

Section 3: Background Reading to Support the Teaching of Healthy Habits

- What is being healthy?
- Factors contributing to people's inability to remain "healthy" include poverty, climate change, and how human activity impacts what we eat.
- How being healthy is part of every child's human right.

Teaching Healthy Habits

This guide section briefly introduces healthy diets through definitions, facts, and figures locally, nationally, and internationally. It should prepare the teacher (adult) with a starting point for teaching The importance of developing and sustaining healthy habits.

The following questions could support young people to start thinking about being healthy:

- What does consuming a healthy diet mean?
- What foods are considered healthy and why?
- What foods are not considered as healthy, and why?
- Is healthy nutrition just impacting our bodies?

The United Nations' definition of a healthy diet states

"A healthy diet is essential for good health and nutrition. It protects you against chronic non-communicable diseases like heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Eating various foods and consuming less salt, sugars, and saturated and industrially-produced trans- industrially-produced trans-fats are essential for a healthy diet." [Healthy diets](#)

The NHS's definition of a healthy diet states

"Eating a healthy, balanced diet is important for maintaining good health and can help you feel your best." This means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions and consuming the right amount of food and drink to maintain a healthy body weight. " [Live-Well, Eat-Well](#)

Guidelines to Understand the Changes Teaching the Social Value of Health Can Impact Lives

This section of the guide provides teachers and school leaders with guidelines to understand the changes teaching the social value of health can bring to how young people experience their lives. Schools would already have some knowledge of health education through the teaching of Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE). However, for social action education, we encourage educators to approach any learning on the topic of Health in an integrated way within the school community so that young people can understand the interrelationships between their health through what they do daily within the school community and outside.

Why is Being Healthy Important?

Being healthy is a human right and is a key part of Children's Human Rights. It is important that young people understand that being healthy is the right of the young person.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally binding international agreement that sets out every child's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, regardless of race, religion, or abilities. In line with article 45 of the Convention, UNICEF UK works together with the UK and devolved governments to effectively implement the Convention throughout the UK." [UNICEF Policy](#)

A convention is an agreement between countries to obey the same law. When the government of a country ratifies a convention, that means it agrees to follow the provisions set out in that convention.

What the Treaty Means

Every child in the UK is entitled to over 40 specific rights. These include:

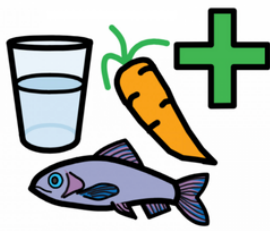
- The right to life, survival and development
- The right to have their views respected and to have their best interests considered at all times
- The right to a name and nationality, freedom of expression and access to information about them
- The right to live in a family environment or alternative care and to have contact with both parents if possible

Health and welfare rights - including rights for young people with disabilities - the right to health and health care and social security, the right to education, leisure, culture and the arts, special protection for refugee young people, in the juvenile justice system, young people deprived of their liberty and young people suffering economic, sexual or other forms of exploitation. Children's Human Rights

Additional resources can be used for young people who are not familiar with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additional resources are available: [Know your rights - Student handbook](#). [Know your rights - Teacher Handbook](#)

In 2000, two optional protocols were added to the UNCRC. One asks governments to ensure young people under 18 are not forcibly recruited into their armed forces. The second calls on states to prohibit child prostitution, child pornography and the sale of young people into slavery. More than 120 states have now ratified. The United Nations adopted them.

A third optional protocol was added in 2011. This enables young people whose rights have been violated to complain directly to the UN Committee on Childs Rights. Since the United Nations adopted it in November 1989, 196 countries have signed up to this agreement.



UN CRC Article 24

I have the right to good quality health care, to clean water and good food

Article 24 of the UNCRC says that healthcare for young people and young people should be as good as possible and also goes further than this by saying young people and young people have the right to be physically and mentally fulfilled.

Among other things, this implies that young people and young people:

should have good enough nourishment from their food should be able to live in a safe and healthy environment shouldn't be in danger at work.



