

Word count – 1,807

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Health, Well-being and Lifestyles

This poster will look at the concept of Health, Well-being and Lifestyle and how those concepts link to early years education and children's holistic development. There are many links between Health, Well-being and Lifestyles. For example, the World Health Organisation suggests that well-being is affected by a person's lived experiences and circumstances such as their health, career, education and relationships. However, it is not one way, an individual's health contributes to their well-being as much as their well-being contributes to their health (Department of Health, 2014).

Health

The World Health Organisation states that health is defined as a person's overall physical, emotional and social well-being rather than a lack of illness (World Health Organisation, 2025). Similarly, Underdown (2007) states that a sign of affluence of a country can be found through the health and well-being of its children. A child also has the right to health as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 24 states that children have the right to adequate medical care, clean water, nourishing food and healthy environment (Underdown, 2007). Musgrave (2017) states that the adults in a child's life have an important role to promote and ensure children's health. This is an important part of safeguarding and practitioners should be aware of Working Together to Safeguard Children which is government guidance. This guidance states that practitioner should strive to prevent children from illness (Musgrave, 2017). Another government scheme is Healthy start which is a scheme provided by the government to support families with a lower income. This scheme has a positive effect on children's health as it gives advice on nutrition, vitamins and also provides tokens to purchase milk and fruit (Public Health England, 2016). Children's health and overall development begin during pregnancy where it is vital the mother receives attentive care and a balanced diet to allow the child to thrive and for the baby to develop properly. Research shows that the use of drugs, alcohol and smoking during pregnancy can have harmful effects such as learning difficulties and a low birth weight (Sadrkhanlou, et al., 2021). In addition to this, the government also believe that a child's health during pregnancy and the early years of their life can impact their health and development throughout their adult life. Similarly to Sadrkhanlou (2021) the government also states that being overweight or smoking during pregnancy can increase the risk of low birth rate and death (Public Health England, 2018). There are several factors that contribute to children's health and development. For example, inherited conditions may affect children's health such as ADHD and asthma (Moore and Oberklaid, n.d.). In addition to this poverty can affect children's health as caregivers may not be able to afford a nutritious, healthy diet. A lack of a nutritious diet can affect children's health as they are lacking essential vitamins and minerals and are at risk of obesity. Living in poverty may also affect the child's wellbeing and mental health (Moore and Oberklaid, n.d.). It is essential that practitioners promote children's health in practice. Practitioners do this by providing a nutritious snack and milk, encouraging exercise in PE and forest schools. Forest school supports children to lead a healthy lifestyle and be active outdoors, learn how to safely take risks, builds confidence and supports their overall health and wellbeing (Forest School Training, 2019). Many practitioners will also be involved in the Design to Smile scheme which promotes oral hygiene with children 0-7 by working with schools and families. They provide toothbrushes and toothpaste, give support and guidance and support schools and settings to brush in class as part of their daily routine (Welsh Government, 2017).

Well-being

Wellbeing is often seen as being cheerful, in good health and thriving (Berlinski, Norbert Rüdiger Schady and Inter-American Development Bank, 2015). However, Mental Health Foundation (2015) states that well-being is more than just being cheerful and happy it includes factors such as how people are feeling, their purpose and their personal and social life. Children's experiences throughout their adolescence can have an impact on their wellbeing and affect their life as an adult ((Public Health England, 2015). It is important for practitioners to prioritise and promote children's wellbeing so that children are able to thrive and live a rich, joyful life (Public Health England, 2015). It is important practitioners understand their role in supporting children's wellbeing, they can do this by encouraging children's independence, resilience and providing a warm, nurturing environment where children feel safe and valued. Practitioners will also need to be able to spot children who's wellbeing may be at risk. There are many factors that can affect children's well being including an unstable family life, living in poverty, difficulties with communication and learning, sickness and unhealthy or negative attachments (Buckinghamshire Council, n.d.). However, positive attachments are a fundamental part of children's wellbeing and self-esteem (Shukla and Dubey, 2021). Bowlby describes attachment as a strong emotional connection built in the early years and believed that the quality of this attachment would have a lifelong effect. Positive attachments can have a positive effect children's wellbeing as they are likely to achieve better academically, have better self-esteem and emotional regulation. However, children with poor attachments are more likely to have mental health problems, display aggression, struggle to form relationships and understand their emotions which will directly affect their wellbeing (Shukla and Dubey, 2021). To ensure children's wellbeing practitioners must ensure they are meeting each individual child's needs. According to Maslow's Hierarchy children require physical needs, safety needs, love, self-esteem and self-actualisation in order to support their well-being and develop holistically (Libretexts.org, 2024). Practitioners support children's physical needs by providing water, a healthy snack, supporting toileting and providing a clean and safe learning environment. Practitioners support children's safety needs by completing risk assessments, following safeguarding procedures and making sure the learning environment is safe and secure. Practitioners support children to feel loved and as though they belong by creating an inclusive learning environment, supporting children to create positive attachments and work collaboratively. Practitioners encourage children to be confident by celebrating their achievements, promoting independence and giving praise. Lastly, practitioners support self-actualisation by giving children choice and allowing them to be creative (Capes, 2024).

