

# WELLBEING FACTSHEETS: 02

What has **wellbeing** got to do  
with early intervention?



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

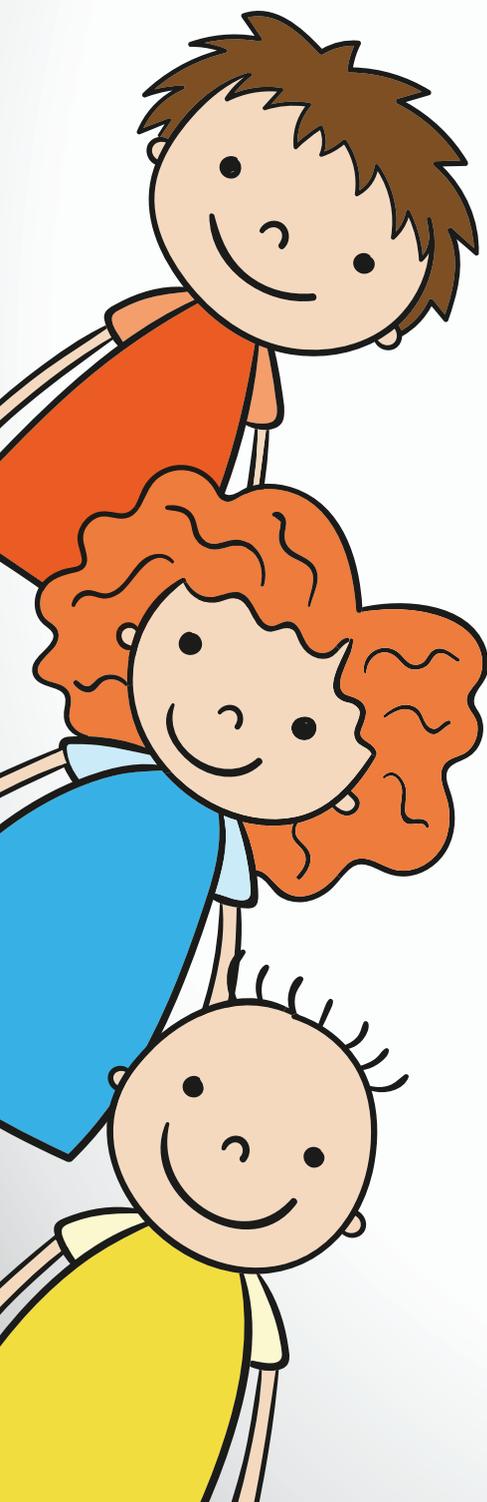


At the Institute of Wellbeing, it is our mission to support people to develop their wellbeing so that they are able to maximise their own sense of inner peace and joy and function effectively. We work with practitioners to give young people aged 0-19 the early help with a focus on family wellbeing, and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

The years between 0 and five are decisive in a child's development and in the shape of their whole lives. We know from a growing body of evidence about how children develop during their early years, how their brains grow and how important early life experiences are to their health, behaviour and developmental outcomes both as children and young people and as they become adults.

The circumstances children are born into have an enormous impact on their life chances. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, born into stressed families, suffer educationally from the beginning of their lives.

Research shows:

- ✓ Poorer children are more likely to have lower birth weight, poorer health, lower personal, social and emotional development, and worse communication, language and literacy skills than their peers<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Despite early signs of potential, poorer children tend to fall behind in primary school<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Children living in poverty have lower scores in measures of their cognitive ability at ages three, five and seven years<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marmot M. Fair Society, Healthy Lives – Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010 (2010); Field F, The Foundation Years: Preventing poor children becoming poor adults – The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Feinstein, 2003, 2004

<sup>3</sup> ESRC [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/\\_images/education-vital-social-mobility\\_tcm8-20069.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/education-vital-social-mobility_tcm8-20069.pdf)

# The role of parents

In these early years the right kind of parenting is a bigger influence on children's future than wealth, class, education or any other common social factor. Parental wellbeing in particular has a huge impact on children's wellbeing and development.

When parents' own wellbeing is fragile or undermined in some way then their ability to be a good parent to their children is also reduced.

Parents, families and the home environment are key to children's early development – good parenting really helps children's progress.

Being a good parent is a lot harder when you have financial or relationship difficulties, are unsupported or have not been parented well yourself.



## The role of the early years practitioner

Children who experience good quality early education are on average four to six months ahead in cognitive development at school entry than those who do not<sup>4</sup> and the difference is apparent right up to adulthood, so early years educators like you have a very important part to play in lessening the effects of disadvantages on children's progress.

