



Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and
Diverse Learners on the Early childhood Road

Report

Promoting the Wellbeing of Toddlers within Europe

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Introduction to the Report

The TODDLER Project focuses on one of the EU Commission's priority themes for 2009-2010 identified in EURYDICE (2009), by supporting early years' practitioners, teachers and students in their understanding of how to promote development of toddlers (aged 18 to 36 months) from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.

“The policy challenge, therefore, is to (re)build (current) systems of early childhood care and education that meet crucial design features as outlined above, that provide high quality care and education for all children, that are integrated, attractive and affordable to all families regardless social class or minority status, yet that is sensitive to differing educational needs and to compensate early educational disadvantages” (EURYDICE, 2009:39)

The aim of the TODDLER Project is to develop reflective practitioners who can promote and improve practice to provide effective early years care and education for diverse and disadvantaged toddlers in reaching their full potential.

This report has been compiled using experiences and expertise from each partner country exploring the different contexts and perspectives of wellbeing that influences practice. These materials have been left verbatim, as far as possible, to maintain the context and originality of each country.

Each partner has been asked to provide a definition of wellbeing and to identify their country's underpinning legislation and research on wellbeing. This information has been compiled into a report/handbook which can be used as teaching materials in conjunction with the PowerPoint.

Contents include:

- Definitions of wellbeing
- Theoretical backgrounds
- Literature Reviews
 - Curriculum documents
 - Piece of National Research
 - Recommended Reading

These materials are photocopyable for teaching purposes.



England

Definitions of wellbeing

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.

Styman J. and Sutherland H.



England

Theoretical background to children's wellbeing

In September 2003, the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda was published, outlining the previous Government's vision for children's services. It proposed reshaping children's services to help achieve the outcomes which children and young people are said to be key to well-being in childhood and later life.

The Five Outcomes are:

1. Be Healthy:
2. Stay Safe:
3. Enjoy and achieve:
4. Make a positive contribution:
5. Achieve economic well-being

This agenda underpinned the Children Act 2004, and the Childcare Act of 2006, which created a basis for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. This was followed by a piece of research Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP, 2005) carried out for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This emphasised the importance of "effective learning is dependent on secure relationships, and appropriate learning environment and high-quality teaching." (DfES, 2005:5) This has underpinned the development of the Early Years Professional (EYP) in supporting early years as a graduate lead profession. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (EPPE, 2004) kicked off the research into effective practice in England and was the first longitudinal study of its kind. This explored the different types of provision in England and how it influenced a child's development identifying good practice. These two initiatives have promoted high quality early years provision by supporting wellbeing through practice.

The Allen Report (2011) into early intervention highlighted children's social and emotional development as a 'bedrock' in supporting children's physical and mental health. He identified 80 different early intervention programmes that demonstrated good practice stating that "if we intervene early enough, we can give children a vital social and emotional foundation which will help to keep them happy, healthy and achieving throughout their lives and, above all, equip them to raise children of their own, who will also enjoy higher levels of wellbeing" (Allen, 2001:ix)

Dame Claire Tickell (2011) carried out a comprehensive review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) drawing on the Allen Report (2011) reviewing four areas:

1. Regulation
2. Learning and Development
3. Assessment
4. Welfare

The recommendations that she then put forward aimed to:

- “Address ways to prevent children from falling behind in their learning through early intervention
- Address ways to engage parents more in their children’s learning
- Clarify ‘safeguarding and welfare’ requirements – link to Munroe review – training
- Overhaul the EYFS curriculum framework
- Devise a join-up approach to early progress checks between health and education
- Reduce paperwork for providers of early learning
- Simplify current assessment procedures”(Langston, 2011)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will continue to ensure that children’s wellbeing is promoted through a variety of strategies put forward by Allen (2011) and Tickell (2011). For example, Sure Start Children’s Centres were set up within each Local Authority to support quality of children’s learning in each centre for birth to five years. These centres follow the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to promote the development of children and to improve outcomes for children and their families through a range of different services which meet the localities’ needs, such as, integrated care, education and health services.

References:

Allen, G. (2011). *Early Intervention: the Next Steps*. London: Cabinet Office

Great Britain. Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Keep – Key Elements of Effective Practice*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills

Great Britain. Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2008) *Early Years Foundation Stage*. Nottingham: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Langston A. (2011) *EYFS REVIEW special - what it means for you and your practice*. Nursery World, 30 March 2011. [Online] Available at: <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/1062969/EYFS-REVIEW-special---means-practice/> (Accessed: 13th June 2011)

Sylva K., Melhuish E., Sammons P., Siraj-Blatchford I. and Taggart B. (2004) *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education: Findings from end of pre-school to the end of Key Stage 1*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills

Tickell, C. (2011) *Early Years Year’s: Foundations for life, health and learning*. London: Cabinet Office



England

Literature Review

Curriculum Documents

Great Britain. Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2008) *Early Years Foundation Stage*. Nottingham: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110202093118/nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/157774>

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides the national legal framework for all early years' provision within England. It was part of the previous government's ten year strategy to improve the outcomes for children. The EYFS states the statutory/legal requirements that are central in underpinning early year's provision within settings. It was designed to support and guide settings in helping children reach their full potential.

There are four principles that underpin the EYFS and these are:

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments
4. Learning and Development

The principle of a unique child ('principles into practice' guidance cards 1.4) informs early year's practitioners about the importance of emotional well-being, physical well-being, effective practice, challenges and dilemmas and reflecting on practice. (DCSF, 2008: practice card 1.4)

The EYFS has six areas of Learning and Development:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication, Language and Literacy
3. Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
4. Knowledge and Understanding of the World
5. Physical Development
6. Creative Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development "means for children, being special to someone and well cared for is vital for their physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing." (DCSF, 2008:24) Underpinning this area of development "providers must ensure support for children's emotional well-being to help them know themselves and what they can do." (DCSF, 2008:24) Settings must therefore demonstrate how they are meeting children's wellbeing within their provision.

National Research

Elfer P. & Dearnley K. (2007) *Nurseries and emotional well-being: evaluating an emotionally containing model of professional development*. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 27, (3), pp. 267–279

With the increase of nursery provision for young children within England, comes a growing concern about how their wellbeing is being facilitated by early years' practitioners. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) emphasises the 'key person approach' but however this was not always translating into practice. Explored through this piece of research is that staff training does not always sufficiently address children's attachments. The paper therefore addresses this through the use of action research with a group of nursery heads who participated in a continuing professional development programme (CPD) which was designed in two phases with evaluation strategies to explore the emotional experience in professional work.

Recommended Reading

Roberts R. (2010) *Wellbeing from Birth*. London: Sage

The book, *Wellbeing from Birth*, by Rosemary Roberts is a key text on Wellbeing. It introduces the concept of wellbeing, outlines a new model of wellbeing, and provides research and policy background. Wellbeing is defined and the theory underpinning wellbeing is discussed. Examples are provided of ideas and strategies to promote wellbeing for both the home and early years setting. For the early years' practitioner, issues such as observation, assessment and planning, the key person approach, and integrated childcare services are discussed.

This book highlights the importance of collective wellbeing, arguing that all young children need experiences of individual and collective wellbeing, in their families and their communities.

Brownell C. & Kopp C. (2007) *Socioemotional Development in the Toddler Years-Transitions & Transformations*. London: The Guildford Press

This book explores the key developmental transitions that toddlers experience investigating aspects of the socioemotional development of toddlers. While it does not specifically deal with wellbeing, the underpinning concepts that this book presents supports the readers understanding of a toddler's wellbeing.