

ToWe Project

Enhancing Opportunities for Toddlers' Wellbeing



Toddlers' Wellbeing

Manual

Disclaimer:

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Introduction

Welcome to this manual which supports the practice of Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) to enhance the education and wellbeing opportunities for disadvantaged toddlers. It underpins EYPs' knowledge and understanding of the different dimensions that impact on toddlers' wellbeing. The manual covers the application of the Wellbeing Audit Tool, underpinning the different dimensions of wellbeing and the implications of these, the theoretical background and the international and national policies that impact on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) provision. The context of wellbeing within each partner country (political, economic and societal aspects) will be explored and how these support or hinder disadvantaged toddlers' wellbeing.

The wellbeing of children has been universally recognised by UNICEF (2013) in their report card 11: Child Well-Being in Rich Countries. The scores of wellbeing for each partner country demonstrate a range of ranking positions:

- Norway - 2
 - United Kingdom - 16
 - Spain - 19
- (UNICEF, 2013:5)

The EURYDICE (2009) document *Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities* identified how effective preschool education can promote life-long learning and provide opportunities to increase equality by supporting children in reaching their full potential. This research particularly focused on diverse and disadvantaged children and their families; highlighting “what seems essential for all approaches is a positive socio-emotional climate, with emotionally safe and stable relationships, with sensitive-responsive, non-intrusive teachers” (ibid:32).

Aims of the Manual

The aims of the toddlers' wellbeing manual are to:

- Familiarise Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) with the theoretical background, dimensions and aspects of wellbeing and how these can be used to evaluate practice;
- Increase Early Years Practitioners' awareness of the complexities of the dimensions and aspects of wellbeing of toddlers;
- Provide Early Years Practitioners with a Wellbeing Audit Tool to evaluate and help them improve the quality of their current provision and practice;
- Help Early Years Practitioners distinguish effective strategies of good practice for toddler wellbeing identified by the Setting Partner EYPs through their action plans, strategies, shared practice and reflective dialogue.

Theoretical background and literature

The International Context of Wellbeing

The discourse regarding wellbeing has come to the fore since 2000 particularly with UNICEF (2000:3) stating that “the league tables of child poverty presented in this first *Innocenti Report Card* are the most comprehensive estimates so far of child poverty across the industrialized world”. This provided a context under which wellbeing was assessed across 29 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However, prior to this the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognised “that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding” (UNICEF, 1989a:3). This encapsulates all that wellbeing entails and the requirements of meeting these needs today and for the future, both in relation to the rights of the toddler and their learning and development.

At the turn of the century the European Union called for “specific targets to be established as part of an effort to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty” (UNICEF, 2000:5). In this paper the United Kingdom was identified as committing to halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020. This has been a political driver for European countries to focus on poverty and disadvantaged families.

National Context for England, Norway and Spain

England

The Children Act, 1989 provided a legal foundation for the welfare and developmental needs of children within the United Kingdom and reflected certain elements of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). This led to the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003) outlining the outcomes for children’s services within the UK. This agenda underpinned the Children Act 2004, and the Childcare Act of 2006, which created a basis for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) framework which supported the provision of wellbeing for children.

The above legislation has underpinned the continued political agenda of More Affordable Childcare (DfE, 2013) which has increased the amount of affordable provision for children and their families.

Early Years Entitlement, Early Years Pupil Premium and Free Early Education and childcare for Two year olds (FEET) (DfE, 2015) makes provision of good quality settings for disadvantaged toddlers to support the promotion of their development and learning.

Early Years Entitlement makes provision for all 3 to 4 year olds in England to have 570 hours of free early education or childcare per year (DfE, 2015). This usually is taken as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year but has been extended to 30 hours for working families that are eligible (DfE, 2015). The Early Years Pupil Premium provides additional funding support for early years settings to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged 3 and 4 year olds (DfE, 2015).

Free Early Education and childcare for Two year olds (FEET) is offered for disadvantaged toddlers who meet the specific eligibility criteria (DfE, 2015). This gives them the same entitlement as Early Years Entitlement of 15 hours for 38 weeks of the year.



The UK Government have identified wellbeing as a strategic area for development of government policy. This has led to the recognition of policy objectives in how wellbeing can be translated into policy in order to build a high wellbeing recovery within health and education with the identification of four key areas for development of wellbeing:

1. Building a high wellbeing economy: labour market policy
2. Building high wellbeing places: planning and transport policy
3. Building personal resources: mindfulness in health and education
4. Valuing what matters: arts and culture

(All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics, 2014)

This has provided a driver to introduce 'Mindfulness' within schools and settings to improve the wellbeing of teachers, practitioners and children (All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics, 2015).

UNICEF commissioned Ipsos MORI (2011) to undertake a qualitative research study. "UNICEF's Report Card 7 put the UK at the bottom of the child well-being league table, including on three key well-being measures" (ibid:1). The UK government can be seen to be actively addressing this concern through the above initiatives.

Norway

Although the UN for several years has ranked Norway as the best country in the world to live in (Human Development Index), there are also a growing proportion of children in Norway who are living in poverty. This is particularly so amongst the increasing population of immigrants who have long-term low incomes. This is one of the reasons why there is a lower participation rate in kindergartens (public or private kindergartens) for minority children than for children in the rest of the population. Several subsidy schemes have therefore been established to ensure that children from low-income families have access to kindergartens. In 2015, all 4 and 5 year olds living in households with a low income received the right to 20 hours free attendance at a kindergarten per week. From 1 August 2016, the scheme will be extended to include 3 year olds. The amount considered to be a low income will be decided by the ministry on an annual basis. All kindergartens will also offer a reduced fee, if the fee for the kindergarten is higher than 6 % of the household's combined income. These subsidies are intended to help improve not only the wellbeing of all children, but also their development and abilities. In other words, participation in kindergartens will help to even out social differences.

Wellbeing is discussed in a number of ways on the national information website of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The term is never defined, but material has been prepared to inspire the nurseries in their work of fostering the wellbeing of all children. The guidance booklet "Children's wellbeing – adults' responsibility. Preventive work against bullying starts in kindergartens" emphasises the responsibility of the staff for the psychosocial environment, children's relationships and friendships during play, and also the cooperation between home and kindergarten. Short videos have also been made that can be used as a basis for professional discussions on children's welfare and adults' responsibilities.

Bullying in kindergartens

The Prime Minister and all the other parties involved in education (= stakeholders) have signed a *Manifesto against Bullying*, in which they undertake to ensure that every child has a good and inclusive upbringing and learning environment with zero tolerance for bullying. The result of this is that bullying in kindergartens has become an important topic in the Norwegian social debate.

The national *Centre for Learning Environment* provides videos and guidance material on how kindergartens can prevent bullying and how they should act if a child is bullying another child. In terms of prevention, they refer to the fact that international research literature particularly emphasises the importance of close relationships and interactions to a child's safety, wellbeing, development and learning. The Centre for Learning Environment also provides articles and master's theses about aggression and bullying in kindergartens (Laeringsmiljøseneteret – UiS, 2016).

The National Parents Committee for Kindergartens provides academic articles and practical suggestions about what parents and kindergartens can do if a child is being bullied. One important point that people must acknowledge is that it does go on in kindergartens, and they must prevent occurrences from being trivialised. Characteristics of this kind of harassment among very young children are: hitting, shoving and hair-pulling, teasing, being laughed at, being called bad names, property being destroyed and hidden, being excluded. These are described in an information notice that has been distributed in six languages (FUB, 2016a). A new definition of the term 'bullying' has been developed, and this says: "Bullying of children in kindergartens means the actions of adults and/or other children that infringes upon the child's perception as belonging to a community and being a meaningful person within that community" (FUB, 2016b).

In a national survey, 97 per cent of kindergartens declare that they work systematically on social competence and children's wellbeing. 85 per cent of kindergartens state that they have procedures on following up information about a child's wellbeing. Kindergarten managers also believe that the staff largely, or to an extremely high degree, work at ensuring that the children feel that they have safe relationships. However, other studies show that when children have been observed and interviewed, not all children at kindergartens are seen, understood and acknowledged. We can summarise by saying that children's wellbeing is a subject that has received a great deal of discussion, but it is not a reality for all children in kindergartens. However, this is what we should aim at.