All children under 18 should enjoy all the rights set out in the UNCRC **without discrimination**, including those with mental health conditions.



Every child and young person should enjoy the **same opportunities to grow and develop** in conditions that don't impact negatively on their mental wellbeing.



Every child has **the right to protection from all forms of violence**, including the neglect of their mental health, self-harm and suicide.



Every child has **the right to the best possible health** and to healthcare services that will help them attain this, including mental health.

A Part of Healthy Habits is about Having a Healthy Diet A new study finds poor diet kills more people globally than tobacco and high blood pressure. Globally, one in five diets is associated with poor diet (Science Daily).

For many people throughout the world, food options are limited. The cost of food, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity and water prevent many people from making sound nutritional choices. Thus, policies have an important role: enabling people to access healthy and sustainable nutrition. (UN org)

1.1 billion people get too few calories to fight hunger; another 1.1 billion or more take in too many calories. The rest of humanity gets enough calories and enough exercise but lacks enough vitamins and minerals. People in this middle group are in the best place, but many are still far from optimal health (Encyclopedia).

Move this sentence to the first sentence of this paragraph. It will read - According to new research comparing global eating habits. (Independent), the citizens of Chad have the world's healthiest diet from eating plenty of fruit and veg, while those in Armenia have the worst.

The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report: The Future is Now Science for Achieving Sustainable Development has raised "building sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition patterns" as a key entry point for sustainable transformation. (U.N. org) Around 45% of deaths among young people under five are linked to undernutrition. These mostly occur in low- and middle-income countries. At the same time, in these same countries, rates of childhood overweight and obesity are rising (WHO)

Among all 195 countries, Uzbekistan saw the highest rate of diet-related deaths, 892 deaths per 100,000 people, followed by Afghanistan, The Marshal Islands, which saw the lowest rate of diet-related deaths of any country, with just 89 deaths per 100,000. The U.S. ranked 43rd with a speed of 171 deaths per 100,000, while the U.K. ranked 23rd.

Facts - Being Healthy at a National Level 2019/2020

- Poor diets contribute to around 64,000 deaths in England alone and cost the economy about 74 billion pounds (\$102 billion). (Reuters)
- The price of fruit and vegetables continues to soar; it cost £9.39 per 1,000 calories in 2019, having risen yearly since 2016 – while the price of food and drinks high in sugar, salt and fat has remained stable at £3.54 per 1,000 calories. (The Guardian Mon 21 Sep 2020)
- In April 2020, a survey found that 19 per cent of over 65-year-olds reported eating more unhealthy foods during the lockdown than before. On the other hand, 50 per cent of those in the youngest age group said they had been eating more unhealthy food than before (Statista)
- Surveys consistently highlight that the population of the United Kingdom is eating too many 'free sugars', too much saturated fat and salt, and not enough fruit, vegetables, fibre and oily fish

Understanding Factors of a Child's Health

Lack of sleep increases the risk of obesity, type two diabetes, attention and behaviour problems, and poor mental health. On average, young people aged 6 to 12 need 9 to 12 hours of sleep a night. Teenagers aged 13 to 18 need 8 to 10 hours of sleep

This 4 minute video from the NHS looks at how [sleep affects your mind and body](#) more than you might think. It's super important to do your best to have a healthy sleep pattern. Find out what you lose when you miss your snooze and how to make sure you catch enough of those all-important ZZZs.

[Ambassador voices Sleep and mental health](#) Rachel Elder is an English Literature student at the University of Edinburgh. She is a Young Ambassador for The Mix, most recently involved in The Body and Soul Club. Listen to Rachel on Ambassador Voices, Sleep and Mental Health. The Mix has a range of areas to support young people. The advice is from young people making this more relatable. [The mix](#) has a range of areas to support young people. The advice is from young people making this more relatable.

Social and Emotional Development

It characterises itself by a child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control his/her own feelings/behaviours, get along with other young people, and build relationships with adults. Parents have a key role to play in this, as well as teachers who have direct access to the different facets and needs of a child's life.

