

Human Development

ECEY4001/C

Component 1 - Develop an infographic to explore Maslow's model in depth (923 words).

Component 2 - Explore in depth the concept of holistic child development with links to Maslow's model 1050 words).

Component 3 - Offer three examples from early years practice to highlight Maslow's significance in understanding child development. (1021 words)

There was use of AI in this assignment

Prompts used

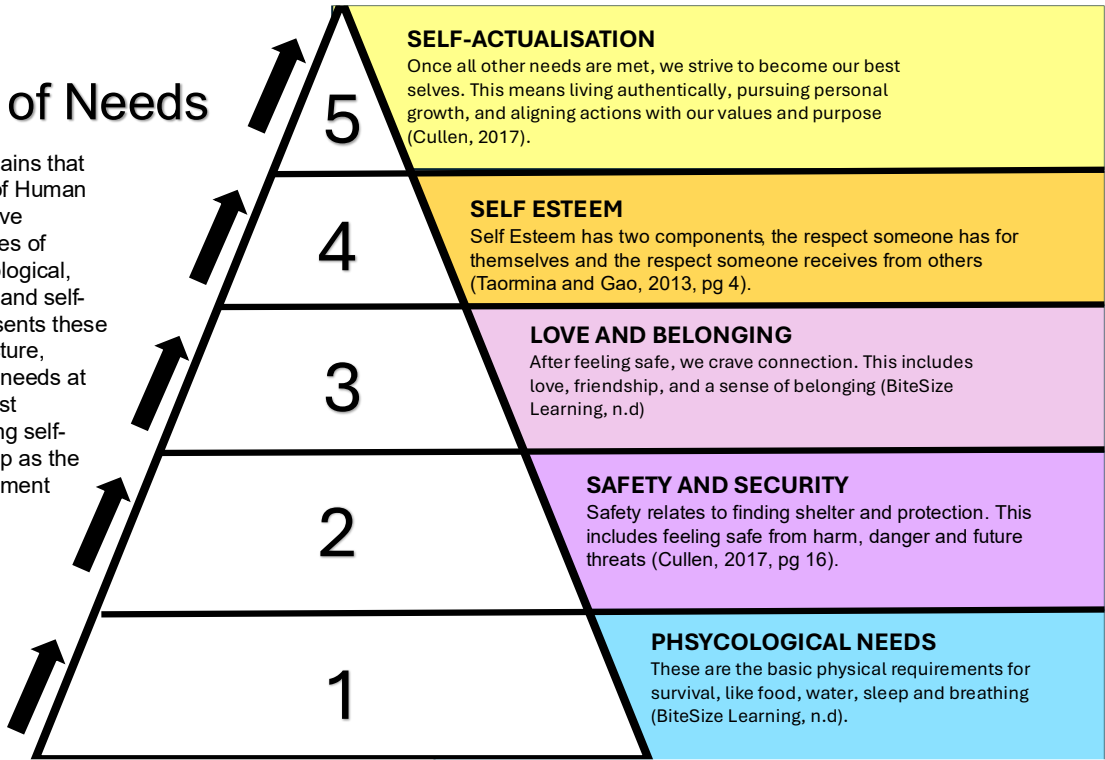
- Can you show me an example of an infographic with a layout to suit 1000 words.
- What would a good structure for this type of assignment look like?
- What theorists would help me best to critique Maslow's hierarchy and why?
- Could you find me an academic source that is peer reviewed?
- (Sent a screenshot to AI) Could I make my infographic better? If so, how?
- How should I structure writing a concept? Would an introduction be needed?

Part 1

Exploring and presenting Maslow’s model using an infographic.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Stoyanov (2017) explains that Maslow’s “A Theory of Human Motivation” outlines five fundamental categories of human needs; physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He presents these in a hierarchical structure, placing physiological needs at the bottom as the most essential, while placing self-actualization at the top as the final stage of development (Stoyanov, 2017).