Spain

The term 'wellbeing' is not frequently used in official documents. It is implicitly included in the main goals of Early Childhood Education in Spain. However, the description of the aim of Early Childhood Education (birth - 3) in the Catalan curriculum (Departament D'Educació, 2010) clearly relates to this concept, and states that the aim of Early Childhood Education is:

to contribute to the children's development at the emotional and affective, physical and motor, social and cognitive levels, by providing a comfortable atmosphere where they feel welcome and which generates learning expectations (Departament D'Educació, 2010).

Furthermore, and in the same official document, it is said that the educational action should foster toddlers' affective development, their personal growth, the creation of a positive and balanced self-image, the discovery of their surroundings and of the possibilities of their own bodies, movement



and body control, so that they can become more and more autonomous. It should also allow them to experiment, relate to one another and communicate with other people (children and adults) through different languages, by learning to live with one another.

Explicitly, the term 'wellbeing' is only mentioned once in the Curriculum (Departament D'Educació, 2010), in which it is related to physical (not emotional) wellbeing. However, a new document published in 2012, in which guidelines to be followed in the first cycle of ECE (birth - 3) are described in detail, includes a number of requirements that must be met in order to ensure children's wellbeing (Generalitat de Catalunya Departament d'Ensenyament, 2012).

Specifically, it says that, to ensure children's wellbeing, good relations between different members of the educational community must be fostered, highlighting here the fundamental importance of families. It also emphasizes that daily life activities must be organized so that children experience them as a time to look after themselves and as a source of wellbeing. A further aspect regarding wellbeing is related to providing the presence and possibilities for children to play in school, that is, understanding play as an activity that is basic and essential to ensure learning and foster wellbeing.

Definitions of Wellbeing

The term 'Wellbeing' is widely used within ECEC provision however perspectives of this terminology and what this means varies between practitioners and countries. You will find that there are many differing ways that wellbeing can be defined and this will have an impact on your own beliefs, values and practice in working with toddlers.

Below are two differing definitions defining what wellbeing entails:

When we want to know how each of the children is doing in a setting, we first have to explore the degree to which children feel at ease, act spontaneously, and show vitality and self-confidence. All this indicates that their emotional well-being is OK and that their physical needs, the need for tenderness and affection, the need for safety and clarity, the need for social recognition, the need to feel competent and the need for meaning and moral value in life are satisfied. Interventions that secure the well-being of children make them stronger and keep them in touch with their feelings and emotions (Laevers, 2005).

Statham and Chase (2010:12) "term well-being as the quality of people's lives. It is a dynamic state that is enhanced when people can fulfil their personal and social goals." They state that the definition of well-being, particularly childhood well-being is not only complex but multi-dimensional, and should include dimensions of physical, social and emotional well-being; it should focus on the immediate lives of children but also consider their future lives; and should incorporate some subjective as well as objective measures (ibid:12).

Reflection:

- Read and identify what are the common words being used to explain the concept of wellbeing here?
- How do the definitions reflect your own beliefs, values and practices relating to supporting the wellbeing of toddlers?

Here are three definitions from the TODDLER Project (2013a):

England

“Wellbeing is a state of being or condition of existence that characterises an individual realising their full potential through their own prosperity, welfare, life satisfaction, health, eudemonia (human flourishing) and happiness” (TODDLER-Sutherland and Styman, 2013a:21).

Norway

“Wellbeing is a positive physical, mental and social state. It is enhanced by conditions that include positive personal relationships with adults and peers, an environment that promotes challenging indoor and outdoor play activities, and an inclusive community that allows the individual child to experience joy and happiness, to unfold his/her potential and to express his/her view on the ongoing activities” (TODDLER- Røthle and Mørkeseth, 2013a:31).

Spain

“Creating the necessary conditions so that children’s wellbeing can be guaranteed is the axis around which the main aims of Infant Education 0-3 (Early childhood education) revolve. Wellbeing is the physical and emotional state that lets the child fully develop his/her autonomy according to his/her possibilities, individually or in relation with others, in a specific context and through different languages, considering each and every need they have, every instinct and ability” (TODDLER- Corcoll López, Flores and Geis, 2013a:52).

Reflection:

- Reflect upon your understanding of the concept of wellbeing
- What does this mean to you?
- Why is it an important consideration when working with toddlers?

Reflect upon your own country’s definition of wellbeing:

- How is this demonstrated in your practice?
- Identify similarities between each country - England, Norway and Spain’s definition of wellbeing

Using the Wellbeing ‘Wordle’ (Figure 1) create your own definition

England

For example, the National Political Policy of the UK (Macrosystem) in regards to the provision of the Free Early Education and childcare for Two year olds (FEET) funding for disadvantaged toddlers. The impact this has had on early years settings and their provision in regards to the challenges they have faced in working with disadvantaged toddlers (Mesosystem).

Norway

For example, the government will establish by law a requirement for all early years practitioners to have a good competence in Norwegian. According to a national survey there is a great difference in EYPs' language competence. One of three Heads of ECEC-settings answers that there is a problem with the Norwegian language amongst their employees from linguistic minorities. The Minister of Education states: A good kindergarten is a setting in which the children learn Norwegian. Therefore he will put this into the law for all private and public ECEC-setting (macro level).

Spain

For example, the Catalan government (macrosystem) has established a new requirement for students who want to access Early Childhood Education University studies. Through a test, they need to show language competence in Catalan and Spanish. This is to ensure sufficient knowledge of both languages before entering University and, in due time, before entering the professional world (mesosystem).

Figure 2 - Toddlers' Wellbeing Wheel provides a framework for Early Years Practitioners to use in supporting the development of their knowledge and understanding of toddlers' wellbeing and the application of the different dimensions of wellbeing. This framework represents the various elements of a toddler's life coming together.

