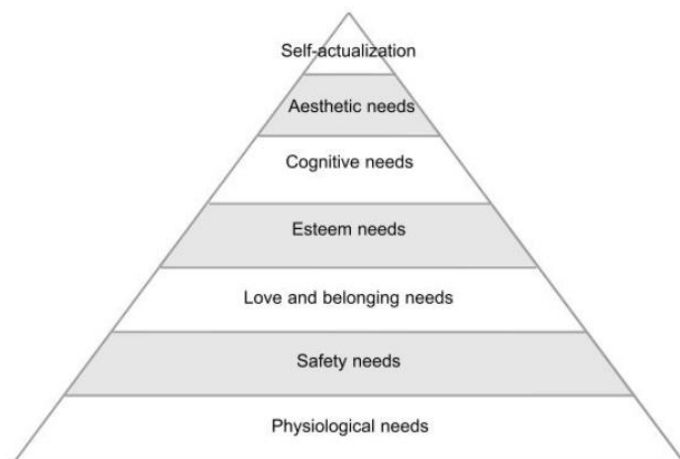
These needs show how emotional, social, physical and intellectual development are closely linked. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory supports this holistic view on health, as he suggests that a child's health is shaped by more than just personal factors, but also by their relationships, environment, and the wider society around them (The Open University, no date). This highlights the importance of taking a holistic approach to health that considers all areas of a child's life and development, and not just their physical needs.

Wellbeing

Bradshaw (p. 125, 2016) describes wellbeing as how children feel about themselves and how they think about their life. It involves cognitive wellbeing, which relates to how children think about different parts of their life such as family, friendships or school, and affective wellbeing, which refers to their emotions and moods, such as feeling happy, anxious or upset. A child's wellbeing, similarly to health, is shaped by their relationships, environment, and everyday experiences, and it plays a vital role in how they grow, learn, and feel about themselves. Care Learning (2025) explains that there are many different factors that influence children's wellbeing. Good physical health is important, including a balanced diet, being active, and having enough sleep, all of which help children feel happy, energetic, and able to focus. The environment they grow up in, feeling safe where they live and having a stable home life all play an important part in their wellbeing. Their school life, how they get on with their teachers, the friendships they make, how included they feel, their cultural background and any big life events, either positive or negative, also shape how children feel. Positive experiences in these areas can boost a child's wellbeing, whereas stressful or negative ones, like trauma or bullying, can make it harder for children to feel confident and secure, negatively impacting their wellbeing. According to Children's Society (no date), when children have a low wellbeing, it can affect their mental health and can lead to anxiety or depression. It can also negatively impact their relationships, and make it harder for children to feel positive about the world around them. Whereas, Berlinski and Schady (p. 23, 2015) highlights that positive wellbeing support's all areas of children's development in a holistic way. Developmental areas such as physical, language and cognitive development, and socio-emotional skills are all closely connected and are influenced by the child's overall wellbeing. Early Intervention Foundation [hereafter, EIF] (2025) adds that children with positive wellbeing can build skills, like understanding their own feelings, getting along with others, managing their emotions, and making responsible decisions. These skills can help them do well in school, form strong relationships, and grow into confident adults. Children with strong wellbeing are more likely to do well in life, which supports better mental health into adulthood and are less likely to engage in crime or antisocial behaviour. Wellbeing can also enhance a child's confidence, make them more empathetic, support positive behaviour, boost creativity, and give them a sense of achievement and resilience (Buchanan and Hudson, 2003, cited in Roberts, 2010, p. 23). Article 31 from the UNCRC supports this, as it recognises the importance of play, rest and activities, which all have a positive impact on children's wellbeing (UNICEF, no date). Underdown (pp. 4-5, 2007) links Maslow's hierarchy of needs to wellbeing, as his theory shows that children must have their basic needs met, such as having food/water and safety and love, before they can thrive. This links closely with wellbeing, as children who feel secure and supported are more likely to have confidence and feel good about themselves. It also highlights the connection between health and wellbeing, and the importance of both for children's holistic development.

Lifestyle

Lifestyles is about a person's everyday habits and routines and the choices that they make, such as what they eat, how active they are, how well they sleep, and how they spend their free time. The choices people make daily can have a big impact on their overall health and wellbeing. For children, building a healthy lifestyle with good routines and habits can directly influence both their physical health and boost their mental wellbeing. Some key parts of a balanced lifestyle includes eating nutritious food, keeping active, and getting enough rest. Focusing on these areas regularly can help build and maintain good health and wellbeing (Open Up, 2025). Barnardos (2024) highlights how important it is for young children to develop healthy eating habits and positive lifestyles early on. Supporting children to eat lots of healthy and nutritious foods, such as fruits, vegetables, proteins and dairy can help strengthen their growth and give them the energy they need to play and learn. Encouraging children to try new foods in a relaxed and positive environment, for example sitting together at mealtimes, can also help build a healthy relationship with food. Having these habits in place early on can benefit children's physical and cognitive health, as well as boost their mood, focus and overall wellbeing. Whereas, British Nutrition Foundation (no date) discusses the negative impact a poor diet can have on children's health and wellbeing. When children do not get the nutrients their bodies need, it can affect their growth and immune system, and also increase their risk of having a disease when they are older.

