

WELLBEING FACTSHEETS: 04

What has **Wellbeing** got to do with creating a positive home learning environment?



Wellbeing is about promoting a better way of life and equality for citizens. In its simplest definition wellbeing is Being Well. When the basic human requirements are met people are free to have optimistic aspirations, which help them attain a satisfying quality of life and happiness. Ultimately, wellbeing comes from our inner sense of peace and life satisfaction.

Mike Kelly,
Chief executive, Institute of Wellbeing



At the Institute of Wellbeing, it is our mission to support people to develop their wellbeing so that they are able to maximise their own sense of inner peace and joy and function effectively. We work with practitioners to give young people aged 0-19 the early help with a focus on family wellbeing, and in particular on providing families with the life skills to achieve positive emotional and mental wellbeing and resilience.

The importance of supporting wellbeing

Supporting wellbeing is about ensuring people have the resilience to deal with life's challenges, by building on the strengths that each person has and working to counter their vulnerabilities. Wellbeing is affected by internal attitudes and by external factors such as health, income, personal freedom, family and friends.

A wellbeing approach helps people to create a better life for themselves. It also promotes community connectedness which can help disadvantaged families build the social networks that will enable them to make progress.



Wellbeing and early intervention

Improving the wellbeing of families, and children in particular, is a critical part of achieving early intervention outcomes. The emerging evidence is unequivocal: investing in wellbeing to improve life outcomes works – there are clear links between levels of wellbeing, inequality and social mobility. Early intervention directly increases the wellbeing of families and their communities and that increase in wellbeing can have a positive effect on a range of other indicators, from children's educational progress to their parents' ability to get into work.

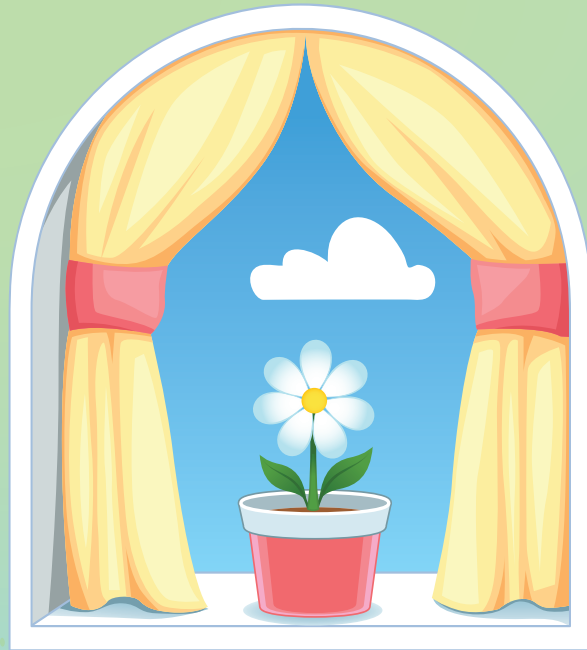
Early years educators can play an important role: by providing high-quality education to children and by supporting parents to nurture and play with their children, actions which can help to mitigate the effects of poverty, low achievement and low-skilled parenting.



Wellbeing and the home learning environment

A sense of wellbeing contributes to a good home learning environment.

Parents who are able to create a sense of optimism in their family, in spite of what can be major difficulties or setbacks in finances, health or other circumstances, are more likely to create an environment in the home where children learn and flourish.



Warm and supportive parenting creates good attachment between you and your child and leads to emotional wellbeing, one of the foundations for learning. It is important for your child's development and will play a big role in how well your child will do at school, achieves in life and their overall wellbeing.



The home learning environment begins with how your child is nurtured in the early days and weeks of life, the type of stimulation you provide in the months up to toddlerhood and early educational activities you do with children from two to five.

A positive environment in which you try to include specific learning activities helps your child to identify him or herself as a 'learner'.¹