PHSYCOLOGICAL NEEDS Physiological needs are the most fundamental requirements for sustaining human life. Maslow identified these as the necessities that must be met before individuals can progress to higher levels of development. They include food, water, air, shelter, clothing, rest, and sleep (Chavda, 2024). These needs are directly linked to survival and take priority over all other needs in the hierarchy. When they are unmet, people find it difficult to concentrate on anything other than relief (Chavda,2024). For example, a hungry child will struggle to engage with learning tasks until their need for nourishment is satisfied. Maslow emphasized this point by noting that “man lives by bread alone” (Maslow, 1943), highlighting how unmet physiological needs dominate attention. In primary schools, meeting these needs is essential for effective learning. Breakfast clubs and free school meals ensure children have access to food, while clean drinking water is available throughout the day to maintain hydration. Warm classrooms and appropriate clothing policies help provide comfort and shelter (Hurak, 2025).	SAFETY AND SECURITY Maslow (1943) described safety and security needs as a basic part of human life, and we can see them clearly even in very young children (Maslow, 1943). For instance, babies instinctively cry when they feel unsafe, such as when they lose the support of a parent’s arms or are handled roughly. These reactions aren’t learned but are natural survival responses, helping to protect the species from harm over thousands of years (Carretié, etal, 2005). In schools, these theoretical needs translate directly into safeguarding practices. The Welsh Government’s <i>Keeping Learners Safe</i> guidance highlights that educational settings must protect children from harm, neglect, and risk, while promoting their well-being (Welsh Government, 2024). This includes having designated safeguarding leads, clear policies, and trained staff who can respond to concerns (Welsh Government, 2024). Safe classrooms, predictable routines, and accountability structures mirror Maslow’s emphasis on stability and protection (Welsh Government, 2024).	LOVE AND BELONGING In Maslow’s hierarchy, love and belonging come third and play an important role in human motivation (Pitchere and Cadiat, 2015). Love and belonging are social needs because they relate to a person’s social life. People naturally seek connection and affection (Chavda, 2024). Human beings want love, care, and acceptance from family, friends, colleagues, and partners (Chavda, 2024). The Welsh Government, guided by the UNCRC, highlights belonging as central to children’s well-being. For example, one core aim is that all learners are listened to and treated with respect, with their race and cultural identity recognised ensuring every child feels valued and included (Welsh Government, 2023). Another aim is that children have safe homes and supportive communities, which provide the stability needed for emotional security and a sense of belonging. Finally, the commitment to play, leisure, and cultural activities ensures pupils can connect with peers, build friendships, and participate fully in society (Welsh Government, 2023).	SELF-ESTEEM Maslow (1943) emphasizes the importance of esteem needs and says that “satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world. Thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness and helplessness” (Maslow, 1943). Weinburg says, it is essential for parents and teachers to recognise the value of self-esteem, self-respect, and the approval of others. Without these, individuals may experience damaging feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. These negative emotions prevent people from progressing toward self-actualization, as a strong sense of esteem is a necessary foundation for personal growth and fulfilment (Weinburg, 2012). The Curriculum for Wales echoes this by embedding well-being and confidence into its four purposes, ensuring that learners can progress toward higher levels of motivation and ultimately self-actualization (Public Health Wales, n.d).	SELF ACTUALISATION Chavda says, self-actualization represents the highest level in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and involves realizing one’s full potential, achieving personal growth, and experiencing fulfilment. It is considered a “growth” need, driven by the desire to become the best version of oneself (Chavda, 2024). Self-actualization is about striving for challenges, pursuing excellence, and reaching a sense of purpose in life or within a chosen field. Although everyone has the capacity to self-actualize, few fully achieve it, and even for those who do, this need is rarely completely satisfied (Chavda, 2024). The Curriculum for Wales promotes, ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens; and healthy, confident individuals. These 4 Purposes mirror Maslow’s higher-order needs. They encourage pupils to develop confidence, creativity, and ethical maturity, which are central to self-actualization (Welsh Government, 2022).
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Part 2

Exploring the concept of holistic child development

Introduction

This part of the essay will explore the meaning of holistic development and how it relates to key theoretical perspectives, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. It will then consider how these ideas are reflected in current practice, particularly within the Curriculum for Wales, which promotes a child-centred, rights-based learning. Finally, the essay will critically discuss the strengths and weaknesses of holistic approaches.