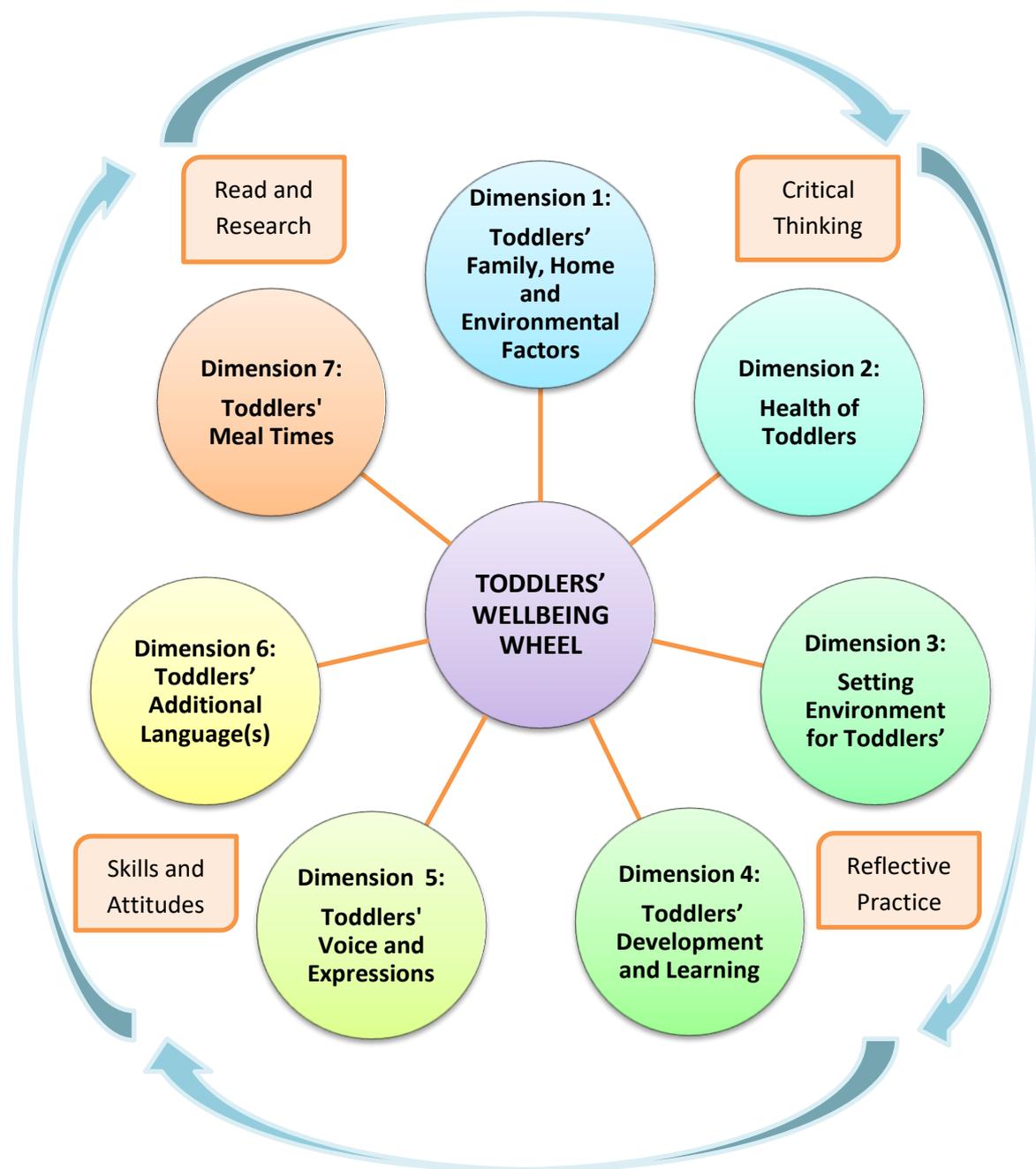


Figure 2 – ToWe Toddlers' Wellbeing Wheel - Mukadam and Sutherland

This training manual will introduce you to the meaning of critical thinking and reflective practice and how you can develop the necessary aptitude to read and research and develop the skills and attitudes towards enhancing opportunities for toddlers' wellbeing.

Four Pedagogical Characteristics:

1. **Critical Thinking**
2. **Read and Research**
3. **Reflective Practice**
4. **Skills and Attitudes**

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the active process of making logical connections between differing concepts and ideologies. This process involves the application of the knowledge, analysis of the concept and synthesis of the understanding achieved and the new understanding, values and beliefs developed and applied through this learning.

Reflection:

Apply the below points to answer the critical questions:

- A critical thinker raises vital questions and problems, challenging beliefs and values, formulating them clearly and precisely
- Gathers and assesses relevant information and reaches well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards (e.g. ToWe Dimensions of Wellbeing Wheel)
- Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognising and assessing, their assumptions, implications and practical consequences
- Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

(Paul and Elder, 2013)

Critical questions:

1. What has been the impact of the education policy in your country over the last 10 years?
2. How has early years education and care been influenced by recent government policy and initiatives in your country?

Select a dimension of wellbeing from the wheel and consider your setting.

1. Consider its current impact on toddlers in your setting?
2. What impact does this aspect have on supporting toddlers' learning and development?

Read and Research

Read and Research is a key skill that provides opportunities to engage with current sources of information, literature, theory and research in order to develop critical thinking and to enhance knowledge and understanding.

Reflection:

- Where would you currently look for information to read and research an area of your practice?
- Consider how you would identify if the source of information you are accessing is a reputable and scholarly source?

Find a piece of research and identify:

- Where is it cited?
Is this a reputable site?
- Who is the author?
- What are their credentials?
Their qualifications, experience and expertise with in the field

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is about the thoughtful consideration of experiences and the application of the knowledge gained in practice. “Reflective thinking is active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1938). This is an active process that links to critical thinking and can also be defined as “being willing to engage in continuous self-appraisal and development in order to better understand the reasoning behind a concept and why that concept is held, whereas routine action is guided by tradition, habit and authority” (Sutherland and Dallal, 2008).

Reflection:

- Why is it important to reflect regularly on your practice?
- Reflect upon how your personal values, principles and beliefs are influenced by early years philosophies and theory?

Skills and Attitudes

Skills and attitudes are important in developing positive trusting relationships with toddlers and their families. The skill in this situation is about having a sound knowledge and understanding of toddlers’ wellbeing, learning and development and the factors that may inhibit this. The attitude relates to the personal principle, values and beliefs that influence how people relate and respond to each other. The three main building blocks of skills and attitudes for EYP’s in supporting toddler wellbeing are first, to **empathise** by having an understanding of the situation, then to **engage** with improving the situation and lastly to **encourage** those around to support with the improvement of the situation.

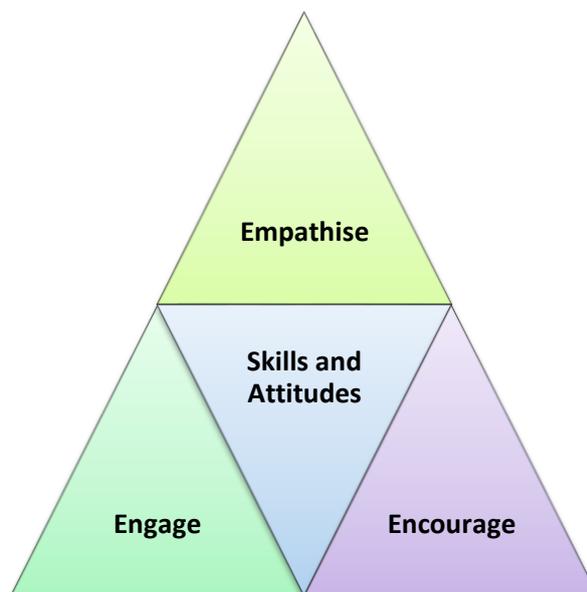


Figure 3 - Skills and Attitudes



Reflection:

Identify a situation where you have used these three skills and attitudes in supporting a toddler and their family?

What impact can these skills and attitudes have in supporting future early years practice?

- Empathise
- Engage
- Encourage

Dimensions and Aspects of Wellbeing

UNICEF - Child Well-Being in Rich Countries

“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born”

(UNICEF, 2007:1).

UNICEF (2000) commissioned the first report to identify the cost of closing the child poverty gap and moving children away from the absolute and relative poverty lines (see table 1 for definitions of poverty).

Relative Poverty	Absolute Poverty
Families lack the income required and live below the average standard of living for the country and the society that they live in. They are considered impoverished if they cannot maintain the living standards of society.	Families lack the minimum income required to meet one or more of the basic minimum needs for living and sustaining life.

Table 1. Definitions of Poverty

The key findings of this report identified that the United Kingdom was in the bottom four of the league table for **relative** child poverty and Spain were in the bottom four of the league table for **absolute** child poverty. The league table identified that Norway was second from the top after Sweden for relative child poverty and Luxembourg for absolute child poverty.

In this first report card UNICEF identified key factors that affected child poverty and the measures each country undertook to monitor child poverty and the strategies developed to close the child poverty gap. The report categorises the links between income and poverty for children examining to what extent low income matters for children’s wellbeing? Existing studies that call into question the size of income’s role do clearly underline the need for government policies to operate on a whole range of issues in order to equalize lifetime opportunities

(UNICEF, 2000:12).

