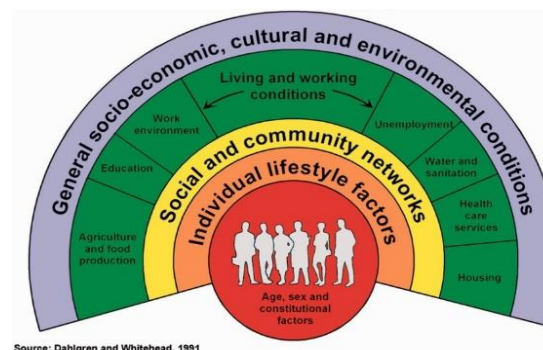


Health, Well-being and Lifestyles

Introduction

This poster will define the concepts of health, well-being and lifestyles and the issues that can arise for children. The poster will further explore how these issues can impact the holistic development of children. The role of the practitioner will be explored, discussing how they can support positive health, well-being and lifestyles through practice and following legislation. This poster will also explore the importance of professionals and services working together to prevent health inequalities and provide the best outcomes for children.



Health

According to Marmot (2010) early childhood lays the groundwork for significant factors of human development including intellectual, emotional and physical. The events during these early years have a lasting impact on health including obesity, heart disease and mental health. Health and well-being can be defined as the attainment and preservation of physical fitness and mental stability (Musgrave, 2017). According to Musgrave (2017) factors including physical, social, intellectual, and emotional all contribute to an individual's overall state of health. In 1991 a model was created urging people to consider the broader social determinants of health (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 2021). This model is still widely used by professionals today. The model suggests that factors such as the environment, relationships, where you live, education all influence a person's health. This is further supported by theorist Bronfenbrenner (1979) who agrees that the environment has detrimental impact on children's development. For children living in a deprived area can impact their health as they are more likely to be living in poverty. This can result in children being born with low birth weight which puts children at risk of developing chronic diseases including diabetes and heart disease. According to Underdown (2007) families with a low income are more likely to buy unhealthier foods due to the low costing. This increases the likelihood of developing obesity. Good health is important in supporting a child's holistic development. Health impacts a child's emotional, physical, social and cognitive development. As a result this has a lasting effect a child's learning throughout life. According to Welsh Government (2019) for learning to be successful, children require good health and positive well-being. Children are empowered to become ambitious capable learners when they have fostered resilience, empathy and decision making skills.

How Practitioners can support Health

Practitioners must provide children in their care with nutritious and healthy meals as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Practitioners can support healthy eating by following the Eat Well Guide ensuring children have the correct portion sizing and balanced diet. Children require specific nutrients such as calcium to develop strong healthy bones and iron to prevent health conditions including anaemia (NHS,2022). Practitioners can ensure children are having the recommended amount of 5 fruit or vegetables a day. Serving water instead of juices and squash reduces sugar intake and encourages good oral health. Practitioners can further support oral hygiene through dentist role play, stories and discussions and providing teeth brushing programmes such as Design to Smile. These are important measures to prevent the rise of tooth decay. Research shows that a third of 5 year olds living in the most deprived areas have tooth decay (Department of Health and Social Care, 2025). Practitioners can prevent health conditions such as obesity by encouraging children to exercise and be active. Children need space and freedom to move to develop physically and mentally. Practitioners need to provide opportunity to play outdoors to support physical and mental development. Physical development supports holistic development (Welsh Government, 2022).

Activities such as obstacle courses, scavenger hunts, puddle jumping, running all provide children with joy supporting positive well-being as well as developing gross motor skills, muscle strength, balance and co-ordination. Spending time outside also supports positive well-being. Outdoor play allows children to explore and take risks promoting resilience. This will enable children to develop decision making skills and overcome challenges in later life.

Well-being

According to Statham and Chase (2010) the concept of well-being has many different aspects including physical, emotional and social. However Roberts (2010) believes that well-being is difficult to define as it has different meaning to different people. Roberts suggests that to understand well-being it should be broken down into categories known as the ABC model. This model considers how communication is received and expressed by infants to tell us what their needs are. Well-being is important for a child to develop holistically (Welsh Government, 2022). Well-being supports emotional development. Adults who provide nurture and build positive relationships make children feel safe, secure and loved. According to Bowlby (1997) children who develop emotional resilience by developing secure attachments early in life will have the skills to form relationships throughout life. This is further supported by Ainsworth who believes that caregivers who identify and respond to the needs of children allow for attachments to form. Not responding to needs can cause children to suffer neglect and stress which has a significant impact on emotional development and cognitive development (Gerhardt 2015). Building resilience and self-regulation is important to reduce adverse childhood experiences. Negative early life experiences, particularly abuse and trauma have a significant impact on cognitive development and behaviour from childhood into adult life (Felitti and Anda, 2010). Emotional support also allows children to feel content and happy (Yonghee *et al.*, 2015). The findings of this study shows how a parent saying “I love you” made a little girl feel “good and delighted”. This suggests that the relationship children have with others has a direct impact on the feeling of happiness (Thoilliez, 2011). Theorist Maslow agrees that love and belonging is human need which is achieved when physiological needs of eating, sleeping, are also met and when children are provided with a safe and secure environment. Fulfilling these needs allows children to develop positive self esteem giving them the confidence to reach their full potential throughout life. A child with positive self-esteem is more likely to achieve academic success (Welsh Government, 2022).