What is holistic child development?

Holistic development refers to the idea that a child's growth is best understood as an integrated process, where learning, development, and well-being are deeply interconnected (Brodie, 2018). There are many factors that influence a child's development.

The Curriculum for Wales (CfW) identifies five key developmental pathways that underpin early childhood learning and care (Welsh Government, 2023).

Belonging focuses on children feeling secure, valued, and part of a community. It highlights the importance of relationships, identity, and inclusion in early learning (Welsh Government, 2023)

Communication encompasses language, expression, listening, and interaction. It stresses how children develop the ability to share ideas, understand others, and build social connections (Welsh Government, 2023)

Exploration encourages curiosity, play, and problem-solving. It recognises children as active learners who investigate their environment and construct knowledge through experience (Welsh Government, 2023)

Physical Development covers gross and fine motor skills, coordination, sensory integration, and physical literacy. It also links to health, movement, and access to outdoor play (Welsh Government, 2023).

Well-Being promotes emotional security, resilience, and self-regulation. It includes mental health, confidence, and the ability to manage feelings and relationships

(Welsh Government, 2023).

These pathways emphasise holistic growth and guide practitioners in supporting children's progress from birth onwards.

Theoretical Foundations

Maslow (1943) is most known famous for the hierarchy of needs which suggests that all humans share the same fundamental requirements, which must be satisfied in a specific sequence before higher levels of growth can be achieved (WJEC, 2021).

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs provides a useful lens for understanding holistic child development. His model suggests that children's growth depends on the fulfilment of basic physiological and safety needs, alongside the need for belonging and love, before development such as esteem, cognition, and self-actualisation can occur (Taormina and Gao, 2013).

Unlike Maslow (1943), Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory places greater emphasis on relationships, arguing that learning occurs through social interaction and scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development. (Bodrova and Leong, 2007). This contrasts with Maslow's focus on individual needs, but both highlight the importance of supportive environments for holistic growth.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory demonstrates that children's development is shaped by the dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment. He identified four nested systems, the microsystem (immediate settings such as family and school), mesosystem (connections between these settings), exosystem (indirect influences such as parental workplace), and macrosystem (broader cultural and societal values), which later turned into the bio-ecological model with the PPCT framework (Process, Person, Context, Time) (El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022). Maslow's hierarchy of needs focuses on building on needs in sequence (Maslow, 1943). Bronfenbrenner places growth within systems and emphasises the role of environment and context (El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022).

How holistic development links to the curriculum today

The Curriculum for Wales places the four purposes at the centre of its framework, with the aim of all learners becoming ambitious and capable learners, healthy and confident individuals, ethical and informed citizens and enterprising and creative contributors (Welsh Government, 2025). These purposes reflect a holistic view of development, recognising that education must nurture not only academic skills but also emotional well-being, resilience, creativity, and social responsibility. This aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that education should develop children's personalities, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential, while preparing them for responsible life in a free society (UNCRC, 1989, Article 29). CfW's focus on play-based learning and rights-based approaches, such as listening to children's voices and safeguarding their well-being, demonstrates how the curriculum has embedded UNCRC principles. The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires Welsh Ministers to promote the rights and well-being of children, embedding the principles of the UNCRC into national policy (Welsh Government, 2010). These frameworks highlight that education in Wales is designed to support the whole child, ensuring that learning is inclusive, creative, and rights-respecting.