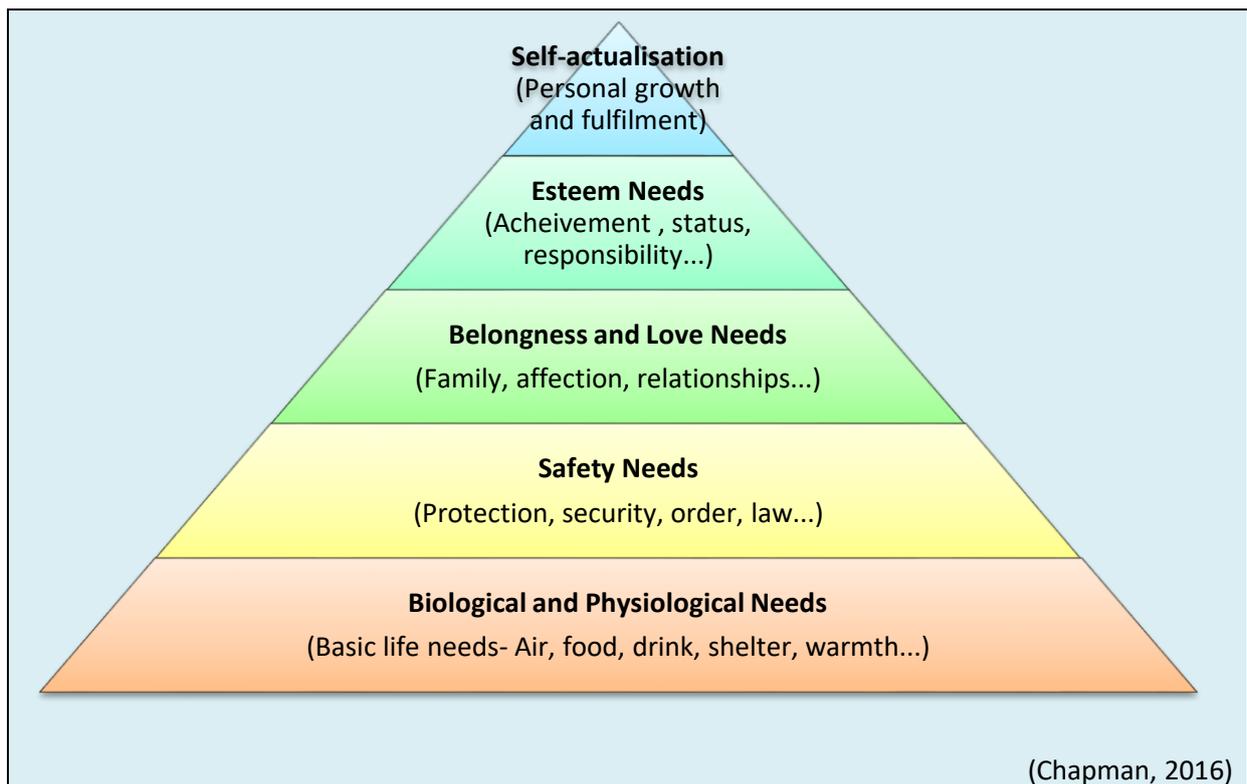
Reflection:

Provide examples of the causes by which a family may find themselves in relative poverty?

Identify some of the basic needs required to be above the absolute poverty line?

Consider where relative and absolute poverty are on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs



UNICEF Report Card 7

Report Card 6 (UNICEF, 2005) reviewed child poverty across the 24 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries highlighting that 17 of these countries poverty had increased. This resulted in Report Card 7 (UNICEF, 2007) which builds and expands on the analysis of this report card and provides dimensions for measuring child wellbeing in 21 OECD countries.

This report card measures and compares child wellbeing under 6 dimensions rather than by using income poverty as the key measure.

There are six dimensions with forty separate indicators:

1. Material Wellbeing
2. Health and Safety
3. Education
4. Peer and Family Relationships
5. Behaviours and Risks
6. Young People's own Subjective Sense of Well-being

This Report Card supports the measurement of wellbeing so that priorities, initiatives and strategies can be identified and developed by OECD countries to assist change and improvement.

UNICEF Report Card 11

This Report Card uses five dimensions to measure wellbeing within 29 OECD countries and updates and enhances findings from Report Card 7 reporting on the changes within wellbeing since 2000. It is divided into three parts: the presentation of league tables on child wellbeing, what children have to say about their own wellbeing and the changes in well-being (UNICEF, 2013:1).

The dimensions of wellbeing are averaged from the component and indicator scores. This is done first by averaging the indicator scores and then averaging the component scores to provide a final score for the dimensions. The report cards summarise and identify trends relating to child wellbeing in rich countries (UNICEF, 2013).

Below are the dimensions of child wellbeing with their component and indicators for the initial league table of child wellbeing in 29 of the world's most advanced economies for Report Card 11:

1. Material Well-being

1.1 Monetary Deprivation

1.1a Relative Child Poverty Rate

1.1b Relative Child Poverty Gap

1.2 Material Deprivation

1.2a Child Deprivation Rate

1.2b Low Family Affluence Rate

2. Health

2.1 Health at Birth

2.1a Infant Mortality Rate

2.1b Low Birth weight Rate

2.2 Preventive Health Service

2.2 Overall Immunisation Rate

2.3 Childhood Mortality

2.3 Child Death rate, age 1 to 19

3. Education

3.1 Participation

3.1a Participation Rate: Early Childhood Education

3.1b Participation Rate: Further Education, age 15 - 19

3.1c Participation Rate: NEET Rate (% age 15 – 19 Not in Education, Employment or Training)

3.2 Achievement

3.2 Average PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) scores in reading, maths and science

4. Behaviour and Risk

4.1 Health Behaviours

4.1a Being Overweight

4.1b Eating Breakfast

4.1c Eating Fruit

4.1d Taking Exercise

4.2 Risk Behaviours

4.2a Teenage Fertility Rate

4.2b Smoking

4.2c Alcohol

4.2d Cannabis

4.3 Exposure to Violence

4.3a Fighting

4.3b Being Bullied

5. Housing and Environment

5.1 Housing

- 5.1a Rooms per Person
- 5.1b Multiple Housing Problems
- 5.2 Environmental Safety
 - 5.2a Homicide Rate
 - 5.2b Air Pollution

(UNICEF, 2013:5)

Reflection:

Select one of the 5 dimensions of wellbeing and reflect on its components and indicators considering how this has impacted upon your role and settings provision?

Leuven Wellbeing and Involvement Scales

This tool consists of a set of two 5 point scales developed by Professor Ferre Laevers and his team at the Research Centre for Experiential Education (Leuven University, Belgium) to measure children's wellbeing and involvement in order to improve the quality of provision using a self-assessment process. The Experiential Education (EXE) project, started in 1976, provides a theoretical framework for the identification of quality and how the context/approach through the process leads to the outcomes. The process focuses on two dimensions: emotional wellbeing and the level of children's involvement (Laevers, 2005a, 2005b).

Well-being refers to feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions and is crucial to secure 'mental health'. Involvement refers to being intensely engaged in activities and is considered to be a necessary condition for deep level learning and development (Laevers et al, 2005a:3).

This process involves EYPs carrying out short 2 minute observations on individual children and ranking their wellbeing and involvement using the rating scales starting from extremely low (1), low (2), moderate (3), high (4) to extremely high (5). The observational data is reflected upon and this can be a shared experience. Influencing factors are taken into consideration when the outcomes are extremely low or extremely high and strengths are identified as well as strategies to improve the quality of provision for the child (Laevers et al, 2005a).

Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing Scale (SSTEWE)

This is an environmental rating scale to support the evaluation of the use of the concept of sustained shared thinking and emotional wellbeing which include the domains of social and emotional development and cognitive development as key areas in creating Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

The longitudinal research studies of The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) (Sylva et al, 2004) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002) influenced the development of SSTEWE and promoted the value of the active engagement of EYPs in supporting toddlers' learning.

The SSTEWE rating scales are completed by EYPs who observe a group of children in all areas of the settings provision both indoors and outside. EYPs make professional judgements as to where in the scale the settings provision is as well as other EYPs' practice (Siraj, Kingston and Melhuish, 2015).

The scales have the following headings identifying the different areas of practice:

- Sub-scale 1 – Building trust, confidence and independence
 - Item 1: Self-regulation and social development
 - Item 2: Encouraging choices and independent play
 - Item 3: Planning for small group and individual interactions/adult deployment
- Sub-scale 2 – Social and emotional well-being
 - Item 4: Supporting socio-emotional well-being
- Sub-scale 3 – Supporting and extending language and communication
 - Item 5: Encouraging children to talk with others
 - Item 6: Staff actively listen to children and encourage children to listen
 - Item 7: Staff support children’s language use
 - Item 8: Sensitive responsiveness
- Sub-scale 4 – Supporting learning and critical thinking
 - Item 9: Supporting curiosity
 - Item 10: Encouraging sustained shared thinking through storytelling, sharing books, singing, and rhymes
 - Item 11: Encouraging sustained shared thinking in investigation and exploration
 - Item 12: Supporting concept development and higher-order thinking
- Sub-scale 5 – Assessing learning and language
 - Item 13: using assessment to support and extend learning and critical thinking
 - Item 14: Assessing language development

(Siraj, Kingston and Melhuish, 2015)

The sub-scale ratings rank from 1 to 7. With supporting criteria for the indication of each scale with 1 being - inadequate, 3 - minimal, 5 - good and 7 - excellent.

Reflection:

Reflect on how these two scales support the assessment of the quality of provision in early years settings?

