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I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Health, Well-being and Lifestyles

Introduction

This poster will explore the concepts of health, wellbeing and lifestyles. It will focus on the importance these concepts have for children in the early years and how practitioners can implement the curriculum to support the holistic development of the children in their settings. Additionally, this poster will discuss Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and how these theories affect the health and wellbeing of children.

Health

According to Musgrave (2017) health is a complex concept to define and that there is no universal definition of what health is, although the definition by the World Health Organisation [hereafter WHO] is highly recognised. Health is defined by WHO (n.d.), as being a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not solely based of the lack of disease. This is supported by HM Government (2010), who define health as a state that encompasses both physical, mental health and wellbeing, and that they are not only interested in whether people have a health condition, but also in how healthy and well they are. The importance of health is highlighted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child [hereafter UNCRC]. Article 24 states that all children have the right to the best possible health and that the government must provide good quality health care, clean water, nourishing food, as well as education on health and well-being (UNICEF, 2019).



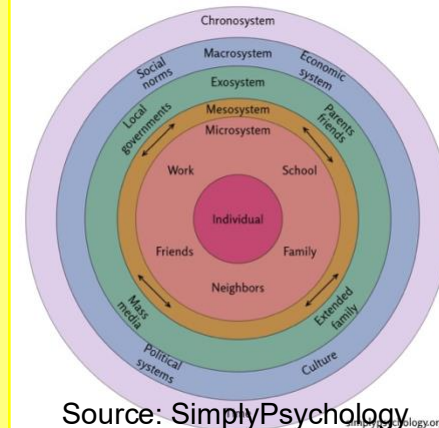
Source: SimplyPsychology (2025)

Student Practitioner, Helena Green, believes that health can be defined as the basic needs of the child being met, as well as being supported by their family and the professionals around them to develop holistically (Musgrave, 2017). This relates to the ideas of Maslow, who created the hierarchy of needs (Johnston *et al.*, 2018; Maslow, 1943). Maslow's hierarchy of needs depicts the complexity of the needs of children and that biological requirements, such as the need for a balanced diet, are at the forefront of the hierarchy and must be met before people can become concerned with higher order needs such as social relationships and esteem (Johnston *et al.*, 2018; Underdown, 2007). Maslow believes that if children have all the building blocks of health, they are more likely to feel at ease with themselves and be open to exploring new experiences (Underdown, 2007). Maslow (1943) uses the example of a man is being extremely hungry and therefore no other interests will exist apart from food. He dreams only of food, emotes only about food and wants only food, and he becomes entirely engulfed with this drive of hunger and all other needs become of secondary importance (Maslow, 1943). This explains the significance of health, as without health, the physiological needs of a child are not met and therefore, the child is unable to develop holistically. Giving children the best start in life, regarding their health, is significant to their development later on in life. This is supported by Marmot (2010) who states that the foundations for holistic development are laid out in the early years. What happens in the early years has a lifelong effect on health and well-being, which can include obesity and mental health issues (Marmot, 2010). The significance of health for early years children is highlighted in the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. The curriculum aims to develop healthy, confident individuals who are able to apply knowledge about diet and exercise and mental health to their own lives and therefore, are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Welsh Government, 2024).

Well-being

As stated previously, Article 24 of the UNCRC states that all children have the right to the best possible health (UNICEF, 2019). This includes a child's mental health and wellbeing (UNICEF, 2023). Mind (2023) states that wellbeing does not have one set meaning. Statham and Chase (2010) describe the concept of wellbeing encompasses physical, emotional and social wellbeing, which focuses on children's immediate and their future lives. Additionally, The National Health Service [hereafter NHS], (2022a), defines wellbeing as not just the absence of ill health, but also the way people feel about themselves and their lives. The NHS (2022a) adds that wellbeing is made up of emotions, perceptions and experiences. Wellbeing is influenced by physical and mental health and has an influence on the experience and outcomes of different health conditions (NHS, 2022a). This is supported by WHO (2021), who defines wellbeing as a positive state experienced by individuals, and similar to health, is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. This is built upon by Thoilliez (2011), who emphasises on the importance of relationships on wellbeing and states that it is "...clear that the natural habitat of happiness is in human relationships. Thus, children experience their happiness with others and from others" (Thoilliez, 2011, pp. 346).