How to Deal with Unhelpful Thoughts

It's pretty understandable if you're experiencing some negative thoughts at the moment. Learn how to step outside yourself and stay on top of your feelings – and do not hesitate to get further support if you're really struggling.

Dealing with Change

Sometimes we feel totally fine and in control when things change, but at others, we end up getting worked up and stressed out. Super Sam and Helen share some tips, tech and advice to help you chill and de-stress.

The Worry Tree

This is one of those pick-your-path films that show you how to stop dwelling on the things that are out of your control and refocus your mind on the choices you can make. And remember: it's always OK to ask for help if you need it.

How to Stay Sane on Social Media

Author Holly Bourne shares her top tips for staying sane on social media so the internet doesn't take over your life...

A Stable Home

The environment enables young people to form positive trusting relationships contributing to social and emotional development. Schools and education bodies have a key role in linking with parents/carers when this is not met.

Physical Exercise

Children and young people need to do two types of physical activity each week: aerobic exercise and exercise that strengthen their muscles and bones. The NHS guidelines recommend an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous-intensity activity per day across the week. Across the week, there needs to be various types and intensities of physical activity to develop movement, skills, muscles, and bones.

Hear how MC Malik exercises to ease stress and how setting goals with his friends helps to adhere to them. Any exercise can boost your mental health.

As for adults, regular breaks promote self-regulation and switch off stress responses. Exposure to stress can affect the digestive system, disrupt hormonal balance, and affect the gut and immune systems.

Self-Care and Social Media

Cooped up and locked down, lots of us have clocked up some serious hours online. Jade Laurice and her friend KB share tips on avoiding stress from your socials and what else they do to feel good.

Healthy and Nutritious Diet

Children need to eat a variety of food; this includes fruits and vegetables, starchy foods, dairy, protein, and fat. As an estimation, adolescents and adults should have a water intake of 2.5 litres a day. The intake for a child of 9 to 13 is 1.5 litres and 1.1 litres for 4 to 8 years old. Fruits and vegetables contribute 30% of this water.

In order to change any aspect of your life, you need to change your habit.

What is a Habit? The video [for 6:34 mins](#) focuses on what makes you healthy and how to create a healthy habit. In order to change any aspect of your life, you need to change your habit. Maya creates healthy habits involving her diet, sleep, physical activity, spending less time on her devices and enjoys the value of finding a balance in her life. Healthy habits are positive behaviours that bring us physical, mental and social well-being, prevent illnesses and get lifelong benefits.

Five Essential Habits of Healthy Teens

- Start small. What is one healthy habit you'd like to start?
- The key to stability is building healthy habits, which are positive behaviours that you automatically do. People often use routines to help them cope with difficult situations.
- It is important to think about whether your habits benefit you and others.
- Science shows that embedding something as a habit takes a few weeks. When you try starting a new hobby or setting up a new routine, try and keep going with it until it becomes part of your normal routine. When you try starting a new hobby or setting up a new routine, try and keep going with it until it becomes part of your normal routine.
- Embedding health habits into your normal routine helps build resilience and support your well-being daily.

Create your own Healthy Habits Guide

Tips for Setting Goals

- Break it down - Maybe you could have a big goal for the year and lots of little goals each month to help you reach that final goal
- Goal setting - Have a range of short-term and long-term goals. Small, easy-to-achieve goals can help keep us motivated to reach bigger, more challenging ones
- Purpose - Focus on purpose rather than productivity. Why are you aiming for this goal? How does it benefit you? Practise setting some goals for the next month. How does it go?
- Reflection - Reflect on your goals. Could you try setting some goals for next month? How did it go? Reflecting and evaluating are important for learning and improving

Click here to see more tips fro goal setting from the Red Cros. [\(Red Cross\)](#).