- Framework
- Headings
- Rankings
- Observation
- Reflection
- Actions

Using the Wellbeing Audit Tool

Introduction to the use of the wellbeing audit tool

The audit tool supports Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) in the self-assessment, evaluation and reflection of their provision, practice and the toddlers' individual needs. It is an evaluative tool that is not about rating/ranking the settings provision but identifying what is done well and what could be developed further to improve on the opportunities and experience for disadvantaged toddlers. This tool helps EYPs to identify areas of strength and areas of development to assist in improving the quality of EYPs provision and practice.

The audit tool uses a variety of approaches from discussion with parents, observations of toddlers and practice, and the assessment and auditing the environment and learning opportunities.

The dimensions used within this audit tool are:

1. Family, Home and Environmental Factors
2. Health of the Toddlers
3. Setting Environment for Toddlers - Current Practice and Provision
4. Toddlers' Development and Learning
5. Toddlers' Voices and Expressions
6. Toddlers' Language(s)
7. Toddlers' Meal Times

These dimensions have been influenced by the UNICEF Report Cards but developed to support early years provision and practice. The seven dimensions interlink with each other and the audit will specifically address dimensions 1 – 4 with the other dimensions (5-7) being acknowledged within this audit tool but the other tools and materials will fully explore and examine this.

The audit tool indicators provide EYPs with questions and/or statements, relating to the dimension, which facilitate opportunities for the self-assessment, evaluation and reflection of provision and practice; highlighting areas of strength and areas for development within each dimension.

Areas of strength are an opportunity for EYPs to highlight the successes, achievements and good practice of the setting in meeting the needs for disadvantaged toddlers or to comment on the responses to the question. Areas for development are an opportunity for identifying areas that would benefit or may need further reviewing, to improve on the quality of the provision and practice within the setting for disadvantaged toddlers. This is an opportunity to share with other colleagues reflecting on the quality of provision and how to improve and develop this further.

The strategies describe how you are going to improve the quality of provision and practice in relation to the identified areas for development. This provides EYPs with direction pointing out how they are going to enhance, increase or extend opportunities for learning and development, resources and provision. See table 2 - Wellbeing Audit Tool Headings.

Indicators	Areas of Strength and/or Comments	Areas for Development	Strategies	Actions – Setting Development Plan

Table 2 – Wellbeing Audit Tool Headings

Actions – from the identified strategies, actions can be formulated, to prioritise the development of aims and objectives to ensure a successful outcome for the area of improvement. Creating a setting develop plan supports the achievement of the identified areas for development setting out the priorities, steps and targets to be taken to achieve this within a chosen time-frame. Table 3 - provides an example of how this can be completed.

Identification of the Priority - Aim	Targets - Objectives	Key actions – Actions to be taken	Who is responsible and by when	Date Achieved and date to be reviewed
To develop the key person (KP) approach within the setting to support the settling in process and attachment of toddlers within the setting.	To review the KP approach	Review policy at team meeting looking at legislation and theory	EYP and/or manager leads team meeting	
	To rewrite the policy	Add new statements to the policy making links to legislations	EYP and/or manager	
	To provide staff training on the importance of theorists around KP approach	In-house training on the importance of the KP approach and theorists	EYP and/or manager delivers to staff	
	Introduce to parents	Produce an information leaflet for parents	EYP and/or manager	

Table 3 – Example of completed setting develop plan priority

Identification of the Priorities – these are the key priorities identified from the audits strategies for the enhancement of provision and practice within the specific dimensions. This sets out the aim for the priority outlining the key intention to be developed/improved. The targets identify specific objectives and goals to be achieved in addressing the key priorities. The key actions are the steps to taken to achieve the priorities and targets. The priorities are the cake, the targets are the ingredients and the key action is the recipe. The ‘who’ is responsible, sets out clearly a named EYP who will take responsibility for leading and implementing the development and the ‘by when’ provides a time-frame for the achievement of this.

The dimensions will interlink and impact on each other with the aim to enhance the overall quality of provision. The dimensions can be used individually or as a whole to determine or prioritise particular aspects of wellbeing.

Dimension 1 - Family, Home and Environmental Factors

This particular dimension deals with the toddlers and their families home and living conditions and while this may not directly involve the setting it still requires thought and consideration in order to improve EYPs’ understanding of the toddlers’ home situations and to adapt the setting provision and resources. These are sensitive issues for families so tack and consideration are required as to whether it is appropriate to ask the families questions about their family and home environment.



Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this (UNICEF UK, 1989b: Article 27).

1.1 Environmental Factors

When considering environmental factors EYPs need to have a good understanding of how they impact upon the toddlers that they work with. The immediate environment in which they live affects their healthy growth and development. “Research has demonstrated that children’s life chances (the factors that affect their current and future wellbeing) are affected by the standard of their housing” (Harker, 2006:7).

Housing

The accommodation that families have access to and the surrounding infrastructure can vary greatly within any given location. The type and condition of the housing that the toddlers maybe living in will greatly impact upon their health and wellbeing. EYPs need to take into account the conditions in which toddlers are living to support families in accessing the resources they need within the provision.

Type of Housing:

Through home visits and discussions with families the type of housing that the family live in can be accessed and understood. The family can be in rented, owned or sheltered accommodation with the property type being a flat, apartment, house, bed-sit, boat or caravan etc.

The condition types of the home that toddlers may be living in include: overcrowding, poor physical conditions, such as, infestation, damp, cold, insufficient beds or sharing, lack of facilities or working facilities, not wind or weather tight, structurally unsafe, insufficient repair. Is the family experiencing relative or absolute poverty?

Location and Access to services and facilities:

The opportunities for families to access essential services and local facilities are vital for families with young children and barriers, such as distance, transportation and travel, financial hardship and geographical locations can hinder opportunities and create barriers to accessing these services:

- Education and Care Provision and Professionals
- Medical and Health Care Facilities and Professionals
- Shops and Public Services
- Transportation

Safe and Stimulating

The opportunities for a safe and stimulating home environment may vary depending upon the housing conditions and life style of the toddlers’ families. If access to outdoor play opportunities is limited, local facilities such as parks and playgrounds can be used. Families living in poor housing or refuge are more likely to experience potential accidents or hazards due to the physical conditions of the home (Harker, 2006).

This can have an impact upon toddlers’ emotional well-being and physical health. Play opportunities within the home may be limited due to living conditions, overcrowding, and lack of provision or parental interaction.

Poor housing conditions have damaging impact upon children’s learning..... parents in overcrowded homes were less responsive and spoke in less sophisticated ways to their children.... Children living in temporary accommodation often face limited space to play and some studies suggest that this can lead to depression of aggressive behaviour

(Harker, 2006:23-24).

1.2 Family

Demographics of Family and Life Style

EYPs need to be aware of the demographics within the geographical location of their setting and the families accessing/attending the setting. This will help inform their provision and practices and awareness of the diversity and issues within their community. The demographics/structure and health needs of the family will also influence the wellbeing of the toddler, such as, a new sibling, parental illness or mental health issues, support provided by the extended family and family support network.

The family income and standard of living plays an integral part in supporting the needs of the toddler and family and whether they are in relative or absolute poverty. The life style choices that families make will also have an impact upon a toddler’s wellbeing. Families are more at risk if they have health issues or additions, such as, mental health, disabilities, smoking, alcohol and drugs. “Bad housing in childhood is linked to long term health problems, which can affect employment opportunities later in life” (Harker, 2006:29).

Home Language and Additional Languages

EYPs demonstrate that they are actively respecting linguistic identities, by promoting toddlers’ confidence and fostering communication – verbal and non-verbal. EYPs can improve their settings ethos and atmosphere by participating and engaging with the toddlers and their families from the outset identifying resources for working with additional language(s).

This links to Dimension 6 and Toddlers’ Additional Language(s) Content and Material.

Reflection:

How does poor housing impact upon the wellbeing of toddlers within your setting?

For example a damp house may cause respiratory problems and asthma.

Identify some of the factors that impact upon toddlers’ health and wellbeing?

For example, parental addiction may create a lack of engagement and meeting the needs of the toddler.

Dimension 2 - Health of the Toddlers'

2.1 Physical and Mental Health

There are many different factors that may impact upon a toddler's physical and mental health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is concerned with the international health of the world and carries out a wide range of health related research, providing direction and co-ordination to the United Nations and the world health agenda. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO Constitution, 2016).