Critical discussion

Theory/framework	Strengths	Weaknesses
Curriculum for Wales (CfW)	• Child centred and holistic, focusing on the 4 purposes to develop learners (Welsh Government, 2022) • Embeds UNCRC principles, promoting rights and well-being (United Nation, 1989).	• Broad aims can be vague in practice (Welsh Government, 2025) • Outcomes difficult to measure consistently (Welsh Government, 2025)
Maslow	• Highlights importance of meeting basic needs before higher-order growth (Maslow, 1943) • Useful lens for understanding well-being in education (WJEC, 2021)	• Criticised for being too linear and universal (Taormina and Gao, 2013) • Overlooks cultural variation in prioritising needs (Taormina and Gao, 2013) • Less focus on social interaction compared to Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978)
Bronfenbrenna	• Shows how environment and systems shape holistic development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) • PPCT model highlights dynamic interactions (El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022)	• Complex to apply in practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) • Can be difficult to evidence (El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022)
Vygotsky	• Emphasises relationships, scaffolding, and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978)	• Requires skilled practitioners to scaffold effectively (Bodrova and Leong, 2007)

Conclusion

Holistic development recognises that children grow best when their needs are supported together. The Curriculum for Wales reflects this through its four purposes and developmental pathways, aiming to nurture confident, resilient, and creative learners (Welsh Government, 2023). Theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Vygotsky's sociocultural approach, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model provides understanding of how children learn and thrive. Holistic development requires secure environments and enabling relationships that respect the whole child (Birth to 5 Matters, n.d.). "Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning" (Birth to 5 Matters, n.d.). In practice, early years professionals often use multiple perspectives, blending Maslow's focus on wellbeing, Vygotsky's emphasis on relationships, and Bronfenbrenner's attention to context (Bodrova and Leong, 2007; El Zaatari and Maalouf, 2022). This adaptability is what makes holistic development significant: it encourages practitioners to see the child as a whole person, shaped by needs, relationships, and environments, and to respond in ways that are inclusive, dynamic, and rights-respecting (UNCRC, 1989; Welsh Government, 2010).

Part 3

Maslow's significance in understanding child development in early years practise

Introduction

The last part of this essay will explore Maslow's significance as well as issues using three examples of early years practise: attachment, transitions and partnership. Maslow's framework is still useful for understanding how children's needs must be met holistically, but it requires critical application alongside other theories (Bitesize Learning, n.d.).

Transition

Hwb's professional learning suggests that transition refers to change, specifically the movement from one set of circumstances to another (Hwb, n.d), for example, a parent or caregiver returning to work after parental leave. While this process is often gradual, it can also occur suddenly as a distinct event (Hwb, n.d). For transitions to

be successful, it requires preparation, planning, and ongoing support to help individuals adjust. These changes may involve shifts in the environment, relationships, behaviours, routines, roles, or expectations that can influence how the transition is experienced and managed (Hwb, n.d).

According to the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings Welsh Government (2025) “Transitions are changes that take place in a child’s life that require them to adapt to a new set of circumstances. These may include major changes such as bereavement, divorce, moving home, or the transition from home to ‘setting” (Welsh Government, 2025).

At Gogerddan Nursery, Aberystwyth, Emma Healy and her team dedicate the first four weeks to helping children settle, gradually building familiarity and responding to individual needs (Hwb, 2024).

This reflects Maslow’s emphasis on meeting children’s safety and belonging needs before they can progress towards confidence and learning. By prioritising secure relationships and consistent routines, practitioners ensure that children feel safe enough to explore and engage (Taormina and Gao, 2013).

However, it is disrupted by criticism for being too linear, whereas transitions show that needs can overlap (safety and belonging at the same time) (Taormina and Gao, 2013). Other theories such as Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory emphasises relationships, scaffolding, and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Attachment

According to the NSPCC (2021), attachment refers to the emotional bond formed between a child and their primary caregiver, which plays a crucial role in shaping social and emotional development. Secure attachments provide children with a sense of safety and trust, enabling them to explore their environment with confidence. Strong attachment relationships in the early years are essential for wellbeing, resilience, and future learning outcomes (NSPCC, 2021).