Things to Think About

Physical	Emotional
Exercise	Self- Care
Food	Use of Social Media
Sleep	Dealing with change

WELLBEING PLANNER



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



Think about:

- Exercise
- Social Media
- Screen Time
- Sleep
- Socialising

General Facts for a Healthy Diet

- Healthy eating is about balancing different foods and nutrients in the diet. This means that no single food can provide anything we need to be healthy (Nutrition.org)
- Fruit and vegetables are a key part of a healthy diet, and we should aim to get five portions or more a day or more if we can (preferably fresh)
- Starchy foods like bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and other grain, which are the main source of carbohydrates, are part of a healthy diet, but the quality of what we choose is important. Ideally, we should only consume complex carbs like wholewheat pasta, oats, potatoes, wholemeal, rye bread, etc
- Plant-based protein foods like beans, lentils, chickpeas, and other legumes provide protein and fibre that are naturally low in saturated fat; therefore, including them in our diets is good
- Animal protein foods like fish, eggs, meat and dairy (milk, yoghurt, cheese) provide a range of vitamins and minerals and can be part of a healthy diet. It is best not to eat too much red and processed meat. We are recommended to have two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish like salmon, mackerel or sardines. Dairy foods provide protein, calcium, B vitamins and iodine. It is preferable to go for lower-sugar versions (Nutrition org)
- Sugar is very dangerous for our health. Provides almost zero nutritional value, and it can lead to obesity, tooth decay and other health diseases. Therefore, limiting our sugar consumption to 25/30 grams per day (around 100 kcal) is important. Consider consuming healthier natural alternatives such as honey, maple syrup, and coconut sugar (Heart)
- Remember: healthy eating doesn't mean demonising all unhealthy foods! Indulging in processed foods is ok from time to time. Nobody eats perfectly 100% of the time, and stressing too much about avoiding certain foods could lead to the opposite effect: binge eating. A healthy diet is a balanced diet that satisfies our body and appetite. BBC Food



Eatwell Guide

Contributing Factors to an Unhealthy Lifestyle

Poverty can also give rise to many developmental issues as the child might not go to school and learn emotional and social values. Thus, they will lack emotional and social development. Most often, poverty causes problems in all development areas. For instance: Money plays a vital role in everybody's life. If a family does not have the money to send their child to school, they will not make friends. And he will lack social development. Limited resources will give rise to not buying books, and thus he will not learn anything. Issues such as; children not going to school and therefore not learning emotional and social values thus they will lack social and emotional development. Access to insufficient food on a daily basis gives rise to many physical developmental problems.



The effects of poverty
Poverty in childhood is damaging: to children, to their life chances and to communities. Wat...
cpag.org.uk

Contributing Factor: Food Poverty

"Material deprivation" – the inability to afford basics such as food and heating – increased between 2019 and 2020, including another 140,000 young people. This means around 1.7 million young people total are forced to go without essentials.

Nearly one million kids signed up for free school meals for the first time in 2020; Councils across the UK provided supermarket vouchers and food parcels to cover the cost. Still, campaigners, including footballer Marcus Rashford, had to fight the government to extend free school meals over the summer holidays when thousands struggled through the pandemic.

"One in ten people were forced to use foodbanks in June, a significant increase of around a third of the previous month. Others reported skipping meals entirely, while some families adopted "basic sustenance" diets made up largely of cheap but unhealthy foods."

The lived experience of food insecurity under Covid-19 July 2020. There is a strong link between each poverty area we have focused on and its impact on young people and their families.

Facts and figures

- 500,000 young people were pushed into poverty between 2015 and 2020
- 4.3 million young people were living below the breadline before Covid-19 hit the UK
- Trussell Trust gave out 1.9 million three-day emergency food parcels in the year up to March 2020; 700,000 of those went to young people
- The Legatum Institute estimated that 120,000 700,000 people who fell into poverty during the pandemic were young
- Two in five families fell into poverty in 2020, meaning hundreds of thousands struggled to pay bills and cover costs for their young people during the pandemic

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) said: "A child can have three meals a day, warm clothes and go to school, but still be poor because their parents don't have enough money to ensure they can live in a warm home, have access to a computer to do their homework or go on the same school trips as their classmates."