They provide standards, frameworks, recommendations and guidance on a range of child health issues that support governments in developing their policies and initiatives to promote the health and well-being of children and their families.

What happens in toddlers' young lives has a critical impact upon their growth and development as they are more vulnerable and susceptible to illnesses, disease, maltreatment and malnutrition and this then influences and impacts upon their life chances and opportunities. Michael Marmot, chair of the Marmot Review (2010) and World Health Organisation's Commission on Social Determinants of Health (WHO, 2008) highlighted this clearly in the below citations:

People with higher socioeconomic position in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life. They also have better health. The two are linked: the more favoured people are, socially and economically, the better their health
(Marmot, 2010:3).

The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being– from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status
(Marmot, 2010:16).

It is important for EYPs to be aware of the factors that may inhibit toddlers' development and what strategies and initiatives can be put in place to help negate any disadvantage.

Health and Childhood Illnesses

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this

(UNICEF UK, 1989b: Article 24).

There are many different health concerns and childhood illnesses that toddlers will be exposed to within their daily lives or in some cases as a chronic illness, some can be prevented or immunised against, treated or avoided. Some may be genetic/hereditary and others environmental. Here are some of the health concerns and childhood illnesses that toddlers may experience:

- Allergies and food allergies
- Asthma
- Chickenpox

- Cold sores
- Coughs, colds and flu
- Cystic fibrosis
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Ear problems - glue ear or ear infection
- Eczema
- Epilepsy
- Febrile seizures/convulsions
- Fifth Disease – slap cheek syndrome
- Hand, foot and mouth disease
- Impetigo
- Infestations - head lice, worms
- Malnutrition
- Maltreatment
- Measles
- Meningitis
- Mumps
- Obesity
- Rubella
- Scabies
- Scarlet fever
- Sickle cell anaemia
- Sleeping Disorders
- Tonsillitis
- Whooping Cough

EYPs need to be able to know what the policies and procedures are for the identification of, reporting of and care of toddlers when they are experiencing any health concern or childhood illnesses, especially if they become ill while attending the setting. It is important that EYPs know how to deal with each illness, who should be contacted, if the illness requires reporting and to whom. EYPs need to be able to identify what infection control measures need to be implemented, such as, washing hands, cleaning of the environment and how vomit, blood and bodily fluids should be dealt with.

Chronic illnesses are illnesses that last over three months and may not have a cure, for example, allergies, asthma, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anaemia and epilepsy will require more specialist provision and the right strategies put in place to support the inclusion of toddlers within the setting. This will more than likely mean that some form of training will be required.

Needs and Abilities

“A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families” (UNICEF UK, 1989b: Article 23).

“Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live” (UNICEF UK, 1989b: Article 30).



Toddlers are all unique and develop at their own rate depending upon their individual needs and interests being met. The setting environment (Dimension 3) and how development and learning is supported within the setting (Dimension 4) play an important role as to how a flexible and adaptable environment can easily meet the needs of all toddlers. The review and reflection of provision, policies, the environment and resources alongside the behaviour and attitude of EYPs, parent(s) and other children contributes hugely to the un-remarkableness and ease that toddlers with any particular need or disability are embraced as part of the settings community. How EYPs work within the ethos and legislation of inclusion and equality of opportunity to demonstrate that all toddlers are valued within the setting is vital in supporting toddlers in reaching their full potential.

Factors that Inhibit Wellbeing

Toddlers' health and wellbeing may be affected by either or both biological/genetic or environmental factors including: maternal diseases during the anti-natal period, genetic/hereditary diseases, such as, haemophilia and muscular dystrophy, environment and environmental teratogens such as toxins and chemicals, legal and illegal drugs, foetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol, smoking, obesity, nutrition, general health, mental health, disabilities, learning difficulties, chronic illness, stress, maltreatment, abuse and foster care. These are all factors that can inhibit and impact upon a toddler's health and wellbeing.

2.2 Health Checks

Health Checks

Most children during their first five years of life will experience health checks and reviews to check that they are healthy and developing 'normally' for their age in relation to their development. This will often be reviewed by a range of health care professionals who will review the following: gross motor, fine motor, vision, communication and hearing, social skills and behaviour and safety. Other aspects that might also be reviewed are toddlers' sleeping habits, teeth and eating. Percentile charts are often used to monitor a child's height, weight and head circumference to make sure that they are within a similar percentage. This is important as through the monitoring of a toddler's development any specific conditions or concerns can be identified and appropriate intervention put in place to help support the toddler. The Healthy Child Programme, two year review (Department of Health, 2009) was introduced in England to support closer collaboration between early years setting and the early years services ensuring that all toddlers' development is monitored and appropriate provision put in place.

Parental engagement is key to the success of the two year review, especially those who may be ambivalent about preventive services or for children who experience psychological, social or economic disadvantage. It can be harder to connect with parents at this age as they may have had little contact with services since their child was a baby and may not know the health visitor and their team

(Department of Health, 2009:11).

Immunisations

Immunisations help to prevent diseases they often take the form of vaccinations where an infant or adult is immunised to help prevent or reduce the chances of catching the disease. These vaccinations help the body to build up anti-bodies to the diseases being vaccinated against and many countries routinely immunise young children under a health programme for the immunisation of these children. Each country will have a schedule for when these vaccinations are administered

with many happening within the first year of life. Booster vaccinations are then provided at routine points during a child's life to help maintain the immunity to disease.

An important thing to also to address is, are staff immunisations up to date?

Reflection:

What WHO health agendas do you know of?

What are the warning signs that a toddler may be suffering from physical or emotional ill health?

What legislation is in place to support inclusion and equality of opportunity within your country?

How is this reflected within your setting?

What health checks and immunisations are provided for toddlers in your county?

Why might families not be accessing these health checks and immunisations?

What vaccinations should the toddlers in your setting have already received?

Dimension 3 - Setting Environment for Toddlers - Current Practice and Provision:

The setting environment provides toddlers with the opportunity to develop and extend their learning. A rich and stimulating indoor and outdoor environment will support toddlers' curiosity and exploration challenging them to achieve higher expectations and goals within a safe and secure environment. A positive supportive environment will develop toddlers' confidence and skills in all areas of their learning and development, contributing particularly to their wellbeing.

3.1 Opportunities for Play and Learning

There are many quotes from varying theories and educationalists extolling the importance of play as the way in which children learn. It is a natural way for toddlers to explore and experiment making discoveries about their immediate environment. This is where play is fun, enjoyable spontaneous and engaging with each toddler demonstrating their own unique interests in different aspects of the environment. This is where engagement with the families supports toddlers' interests being met within the setting.

Poem about the importance of children's play:

*"Play is not a shop bought toy or lots of money spent
For children play has never been an organised event
A child at home plays endlessly left to his own devices
Play can deal with everything from customary to crisis
And when a child is under stress the need to play increases
It helps to clarify the fears and feelings it releases"*

Anonymous

Reflection:

- What are your feeling and perceptions from reading this poem?

Play is a medium for learning, and practitioners who acknowledge and appreciate this can, through provision, interaction and intervention in children’s play, enhance progression, differentiation and relevance in the curriculum

(Moyles, 2010:10).

The context for play is imperative as plenty of space is required both in and out of doors with time to be able to engage in exploration and trying things out, taking risks and expressing themselves. At this age toddlers tend to be in the parallel stage of play often playing alongside other peers but not always engaging socially with them. For example, EYPs may observe a small group of toddlers running around pushing buggies and ‘push toys’ following each other and chasing each other around equipment; however as they tire of this they go off to explore other materials and are no longer engaged in the activity with those particular peers. EYPs support toddlers towards the next stage of associative play.

The ability to join groups of other children, and the desire to do so begins, at an early age and progresses through a developmental sequence. Parten focussed on the different types of social play.... Unoccupied Play... Solitary Play... Onlooker Play... Parallel Play - This is usually seen during toddlerhood. During parallel play toddlers will play alongside each other and with similar materials but don’t interact with each other. Associative Play and Cooperative Play

(State of New South Wales, Department of Education and Training, 2006:12).

Children experience many different types of play during their childhood. These are often identified by different theorists, such as, Piaget, Smilansky and Parten with sensori-motor play, symbolic play, games with rules, functional play, constructive play and dramatic play (State of New South Wales, Department of Education and Training, 2006).