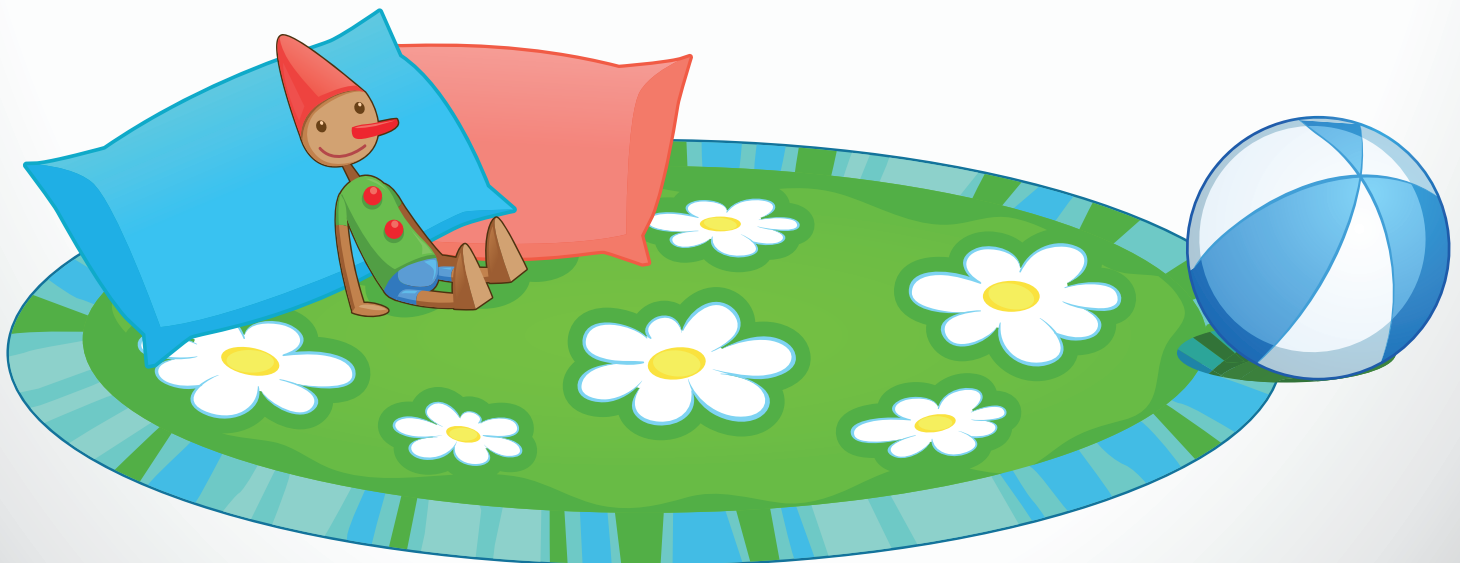
How important is the home learning environment?

- ✓ It is the most important element in your child's overall wellbeing and achievement
- ✓ It is more important than your child's school in his or her overall outcome
- ✓ It is more important than your level of education—even if you left school with no qualifications, doing activities with your child gives him or her as good a start as the child of parents who do have qualifications
- ✓ It is more important than how well off you are.¹

Good home learning is about what you do with your child rather than whether you are someone with a successful career or a big house. In some ways 'good home learning' corresponds with most people's idea of 'good parenting'.

But, there are many factors that can interfere with this good parenting, including work and family stress, money worries, and children's own different ability and response levels.

The good news is that, even with major obstacles to overcome, be it a job loss, a health issue or a child having difficulties, taking a decision to adopt a glass-half-full approach to life and to talk optimistically about future projects and aspirations will encourage your child also to become optimistic and experience wellbeing.¹



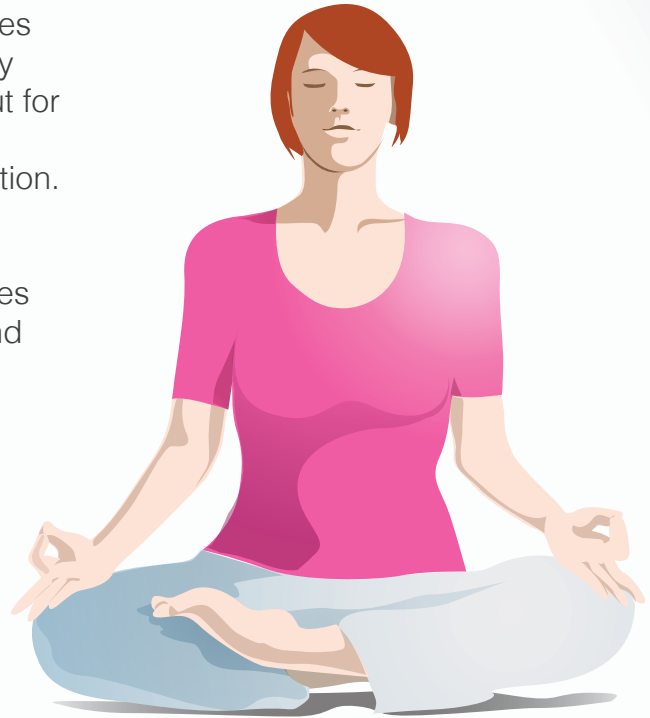
Your own wellbeing comes first

There will always be stresses and strains to deal with in life, especially when you have young children. Stress can get in the way of relationships and disrupt a calm home atmosphere. So it is important for you to manage worries and stresses and not let them build up. De-stress regularly by spending time with supportive friends, going out for the evening with your partner, exercising and learning about mindfulness-based stress reduction.