Links can be made between Poverty, Health and Social-Emotional Outcomes

There are links between poverty, health, and social-emotional outcomes are made:

- Poverty affects friendships at school, with young people growing up in poverty more likely to play alone, fall out with their friends and be less likely to talk to their friends about their worries
- Often, poorer families will go without items to protect their children from the stigma of being identified as poor and many young people entitled to free school meals do not take them to protect themselves and/or their families from this stigma
- Respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis are more common in young people growing up in poverty and can negatively impact attendance at school
- Young people living in more deprived areas are more likely to report lower life satisfaction than those living in less disadvantaged areas
- 23% of parents under 18 reported skipping meals to make ends meet and feed their young people
- A strong stigma is attached to poverty, and young people living in poverty are often bullied at school

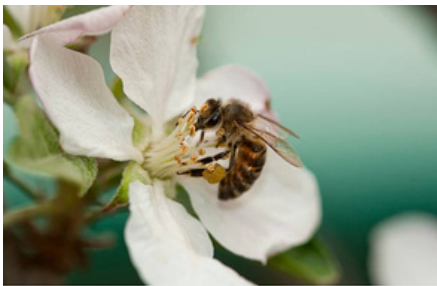
Contributing Factor: Financial Poverty

Financial poverty impacts education, health and well-being, and many more aspects of an individual's life.

Poverty can be present in several different ways. If parents struggle to afford food and rely on food banks, that indicates poverty. Poverty indicators include going without heating and electricity, facing childcare costs higher than earnings, or living in insecure housing because families can't keep up with the rent. It can affect every part of a child's life. (The Big Issue 24th March 2022)

Health and the Natural World

Ecological health is a term that refers to the link between human health and that of the natural world. The state of nature defines the quality of our soil, water, air, and animals' health that directly interact with our health. From an educational point of view, a fundamental understanding of the relationship between our health and nature is essential to understanding the relationship between human health and the environment. The examples below can be used to inform planning and illustrate this concept within schools:



The role of bees, wasps, and butterflies pollination in food production.



The link between farming systems and the physical properties of soil.



Clean water and preservation of human health and biodiversity.

The population of pollinators and insects is in decline. Three-quarters of our crops depend on pollinators. **Because the largest-producing crops in the world harvest food that is not dependent on pollinators, the global proportion of crop production reliant on pollinators represents one-third.**

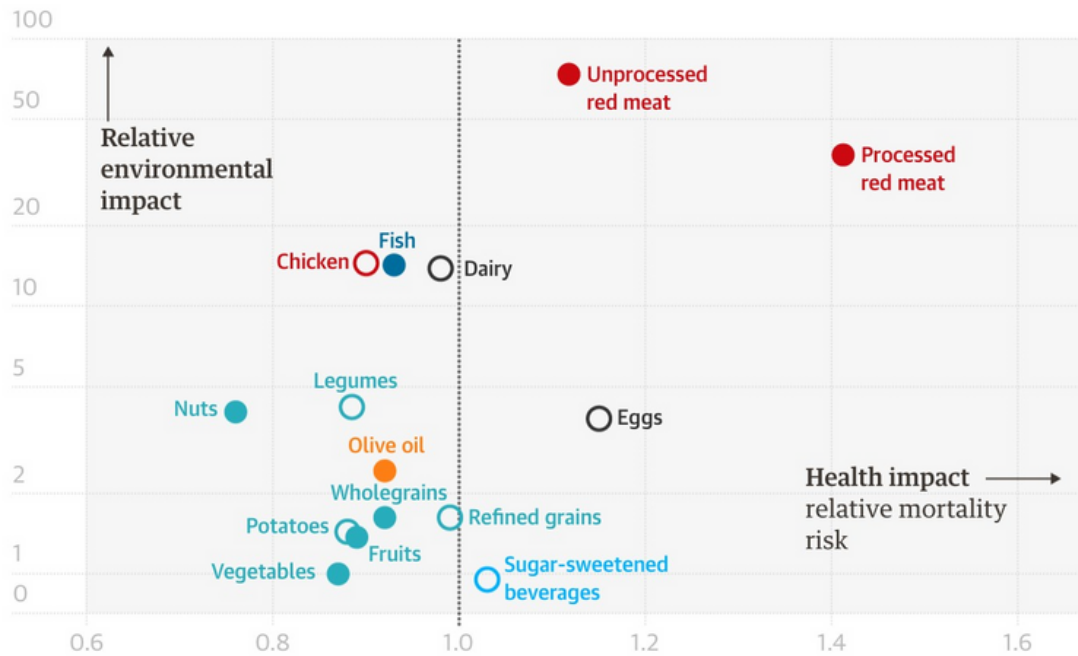
Therefore, the global proportion of crops production reliant on pollinators represents one third. Should this read 1/4 as the previous sentence was 3/4 and now it has changed to 1/3.