Adult involvement and engagement is important as they set-up the activities, experiences and resources for toddlers to engage with. Through the use of observation toddlers’ play can be observed and appropriate involvement and engagement can be applied in order to extend and develop toddlers’ learning.

Vygotsky saw the adult as vital to the process of ‘scaffolding’ the child’s behaviour. When you scaffold a building, you support it structurally while internal developments occur. It is a common sight on building sites. We scaffold child’s development almost without thinking

(State of New South Wales, Department of Education and Training, 2006:6).

Reflection:

Reflect upon the other types of play that you have observed toddlers engaging in within your setting?

3.2 Health and Safety

The health and safety of toddlers is a fundamental requirement within any early years setting to keep toddlers both physically and psychologically safe and protected. Each country will have its own legislation that must adhere to in the protection of toddlers in relation to health and safety and safeguarding/child protection.

The planning and communication of the settings safety requirements, policies and procedure is essential to managing health and safety. It is through the use of daily routines that procedures are implemented that support the checking, recording and reviewing of safety standards.

Areas for consideration include:

- the building and its physical condition, fixtures and fittings, emergency equipment, security, resources and furniture
- the assessment of risks and hazards
- toddlers' medical conditions and allergies
- administration of first aid and recording of incidents and injuries
- vetting and the safe recruitment of staff
- safety routines and procedure in and out doors, in and off the premises

It is important the EYPs are alert to changes in behaviour and mood swings, the ability to settle the toddlers and the relationships established with others. Being aware of the signs and voice of the toddler, knowing and taking responsibility in adhering to the policies and procedures reporting of safeguarding incidents is essential in the protection of toddlers.

3.3 Learning Environment – Development and Learning:

The environment is the conditions or influences under which a person lives and develops. It is all around us, the surrounding objects, scenery and circumstances.

The learning environment plays an important role in supporting toddlers' learning and development providing a platform of experiences, opportunities and activities which encourage them to explore, investigate and make discoveries about themselves and the world around them. The learning environment needs to be flexible, adaptable and dependable supporting toddlers' all round development and providing different spaces and opportunities that capture their interest and curiosity while meeting legislation and curriculum requirements.

These four identified areas link very closely and help to underpin Dimension 4 - Development and Learning.

Physical Environment

The physical environment needs to consider the overall appearance of the setting, use of space available, access and use to the range of resources, so that the physical environment has a positive impact on their sense of wellbeing. The EYPs' planning, structuring and resourcing is a key component in the setting up of the physical environment in support toddlers' development and learning. Both the in and outdoor environments offer different learning opportunities and freedom to explore the natural environment and experience variation in the weather and atmosphere.

Social Environment

A good social environment needs to be a warm, friendly and inviting atmosphere that enables socialisation for toddlers in developing positive relationships with EYPs and their peers. EYPs support toddlers in building relationships and friendships both on a one-one basis and in small groups. Toddlers will show preferences with whom they would like to share their time with. They are learning the etiquette of society starting with sharing, caring, taking turns and listening as they are playing alongside each other using the materials and resources within the setting.

Emotional Environment

The atmosphere created within the environment for toddlers should one that is warm, accepting, welcoming and inclusive. The EYPs provide emotional support for toddlers in managing their emotions and feeling in a positive manner so that they feel safe and secure within their learning environment. The toddlers will feel “like a fish in water”- that is how you can describe children who feel alright” (Laevers et al, 2005a:8). A range of resources, activities and experiences can be used to support the toddlers’ expression of their feelings. This can range from physically invigorating to soothing therapeutics activities and experiences. The use of mindfulness can support the wellbeing of toddlers’ as it helps them to relax, focus on the moment and notice how they are feeling.

Cognitive and Language Environment

A rich cognitive and language environment provides toddlers with the new and stimulating resources and activities that engage them in problem solving, exploring and extending their knowledge, language and communication through concrete experiences and engagement with EYPs. Toddlers have the opportunity to independently and/or with adult support engage in discovery, exploration, and problem solving that leads to learning. By providing a range of situations and experiences toddlers will be supported in developing their competence and communication with others.

3.4 Staffing

Staffing is an important part of caring for the needs of toddlers. Maintaining the right level of staffing, with the right experience and qualifications to meet statutory requirements is not always easy if the sector has a shortage of early years practitioners. Maintaining early years practitioners’ wellbeing as well is important as happy staff will often lead to happy children! It is not just getting the environment right for the toddlers but also the adult as well. The physical environment is important in regards to the physical health and safety of practitioners and the aesthetic atmosphere has an impact upon how they feel about their working environment. The climate and working organisation also impacts upon psychological mental health as the support, hours worked, adult child ratios and opportunities available can have an impact upon how early years practitioners feel and their emotional health.

Practitioner training and experience

Staffing plays a key role in the education and care of toddlers first with the employment of suitable practitioners who can meet the needs of the toddlers. Do they have appropriate qualifications, training, skills, experience, knowledge and understanding to support disadvantaged toddlers and their families? Further Continuous Professional Development (CPD) may be needed to support their development and understanding of supporting the needs of toddlers that have fewer opportunities.

Your Professional Role

The professional role of an EYP may vary from country to country however there are some key responsibilities to being a professional that apply to any early years setting. An example of an EYP's responsibilities includes:

- modelling good practice to others
- being a reflective practitioner
- leading and instigating change and innovation of policies, provision and practice to best meet the toddlers' needs, curriculum and legislation requirements
- encouraging and supporting other practitioners in the development of their knowledge and understanding of early years practice and disadvantaged toddlers
- building positive relationships with toddlers, their families, colleagues and other professionals.

This links to the four Pedagogical Characteristics of Critical Thinking, Read and Research, Reflective Practice and Skills and Attitudes.

When considering EYPs professional role the dimensions below are useful in the identification of factors and traits relating to professionalism and early years.

Dimensions of Professionalism:

- Knowledge - Specialist knowledge, unique expertise, experience
- Education and training - Higher education, qualification, practical experience, obligation to engage in CPD
- Skills - Competence and efficacy, task complexity, communication, judgment
- Autonomy - Entry requirement, self-regulation and standards, voice in public policy, discretionary judgment
- Values - Ideology, altruism, dedication, service to clients
- Ethics - Codes of conduct, moral integrity, confidentiality, trustworthiness, responsibility
- Reward - Influence, social status, power, vocation

(Brock, 2006:4).

Reflection:

What CPD have you had access to recently?

How do the different dimensions represent your professionalism and professional role as an Early Years Practitioner?

What is the distinction to being a professional and behaving professionally?

What standards are there in your country that identifies Early Years Practitioners as early years professionals?

What qualities do you consider to be important for an EYP to have?

Key Person Approach

The use and deployment of EYPs is vital in providing a safe and secure environment for toddlers and a secure-base from which they are able to develop and learn. The Key Person approach is where a specific person is allocated or chosen by the child/toddler and they take on the intimate care and provide an attachment figure for the toddler while they are in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) setting. The key person establishes a positive and trusting relationship with their key child (toddler) providing them with a sense of belonging, care and security. They know their key children/toddlers and respond sensitively to their feelings, needs and interests providing emotional reassurance and meeting their intimate physical needs.

A key person has special responsibilities for working with a small number of children, giving them the reassurance to feel safe and cared for, and building relationships with their parents. They will also talk to parents to make sure that the needs of the child are being met appropriately, and that records of development and progress is shared with parents and other professionals as necessary

(DCSF, 2008:15).

This approach is supported by the research based evidence of John Bowlby, James and Joyce Robertson and Mary Ainsworth.

Bowlby believed that there are four distinguishing characteristics of attachment:

1. **Proximity Maintenance** - The desire to be near the people we are attached to.
2. **Safe Haven** - Returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.
3. **Secure Base** - The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.
4. **Separation Distress** - Anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure

(Cherry, 2012).

And they are important in supporting the toddler's transition into the setting and the forming of attachments to key figures (carers); with more recently the key person approach being championed by Elinor Goldschmied with her consultancy work in England, Italy and Spain. She also developed Heuristic play for toddlers using natural and everyday materials to explore and make discoveries with.

Reflection:

How does your environment support a toddler's sense of belonging?