Focusing on the social and emotional wellbeing of children and their parents will help prevent poor health and improve education and employment outcomes in adolescence and throughout adulthood. By working with parents you can give them the tools and understanding they need to give their child the best start in life.

A warm relationship with their child's carer can make all the difference to a parent who may have worries about their child's development or behaviour or be facing difficulties at home. Having someone they can trust to talk to about these things, without fear of being labelled a poor parent, means they are more likely to get the help and information they need to get involved in their children's education.

Your aim should be to create an environment where every parent feels included and comfortable and can ask for any help they need. But those families that face the most difficult problems in their lives – and whose children are most at risk of low wellbeing and educational attainment – are likely to be the hardest to connect with. You may have to make a special effort to draw those parents in.

You can also help parents create a warm and loving home environment, where learning experiences – with lots of talk, songs, stories, games and social interactions – are part of normal daily life, which can make a real difference to their children's future.

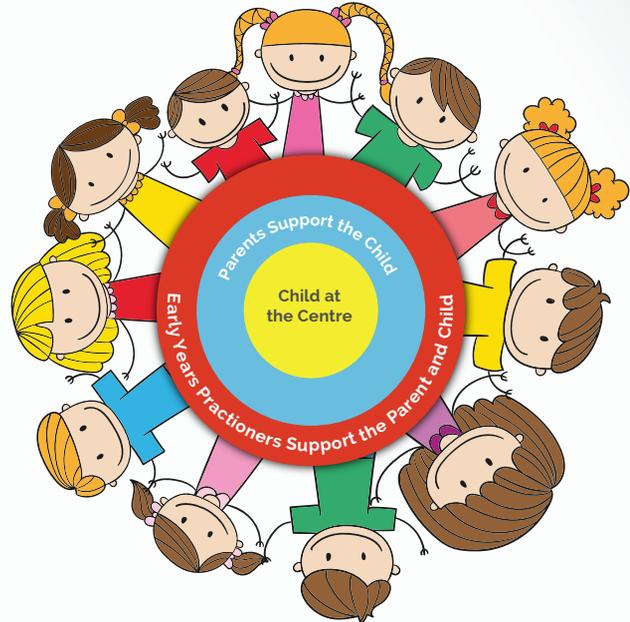
Parents and children can only benefit from early years education if they take it up. One of the responsibilities of early years' settings is to reach out, via other local services, voluntary and community groups, to families eligible for free early years education and encourage them to take up the offer.

4 Quoted in Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers. A Strategy for Social Mobility, HM Government, 2011

# Actions

As an early years professional you can make a big difference to the lives of children in your care by:

- ✓ Offering the highest quality early years education and wellbeing support services
- ✓ Making your setting a warm and welcoming place both for children and their parents
- ✓ Taking care of your own and your colleagues' wellbeing so that you are able to support others
- ✓ Supporting parents and encouraging their wellbeing
- ✓ Giving parents the skills they need to help their children at home
- ✓ Reaching out to the parents of two-year-olds who are not taking up their free early years education entitlement



## Children's wellbeing in numbers

The UK is **16th** out of **29** developed countries for children's wellbeing, up from 21st in 2007.

**85%** of British children say they have a high level of overall life satisfaction.

Children who experience good quality early education are on average 4 to 6 months ahead in cognitive development at school entry than those who do not

**16%** of children in the UK live in households where no adult is working (Source: ONS)

**25%** of children live in lone parent households

In 2014, 113,000 children – **42%** of those eligible – did not take up their free early years education entitlement (Source: Ofsted)



## Resources

- Early Home Learning Matters - Kim Roberts, 2009
- Increasing wellbeing and inclusion in early years settings, The Institute of Wellbeing e-learning resource for early years practitioners - [click here](#)
- Supporting families in the foundation years, DfE 2011
- Inclusion in the early years, Cathy Nutbrown and Peter Clough, Sage Publications, 2013
- Foundationyears.org

You may also be interested in other  
Institute of Wellbeing support services:

- Life Choices (Wellbeing Programme for Adults)
- URSpecial (Family Wellbeing Programme)
- Effective Parenting
- Be Well (App for Faith Leaders)

Email: [support@tiow.org](mailto:support@tiow.org)  
Telephone: **0700 2222 700**

To learn more, visit our website [www.tiow.org](http://www.tiow.org)  
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