Maslow (1943) states that when physiological and safety needs are gratified, then the love and belonging needs arises. This section of the hierarchy of needs, states that a person is hungry for affectionate relationships and will strive at great intensity to achieve this goal (Maslow, 1943). Firth (2018) state that secondary socialisation from wider relationships such as nursery staff, are an important factor in how a child develops throughout the early years. This is highlighted by the curriculum for non-maintained nursery settings, a practitioner has an integral role in the period of early learning and supports children to begin to express and regulate their feelings in positive ways (Welsh Government, 2022). The practitioner can have a positive impact on a child's wellbeing, and through consistency in care, should demonstrate respect for children through supporting them with making their own decisions (Welsh Government, 2022). This can be explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasises the influence the environment can have on holistic development, through four systems influencing the child (Mukherji, 2014). Underdown (2007, cited in Mukherji, 2014) states that within the microsystem represents the closest relationships to the child, which not only be the family, but also relationships formed in early childhood settings. The practitioner is one of the first people to influence the child, and as an enabling adult, gives the child esteem and purpose, thus affecting the child's wellbeing. This is built upon by Pierson (2013), who talks about the importance of human connection, particularly between a child and educator. Pierson states that the toughest children are never absent and stresses that the tough children show up for a reason and that is the relationship and connection they receive from the educator (Pierson, 2013). Early experiences have an impact on brain developmental, and the impact of these experiences can influence the psychological development and wellbeing of children (Howard *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, wellbeing is vital in the early years to support the holistic development through the child's entire life.

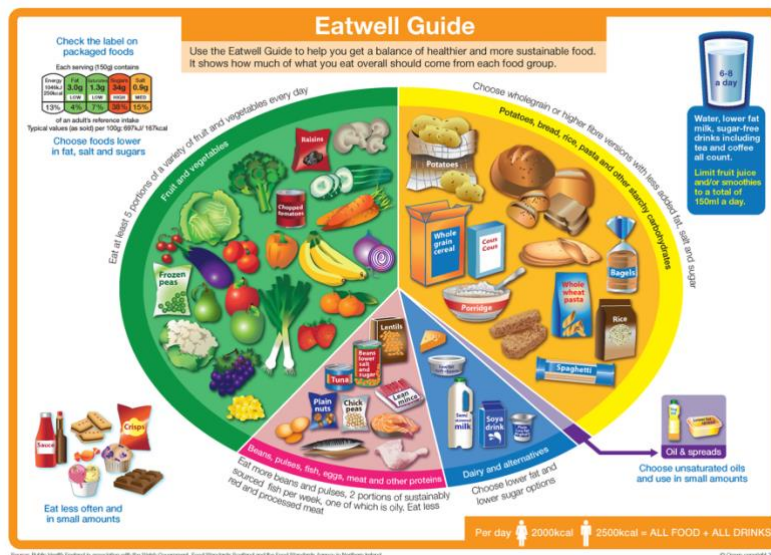


Source: SimplyPsychology (2025)

Lifestyles

Brivio *et al.* (2023) state that there is no single definition for lifestyles. However, lifestyles are defined by Farhud (2015) as the characteristics of people of a region, which includes day to day behaviours and functions of individuals in job, activities, and diet. Meanwhile Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines lifestyles as a person's way of living as well as their values and ideas. According to Barnardos (2025) and Estyn (2013), healthy lifestyles in the early years include healthy eating, exercise, relationships, education and wellbeing. This is built upon by NHS (2022b), who believe that 5 ways to wellbeing include, connecting, being physically active, learning new skills, giving to others and being present in the moment. Regarding being present in the moment, early years practitioners can set up activities in the room, where the child needs to stop and observe. This could be done through a nature walk, which will not only improve their mental wellbeing but also keep them physically active.