How do EYPs in your country support and meet the intimate care needs of toddlers?

Dimension 4 - Development and Learning:

EYPs have an understanding of the developmental milestones that children progress through during their formative years, providing them with appropriate expectations of how to continually support toddlers' development.



“Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential” (UNICEF UK, 1989b: Article 6).

The development and learning of toddlers is important as from when they are born they develop at different rates and at their own unique pace. Toddlers go through predictable sequences accomplishing a range of different tasks and skills. These have been explored by a range of different theories under four main areas of learning:

1. Behaviourist perspective
 2. Cognitive perspective
 3. Humanistic perspective
 4. Social Learning perspective
- (Cooper, 2013).

These theories provide a range of different perspectives and a framework for understating how children develop and learn.

The environment and the adults that care for toddlers, influence and support their learning and development. Toddlers learn through a range of opportunities to explore, experience and gain an understanding of their environment. This dimension supports EYPs in reflecting upon their provision and practice and is broken down into the different aspects of development and learning. This however can be reflected upon holistically as each area impacts and informs the others.

4.1 Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual

Personal development is a life process of self-development and self-growth relating to how toddlers achieve/reach their full potential through the development of identity and personality including self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness.

Social development is related to the learning of skills needed to interact with others. This can be both with individuals and in-groups. Social skills include toddlers learning to get on others, forming relationships, learning to share and take turns, co-operating and reposing to others.

Emotional development is related to the healthy expression and control of toddlers’ feelings and emotions. Through play toddlers can explore their feelings and learn to respond to them.

Toddlers’ spiritual needs can be considered and nurtured and is dependent upon their developmental maturity. Spirituality is very dependent upon families’ own beliefs and values and influences a child’s understanding and awareness of who they are and their existence in the world. This supports the exploration of feelings relating to where they are from and in dealing with emotional situations such as bereavement. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion):

Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up

(UNICEF UK, 1989b).



These closely correlate and interlink with one another as each aspect has an impact on the other.

Interaction, Engagement and Play

This aspect of Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual development is about how you provide opportunities for toddlers to interact, co-operate and be involved with one another and others (peers, siblings, staff, parent(s) and carer(s)) either in a group or individual situation. EYPs act as good role models in setting a good example of how to engage and interact to form positive and trusting relationships with others.

EYPs through play encourage opportunities for toddlers to express their feelings and frustrations in a safe and nurturing learning environment where they can develop strategies for coping with new and challenging situations.

Attachment

Attachment is the close relationship and bond held initially between a child and a parent/main care giver where they feel more secure in their presence. The child will exhibit distress when separated from that parent/main care giver. Theories, such as, John Bowlby, James and Joyce Robertson provide a framework to recognise the need children have for consistency, stability and security and the effect this has on their development if these needs are not met. A Key Person approach is where toddlers have a main carer responsible for their primary care needs providing them with the reassurance to feel safe and secure while also building positive trusting a relationship with the family.

Settling-in

Settling-in is a gradual process where a toddler is experiencing a transition from one setting to another, for example, from the home to the early years setting. This procedure links closely with attachment as the EYPs become the key person supporting the settling in process of the toddler's transition both within and beyond the setting. Transitions that toddlers face may be vertical which refer to movement across various settings such as from home to the early years setting or horizontal which is the movement from one activity to another as part of the daily routine.

Meal and Snack times

This is an opportunity for toddlers to build relationships with one another and EYPs and strengthen skills such as autonomy and independence as they learn how to feed themselves and use utensils.

Also link to Dimension 7 and Toddlers' Meal Time Content and Material.

4.2 Cognitive, Language and Communication

Cognitive development is related to thinking and learning skills such as concept formation, problem solving, creativity, imagination, memory, attention and concentration.

Language and communication relates to the development of communication skills through speaking (verbal), non-verbal (gesture and body language), listening, reading and writing.

Attention and Concentration

This aspect relates only to attention and concentration but to the skills and concepts that support this, such as, concept formation, recall, memory and problem solving as these would not happen if a toddler did not concentrate or pay attention to what was happening.

The use of engaging toddlers in sustained shared thinking supports their interaction and collaboration with others as EYPs engage in problem solving and an opening for toddlers to express their ideas and thoughts. The use of open ended questions such as 'what' can further support this however the use of 'why' may not be appropriate for this age group to understand.

Voice and Expressions

This aspect links to Dimension 5 and Toddlers' Voice and Expressions Content and Material but here addresses how EYPs listen to toddlers and provide them with opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. It is important that EYPs are positive role models and this includes how they communicate with the parent(s) and main care giver(s).

Home Language and Additional Languages

This aspect links to Dimension 6: Toddler's? Additional Language(s). It is important that EYPs respect and foster the toddlers' home languages to support their linguistic identity and help develop their confidence in the use of the spoken language both in the home and host nations' language.

4.3 Physical

Physical development is related to the development of body movement and control involving both gross (large) and fine (small) motor skills, balance and spatial awareness, whole body and hand-eye co-ordination. EYPs make suitable provision for toddlers to be active and interactive both in and outdoors to improve their coordination, balance, spatial awareness and manipulation and movement skills.

Physical Abilities and Attitudes

The physical abilities are the skills that toddlers acquire and master such as balance and co-ordination through the development of positive attitudes toddlers have toward risk taking, challenges and trying new things out. The role of the EYP is to facilitate and enable toddlers in providing opportunities for the development of these physical skills and abilities while also developing confidence and positive attitudes.

4.4 Behaviour

Behaviour and self-control relates to how toddlers develop an understanding of what is right and wrong and why. This links closely to Personal, Social, Emotional and Spiritual development as toddlers learn the impact of their actions on those around them.

Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience is the ability to which a toddler learns to manage their feeling and emotions when experiencing stressful or frustrating situations. This is where EYPs play an important role in providing opportunities for self-expression and understanding of feelings.

Regulating Feelings and Behaviours

This is where EYPs support toddlers to recognise the feeling and emotions that they are experiencing and constructively helping them to cope with these feeling, describe and voice these feelings and emotions.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts arise with toddlers as they are they are learning to share their space, materials and toys with other children. However this can be a very emotional time for toddlers as they do not always understand the need to share or take turns. They may become very physical and hurtful to other children. High/Scope provides a range of strategies for EYPs to support them in conflict resolution with young children with six steps to help young children to settle disputes and conflicts:

1. "Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions,
2. Acknowledge children's feelings
3. Gather information
4. Restate the problem
5. Ask for solutions and choose one together
6. Be prepared to give follow up support"

(High/Scope, 2016)

Reflection:

Identify some of the factors that may affect toddlers' development and learning?

What strategies do you use to support toddlers' learning and development?

Toddlers Creed

If I want it, it's mine!

If I gave it to you and I change my mind later, it's mine!

If I can take it away from you, it's mine!

If I had it a little while ago, it's mine!

If it's mine, it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what.

If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine!

If it looks like mine, it's mine!

If it breaks or needs putting away, it's yours!

(Author Unknown)

Dimension 5: Toddler's? Voice and Expressions

This links to the contents and materials in Toddler's? Voice and Expressions. From the completion of these what questions and statements could you use for the audit to identify the quality of your settings provision and practice in supporting toddlers' voice and expressions.

Reflection:

Contents and materials from the Toddler's Voice and Expressions:

- What are the diverse modes of expressions that you have observed?

- How can you enable and empower the voice of the toddlers’?

Dimension 6: Toddler’s? Additional Language(s)

This links to the contents and materials in Toddler’s? Additional Language(s). From the completion of these what questions and statements could you use for the audit to identify the quality of your settings provision and practice in supporting toddlers’ additional language(s).

Reflection:

Contents and materials from the Toddler’s? Additional Language(s):

- What resources are provided that support additional language(s) within your setting?
- How do you identify the languages spoken within the home and make provision for them within your setting?

Dimension 7: Toddler’s? Meal Times

This links to the contents and materials in Toddler’s? Meal Times. From the completion of these what questions and statements could you use for the audit to identify the quality of your settings provision and practice in supporting toddlers’ meal times.

Reflection:

Contents and materials from the Toddler’s? Meal Times:

- How do you support and maintain healthy eating/drinking habits?
- How do you encourage independence skills and choice during meal and snack times?

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