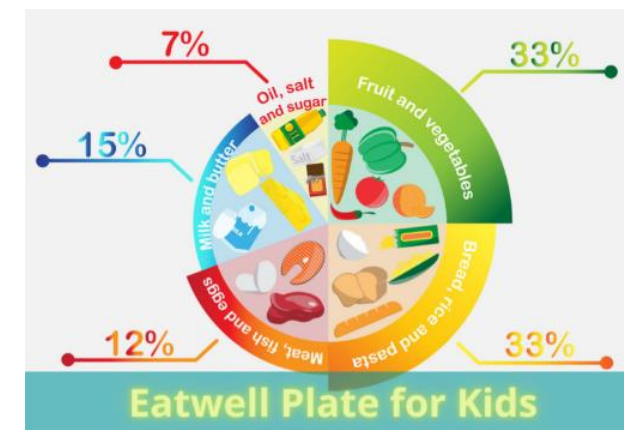


(Underdown, 2007)

Children who are hungry and do not eat well may feel tired, irritable and find it harder to concentrate in school and on their play, whereas a child eating too much of an unbalanced diet can become overweight, which increases their risk to health problems later in life. Wales Centre for Public Policy (2022) notes that lifestyle choices and behaviours in children are influenced by lots of different factors, such as genetics and health conditions, but a large part comes from the social side of things. For example, a child's family, where they live, how financially stable their household is, and the people they are around all day play a big role in shaping their lifestyle. How parents raise their children, the local community and the wider social environment all have a strong impact on a child's health. For example, if a family is struggling financially, they may find it hard to afford healthy food or hobbies, such as swimming or football clubs, which can affect the child's lifestyle choices (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991, cited in Wales Centre for Public Policy, p. 2, 2022). The World Health Organisation (2021) suggests that important influences on lifestyles for children include how wealthy or deprived their family is, their family habits, their school environment and peer pressure. These influences all shape children's everyday choices, and when they are supported they can build healthy lifestyles. This shows how closely connected lifestyles, health, and wellbeing are, because when children have healthy lifestyles and the right support, they are more likely to feel good physically in their health and mentally in their wellbeing.

Supporting health, wellbeing and lifestyles in early years practice

Early years practice and practitioners plays a vital role in supporting children's health, wellbeing, and lifestyle habits through daily routines, play based learning, and a nurturing environment. The Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019) takes a holistic approach in supporting children in its health and wellbeing section. The framework allows practitioners to help children develop important skills in their practice, such as making healthy choices and understanding how different parts of their wellbeing are connected. It also emphasises that health and wellbeing are part of everything children do at school, and that it should be a whole school approach. The aim is for children to become motivated, resilient, caring, and responsible, with practitioners guiding and supporting them. This highlights the role practitioners play in supporting children's health and wellbeing in their settings. According to the Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government, 2022) practitioners are "enabling adults" who support children's learning and development through play. Play is essential for children's health, wellbeing, and lifestyle because it helps them build confidence, make friends, and develop physical skills in a fun way. By encouraging and joining in with play, practitioners give children opportunities to explore, express themselves, and develop holistically. Welsh Government (2021) discusses a whole school approach to supporting children's mental health and wellbeing. This means everyone who is involved with the school, such as staff, parents, children and the community must work together to make mental health and wellbeing a priority. To support this, practitioners can create a safe and nurturing environment, model positive behaviour and support children's emotional needs every day. Building strong relationships with both children and their families, and working closely with other staff and outside agencies is also important, as it helps ensure children get the support they need. In Wales, practitioners and their settings can support children's health during snack and lunch times by encouraging healthy eating habits and following the Welsh Government's (2024) guidance in 'Heathy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009'. This guidance encourages children to bring a healthy snack to school, such as fruit and water, instead of fizzy drinks. Food A Fact of Life (2022) highlights that even though providing a healthy lunch box is not law, many schools have their own policy regarding this which encourages parents and carers to provide children with healthy lunch boxes, including foods like, pasta and vegetables instead of chocolate and crisps. Practitioners can support this by talking to children about healthy choices and creating a positive eating environment. Early years practitioners also work closely with outside agencies to provide children with extra care and support if needed, this is called multi-agency working. NSPCC (2023), states that practitioners and professionals need to work together and share information so they can fully understand a child's needs and provide the correct support. This multi-agency approach helps identify any concerns early on and allows for a more holistic support system that benefits children's health, wellbeing and lifestyles.



(Training Express, 2023)

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