In practice, the key person approach within early years settings ensures that each child has a consistent adult who builds familiarity and responds to their individual

needs (DfE, 2021). According to Jeremy Holmes, when caregivers recognise infants as separate and sentient beings, children are more likely to be socially well-adjusted, able to reflect on their emotions, and capable of weaving experiences into a coherent narrative. Secure attachment also supports children in managing loss and separation with appropriate emotional responses such as sadness, anger, and reconciliation (Holmes, 2014). Similarly to transitions, this also reflects Maslow's love and belonging needs, as children who experience consistent emotional support and nurturing relationships feel valued and connected (Simply Psychology, 2025). Meeting these foundational needs enables progression towards confidence, self-esteem, and ultimately learning (NSPCC, 2021).

While Maslow's hierarchy highlights the importance of love and belonging as foundational needs, Stoyanov argues that his framework oversimplifies the complexity of human relationships (Stoyanov, 2017).

Another theorist that differs from Maslow is Bowlby (1969), for example, a child's attachment to a caregiver provides both safety and belonging at the same time (Holmes, 2014), challenging Maslow's assumption that needs emerge in a strict order.

Partnership

The Curriculum for Wales emphasises that effective partnership between practitioners, parents, and the wider community is central to supporting children's holistic development. Strong partnerships ensure that children's learning experiences are consistent across home and setting, and that families feel valued as co-educators (Welsh Government, 2022). The curriculum guidance highlights that collaboration with parents and carers promotes continuity, strengthens relationships, and supports children's wellbeing during key stages of development (Welsh Government, 2022).

In practice, partnership working in early years settings involve consistent communication and relationship-building with parents and carers. Coram PACEY (n.d) highlights that practitioners should engage families from the beginning, during induction, settling in, and daily routines. This is done through informal chats, sharing resources, and organising information sessions. These strategies help parents feel connected to their child's experiences, reassures them about progress, and encourages their involvement in learning and development (Coram PACEY, n.d).

Staff at Little Stars collaborated with Goytre Fawr Primary School, sharing observations, environments, and assessment information to ensure smooth transitions. This shows partnership in action — mutual respect, shared professional dialogue, and continuity for children (National Day Nurseries Association Cymru, 2025).

Maslow's theory highlights the importance of meeting basic needs before higher order of growth (Maslow, 1943). Higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualisation become evident when considering partnership working, as collaboration between practitioners and families.

Some may say it challenges Maslow's model by showing how collective relationships underpin children's well-being.

Although, Maslow's is less focussed on social interaction compared to Vygotsky (1978) who emphasises relationships, scaffolding, and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978) In contrast, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasises that learning is co-constructed through relationships, scaffolding, and social interaction, making it more applicable to understanding partnership in early years practice (McLeod, 2025).

Conclusion

Maslow's hierarchy remains useful for framing children's needs (Maslow, 1943), but its linear, individualistic focus limits application in early years practice (Taormina and Gao, 2013). Transition and attachment highlight safety and belonging and partnership reflects esteem and self-actualisation (Welsh Government, 2022).

However, early years practice demonstrates that children's needs are not always experienced in an order but often overlap. Secure attachments provide safety and belonging while effective partnerships nurtures esteem and confidence alongside basic needs.

Critically, Maslow's theory underplays the importance of social and cultural contexts. Theories such as Vygotsky's sociocultural approach remind practitioners that learning and development are co-constructed through relationships, scaffolding, and community support. While Maslow offers a valuable lens for recognising the holistic nature of children's needs, it should be applied with other perspectives to ensure practice remains inclusive to the child's development.

In summary, Maslow's hierarchy continues to provide a foundation for understanding children's wellbeing, but its strength is encouraging practitioners to reflect on how needs are met in practice.

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