As stated previously, healthy lifestyles include healthy eating (Barnardos, 2025; Estyn, 2013). The Eatwell Guide is a tool recommended by the Government on achieving a balanced diet (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2024). This is supported by NHS (2022c), who state that the Eatwell Guide shows how much a person needs to eat overall from each food group to achieve a healthy and well balanced diet. The guide recommends that children over the age of 2 must eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day (NHS, 2022c; Department for Education, n.d.). The importance of 5 a day is emphasised by NHS (2022d) and the Association of UK Dietitians (2023), who state that a fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre, which are good for health. Additionally, fruit and vegetables can help reduce the risk of health diseases later in life such as heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure (Association of UK Dietitians, 2023; NHS, 2022d; NHS n.d.). Therefore, healthy eating can contribute to a healthy lifestyle.



However, achieving a healthy lifestyle is difficult for children who are living in poverty. According to the Child Poverty Action Group [hereafter CPAG] (n.d.) poverty causes children to go without basic necessities, which includes going to school hungry. Poverty harms children's health and wellbeing (CPAG, n.d.). Therefore, the Early Years Outcomes Framework discussed the most important quality of life conditions for children age 0-7 in Wales and outlined outcomes that they want children to achieve (Welsh Government, 2019). These outcomes include that all children in the early years must feel safe, are healthy, and do not live in and are disadvantaged by poverty (Welsh Government, 2019). To achieve these outcomes, the Welsh Government (2025), aim to help children living in poverty by providing all children with free school meals. Additionally, the Government will make sure that services are accessible and available to meet family's needs (Welsh Government, 2019).

Application to Early Years Practice

The Welsh Government (2014) state that the nation is committed to the UNCRC and early childhood education follow the principles of Article 6 and Article 24. Within these articles, the Welsh Government (2014) is committed to the idea of a consistent, child led approach to learning and development across all early years services, as this is essential to ensuring a child's health and wellbeing. As stated previously, the Welsh Government has created a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, which has a focus on 5 pathways (Early Years Wales, 2023). These pathways focus on belonging, communication, exploration, physical health and wellbeing (Early Years Wales, 2023; Welsh Government, 2022). Therefore, this shows the government's commitment to helping practitioners support children's health, wellbeing and lifestyles.

Within the curriculum, it advises practitioners to become enabling adults and create an emotionally safe environment which can support children to express and regulate their feelings in a positive way (Welsh Government, 2022). Additionally, practitioners can have a positive impact on children's wellbeing, through consistent care and modelling kindness (Welsh Government, 2022). Practitioners should demonstrate respect for children's decisions and choices, and should sensitively support them to cope with change, and uncertainty (Welsh Government, 2022). In addition to this, the curriculum advises practitioners to support the physical health of children in their care (Early Years Wales, 2023). The curriculum states that all children should have experiences that promote enjoyment in physical activity, and that practitioners should give children regular access to a wide range of physical experiences, indoors and outdoors (Welsh Government, 2022). The Welsh Government (2022) state that children having a physical, healthy lifestyle, can have multiple benefits for development. Physical activity can positively support healthy bone and muscle development, as well as enhance a child's sense of belonging and wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2022). Therefore, physical development is an important pathway that practitioners must explore with the children in their setting.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, this poster has explored the concepts of health, wellbeing, lifestyles and how early years practitioners can support children through implementing the curriculum. It has recognised the importance of health, in relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the complexity of the requirements of physiological needs, such as health and a balanced diet that must be met before children can become concerned with higher order needs such as relationships (Johnston *et al.*, 2018; Underdown, 2007). This poster has also explored wellbeing, and the importance relationships can have on the development of children. It has recognised Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, and that the relationship that practitioners form with the children in their settings, can have a huge influence on their holistic development (Mukherji, 2014; Underdown, 2007, cited in Mukherji, 2014). This poster also has explored lifestyles, specifically healthy lifestyles and the importance of a healthy diet. It has recognised that the Government recommends following the Eatwell Guide, which shows how much a person needs to eat from each food group to achieve a well-balanced diet (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2024; NHS, 2022c).

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