Talking about parenting strategies with your partner, perhaps with a counsellor, also improves your child's sense of security, self-regulation and academic adjustment—and therefore his or her wellbeing.²

Benefits of attending to your own wellbeing

- ✓ A calm you
- ✓ Calmer family interactions
- ✓ More relaxed home atmosphere
- ✓ Better relationship with your child
- ✓ More wellbeing for your child



5 steps to maintaining your wellbeing

- ✓ Reach out
- ✓ Get moving
- ✓ Be generous
- ✓ Be attentive
- ✓ Keep learning

How to improve your home learning environment

In the early months:

Stimulating your baby's senses—vision, hearing, touch, smell—with brightly coloured toys, rattles, singing and 'talking', or making sounds to your baby, songs and gentle music, stroking and massage and playing with fruit or other safe, fragrant objects.



The one-year-old

Touching games, like 'round-the-garden' and 'pat-a-cake'; concept games, such as 'peek-a-boo'; clapping hands; waving.

Ages 1 to 3:

- Reading story books with child
- Singing songs and counting rhymes
- Playdough; painting; colours



Ages 3-4:

- Arranging for friends to come and play
- Playing together on the floor
- Playing with letters and numbers
- Lego
- Visits to the library



Remember that all children develop at different rates, so it is important to tailor activities to your individual child.

Home learning: the specifics

In addition to healthy relationships and a positive home atmosphere, seven early home learning activities are specifically associated with improved academic outcomes in later school life:³

- ✓ Parent reading to the child
- ✓ Parent taking the child to the library
- ✓ Child playing with letters
- ✓ Parent helping child to learn the alphabet
- ✓ Parent teach the child numbers and counting
- ✓ Parent teaching the child songs, poems and nursery rhymes
- ✓ Child painting or drawing at home



Include the activities in your daily life

You can include some of these activities, or some aspects of them as you go about your daily life: numbers and letters, and songs about them, can be part of outings to the park, nature walks, shopping and what you and your children talk about and look at during these activities.

Keep up activities even once your child is at nursery

It is also quite important to keep up these activities at home after your child has started nursery or daycare. In fact, you learning the songs and activities that your child does at school and joining in with them at home is a good way for you to get ideas about how to play with your child and validates your child's school learning.

Your child's childminder or early years teacher can help you

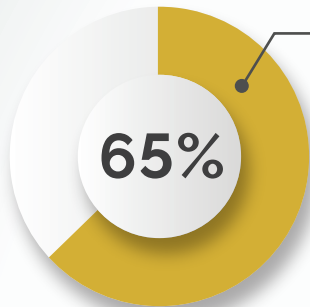
They work with age-appropriate early years activities every day, so talk to your child's minder or teacher about the activities your child enjoys and it will give you extra ideas about how to play at home.

Be aware of your child's entitlement to free early years provision

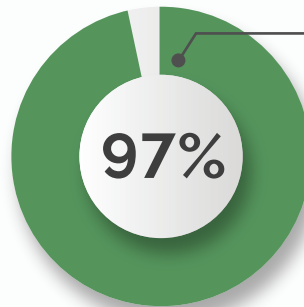
All three and four-year-olds, as well as many two-year-olds, are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year. This can be through nursery schools or classes, playgroups and pre-schools, Sure Start children's centres or childminders. Make sure you take up your child's entitlement, as high-quality early years education can make a huge difference to children's progress in life.

Wellbeing

FACTS AND FIGURES



Almost two-thirds of all parents will attend a stay-and-play or parent session, if invited by their child's setting. (DFE-RR142)⁴



of parents who attend and observe activities repeat the activities at home with their children! (DFE-RR142)⁴



The number of specific activities most important for school readiness

Parents' involvement in early learning has a greater impact on children's wellbeing and achievement than any other factor. Supporting parents to help them provide a positive home learning environment is therefore a vital part of improving outcomes for children.⁴



1 Desforges, C. and Abouchaar, A. (2003) The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review. DfES Research Report 433.

2 Family Foundations, Early Intervention Foundation. Feinberg, M.E., Kan, M.L., & Goslin, M.C. (2009) Family Foundations at child age one year: Effects on observed co-parenting, parenting, and child self-regulation. Prevention Science, 10, 276 - 285.

3 Sylva, K Melhuish, E, Sammons, P Siraj-Blatchford, I and Taggart, B (2004) Effective Pre-School Education. Final Report. DfES. London: Institute of Education.

4 Provider Influence on the Early Home Learning Environment (EHLE) Research Report DFE-RR142 (2010)

Resources

Where to access more connection and support for early home learning

- **Home Start**
Tailor-made support and friendship for families in their own homes
www.home-start.org.uk
- **Family Lives**
Support for families
www.familylives.org.uk
- **Action for Children**
www.actionforchildren.org.uk
- **Guidance on child behaviour**
www.kidsbehaviour.co.uk
- **Fatherhood Institute**
Fatherhood Think-and-Do Tank
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
- **Mumsnet**
Community of online parents sharing information
www.mumsnet.com