How Practitioners can support Well-being

Practitioners support emotional development by building positive relationships through interacting and responding to the child's needs. This allows children to develop attachment and a sense of belonging. Identifying the individual needs of the child through observation and assessment then allows for adapting the environment (Welsh Government, 2021). Practitioners can support well-being by providing regular outdoor access and a variety of opportunities for free flow play. According to Vygotsky children learn and develop through playing. Vygotsky's theory of 'zone of proximal development' explains how practitioners should observe what a child can do alone and when a child needs them to intervene and provide support. This allows children to learn and thinking for themselves developing independence and confidence. According to Laevers 2005 when a child is involved they are learning for themselves in their own way and discovering their own capabilities. Practitioners can further support by well-being by observing children to find out their individual interests. This allows practitioners to provide stimulating and challenging activities that are child centred. This not only values all children as unique individuals but also allows children to enjoy. Children are more motivated to learn when they feel they belong (Welsh Government, 2021).

Lifestyle

According to NHS (2022) factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle include exercising, eating a balanced diet and adequate sleep. Lifestyle choices have a significant impact on health and well-being. For children exercising is an important of physical development and an effective way of maintaining a healthy weight. Lack of physical exercise and a poor diet increases the risk of obesity. Since infants are dependent on adults this means that parents have a significant influence on children's lifestyles. Children need a consistent routine which includes the sufficient amount of sleep for their age to support holistic development. Research suggests sleep is strongly linked to cognitive development. The brain processes and stores long lasting memory during sleep (Payne, 2011). Insufficient sleep can have a negative impact on a child's concentration and learning in education. Research also shows how nutrition can impact a child's ability to learn. Breakfast is widely acknowledged as the most crucial meal of the day, and research indicates that children who consume a balanced and nutritious breakfast before the school day are more likely to thrive (Welsh Government, 2019). To support families and give children an equal opportunity to learn, the Government launched free breakfast clubs providing a healthy breakfast every day. According to the Children's Commissioner for Wales the influence of screen time on children's physical and emotional well-being is a growing concern. Parents need to limit the amount of screen time children have as this has significant impacts language and social skills. Excessive screen time can cause a delay in language development and communication skills as it prevents children from having interactions. Interactions are how children learn to communicate, understand feelings and develop empathy. This how children develop social skills and build relationships, important skills needed to make friends and form positive relationships in later life as identified by Bowlby (1997). Not having these skills gives low confidence and may cause children to be withdrawn.

How Practitioners can support Lifestyle

A practitioner provides a safe and secure environment when they create a routine providing children with a consistent sleep routine and regular nutritious meals appropriate to the age and individual needs. Practitioners can further support healthy lifestyles by building a trusting relationship with parents/ care givers no matter the circumstances. Sharing information is essential In providing support for parents ensuring the best outcomes for the child (Barnardo's, 2022). Practitioners can invite families to events, parents evening, drop in sessions where information can be shared. Practitioners can educate parents on nutrition and physical exercise. This encourages parents to be healthy role models, mirroring practitioners. Practitioners should have an open door policy where parents feel comfortable to ask for support, this enables practitioners to connect parents to support services. Successful multiagency collaboration improves outcomes. According to the NSPCC (2025) multi-agency is an integral part of keeping children safe and protected.

Conclusion

We can see that health, well-being and lifestyle all contribute to the holistic development of a child. Research suggests there is a link between all three as they all contribute to maintaining health and positive well-being. According to NHS Wales the early years is the most fundamental time to ensure better outcomes in health, learning and adulthood. Early childhood development can be impacted by a variety of factors and social detriments that affect children's health and wellbeing. Therefore It is important parents, practitioners and healthcare professionals can identify these and provide additional support and interventions. The Welsh Government make it clear that working in collaboration will support better health and well-being outcomes. It is evident that children need adequate nutrition, exercise, rest and sleep to aid holistic development. Children also need to experience positive relationships to support well-being and reach their full academic potential.



(Source: Simply Psychology, 2022)

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