Rates of soil depletion exceed replenishment rates, making fertile soil an endangered ecosystem. The minimal soil depth for agricultural production is 15 cm (150 millimetres). It takes approximately 500 years to replace 2.5 cm of topsoil lost to erosion (25 millimetres).

Contributing Factor: Our Diets and Their Impact on the Environment

After studying more than 3000 generic foods and 40,000 branded items, researchers found that many less nutritious foods and drinks account for nearly a quarter of diet-related greenhouse gas emissions. Unhealthy diets also tend to be bad for the planet. Sweets, cakes and biscuits account for 8.5% of food-related greenhouse gasses. (News-Medical Life Sciences)

- A healthy diet based on unprocessed, largely plant-based foods is also sustainable. They point to the 2019 IPCC Climate Change report that suggests a switch to this diet could prevent one-fifth of premature adult deaths while reducing diet-related greenhouse gas emissions by 80%.



¹ monosaccharides and disaccharides) added to foods and drinks by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, as well as sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, smoothies, and fruit juices. They do not include sugars found naturally in whole fresh fruit and vegetables and those naturally present in milk and milk products.

Impact of a Poor Diet on Health and Well-being

Living in poverty can lead to poorer health outcomes in childhood and adulthood being exposed to some or all of the key factors below and accumulating exposure over time can adversely impact child development and health outcomes

- Little money for everyday resources - including good quality housing
- The stress of living in poverty
- Unhealthy lifestyles
- Poorer education and employment opportunities (Child poverty overview - NHS Scotland)

Impact of a Poor Diet on Education

Does money affect young people's outcomes? A study conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found strong evidence that money makes a difference in children's outcomes; it affects their cognitive ability, achievement and engagement in school, higher anxiety levels and behavioural challenges.

Poverty is the strongest predictor of a child's well-being at school. The level of disadvantage that a child experience arbitrates the overall experience of school. The effects of poverty can manifest through fatigue, poor concentration and hunger, and ill health, which can also lead to bullying by other peers. At the end of key stage 2, young people living in poverty are often over nine months behind their peers in reading, writing and maths. Pupils experiencing a high persistence of poverty have a learning gap of 22.7 months, twice that of young people experiencing a low persistence of poverty, who have a learning gap of 11.3 months.

This attainment gap persists throughout secondary school. Students eligible for free school meals are half as likely to achieve a good pass at GCSE in English and Maths compared to other young people. In general, young peoples living in poverty are four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers. Even with the same qualifications, disadvantaged young peoples are 50%

Free School Meals for over 80% of time	22.7 months learning gap
Free School Meals for less than 20% of time	11.3 months learning gap
Average disadvantage gap	18.1 months

Table 1. Learning gap, months behind in secondary school

More likely to be 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

Poverty significantly impacts many young people's educational experience and attainment in the UK. Based on a survey from the NEU, poverty creates barriers for young people from accessing education: Poverty harms young people's physical health and mental well-being, and this undermines their ability to learn in lots of different ways—child_poverty_facts.