Capes. (2024)

**Lifestyles**

Jensen (2008) defines lifestyle as the way someone lives. This could refer to a person's eating habits, how they travel, where they live, what they do and who they choose to spend time with. Carlson (2020) states that health, wellbeing and lifestyle are linked as people's lifestyles can have a direct impact on their health which then affects a person's wellbeing. There are many different types of lifestyle choices that can affect an individual's health and wellbeing such as poor nutrition and poor hygiene (Carlson, 2020). Lifestyle has an impact on children and their health and wellbeing as children need to live a healthy lifestyle ensuring they have the correct nutrition, good quality sleep for the appropriate amount of time and exercise for their bodies to function and develop holistically (BBC Bitesize, n.d.). Similarly, Barnardos Family Space (n.d) suggest that sleep is important for children as it helps the body and brain to rest and recharge and can also support their cognitive development. They also believe in being active as part of a healthy lifestyle as it can support children's wellbeing by relieving any worries or anxiety and boost their confidence. World Health Organisation (2019) supports this and states that by limiting the time that children are sat and not active, encouraging more physical activity and having sufficient sleep can have a positive effect on children's overall health and wellbeing. As part of the new curriculum in Wales, the health and wellbeing section aims to develop healthy, self-assured children that are prepared for the ever-changing world. The new curriculum aims to do this by promoting a healthy lifestyle, building confidence, independence and problem-solving skills (Welsh Government, 2020). However, barriers to children living a healthy lifestyle include parenting styles and behaviours. For example, children need to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day however parents may not buy them or may not be able to afford them. Parents snacking habits and overconsumption may also lead to children overeating and not consuming enough vital nutrients. Working parents are also struggling to find the time and effort to make nutritious food for their children and often resort to fast food or food that lacks nutritional value (Magalhaes et al., 2022). Practitioners can promote a healthy lifestyle and diet by going on trips to local shops to support children to learn more about where their food comes from. Practitioners may also create a place in the outdoor area where children can grow their own fruits and vegetables. In addition to this, practitioners need to ensure they have the relevant training such as a food hygiene certificate which will give practitioners the knowledge to support children's health and wellbeing (earlyyearscares, n.d.).

Application in practice

Mainstone- Cotton (2017) states that a crucial part of children's wellbeing is feeling supported and encouraged by the practitioners and adults around them. It is the practitioner's role to be a positive role model, guide children and help them to make decisions regarding their health, wellbeing and lifestyle. There are many children who are facing hard times and trauma at home and practitioners may be the only adult to make them feel safe, heard and loved which has a positive effect on their health and wellbeing (Mainstone-Cotton, 2017). Practitioners also support emotional wellbeing by looking for signs of change in children as signs of stress, anxiety or anger can signal that there may be a safeguarding issue that can directly affect a child's health, lifestyle and wellbeing. They will keep a record of their notes and concerns and contact the safeguarding officer (Care Learning, 2024).

Conclusion

To conclude, the research shows there is a link between children's health, wellbeing and lifestyle. It is essential that families, agencies and schools continue to work in partnership to ensure children are healthy, safe and feel valued. Throughout this assignment it is clear the important and valuable role that practitioners take on to ensure children's needs are being met. The theories explored made it clear that children's basic needs need to be met and they need to build positive relationships and attachments in order to develop holistically. Going forward, practitioners will need to continue to support children's health and wellbeing to allow children to achieve their full potential. They will do this by ensuring the learning area is clean and safe with fresh air to reduce the chance of sickness, encouraging proper hygiene in school such as hand washing, toileting and covering their mouth when coughing or sneezing. Practitioners will also ensure the children have a healthy school meal, snack and stay hydrated whilst also working in collaboration with outside agencies and families (Care Learning, 2024).

ECEY5009 reference list for poster

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