



What are life factors?

Life factors are the different influences that affect an individual's growth, development, health and well-being throughout their lifespan.

Key definitions

- **Growth:** An increase in physical size, such as weight and mass.
- **Development:** Gaining new skills and abilities, which become more complex over time.
- **Health:** A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.
- **Well-being:** The state of being happy, healthy and thriving.

Life factors affecting growth, development, health and well-being

Category	Life factors
Social and economic	Employment, access to services, education, family, abuse, sex, gender, LGBTQ+, culture, race, ethnicity.
Living environment	Home and environment.
Health and disability	Promoting health, different health conditions and disabilities.

Living environment factors

Home and environment

- A **good-quality home** is secure, clean, warm and has enough space. Living in a safe, green neighbourhood with low pollution promotes physical health and mental well-being and provides space for play and learning.
- A **poor-quality home** may be damp, cold, overcrowded or in poor repair. This can cause physical illnesses (e.g. asthma from damp) and mental health problems like anxiety and stress.

Social and economic factors

Employment and unemployment

- **Employment** (paid work) provides income, which can lead to a high standard of living. This allows for better nutrition, housing and leisure activities, positively affecting health and well-being.
- **Unemployment** can lead to low income, reliance on benefits, debt and poverty. This can negatively impact all areas, for example causing stress (mental health) or poor nutrition (growth).

Access to services: Having access to services supports health and well-being. Key services include:

- **Health services:** Immunisations (e.g. MMR) and screening programmes (e.g. for cancer) prevent or detect diseases early. Dental and eye tests also maintain health.
- **Support services:** Early years services support development in young children. Community groups, youth services and day centres provide social opportunities, support and advice, reducing loneliness and promoting well-being.

Education experiences

- **Positive experiences**, like good teaching, friendships and extracurricular activities, boost skills, confidence and mental health.

This supports development and future opportunities.

- **Negative experiences**, such as bullying or unmet learning needs, can cause stress and anxiety, leading to poor mental health.

Family and relationships

- **Positive relationships** with family, partners and peers provide emotional support, security and stability. This promotes self-esteem and positive well-being. An authoritative parenting style (being warm and setting clear boundaries) is linked to positive outcomes.
- **Poor relationships** and negative parenting styles (e.g. neglectful) can lead to emotional distress, instability and hinder development.

Abuse and neglect

- **Abuse** is the deliberate harm of a person. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, financial or coercive (controlling).
- **Neglect** is the failure to meet an individual's basic needs (e.g. for food, warmth, or safety).
- Both abuse and neglect have severe negative impacts, causing physical injury, poor growth, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, which affects all aspects of

development and well-being.

Sex, gender and LGBTQ+

- **Sex** is assigned at birth based on biology. **Gender** is an individual's personal sense of self. **LGBTQ+** is an initialism for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning and other identities.
- Acceptance and respect for an individual's identity promotes positive emotional development and well-being.
- Discrimination or hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people can severely harm mental health.

Culture, race and ethnicity

- **Culture** relates to shared beliefs and values. **Race** and **ethnicity** relate to background, such as skin colour and nationality.

Prejudice and discrimination

- **Prejudice** (pre-judging) and **discrimination** (unfair treatment) based on race can limit access to jobs and services, causing stress and damaging well-being.
- Equality and respect for cultural differences promote confidence and positive health outcomes.

Health and disability factors

Promoting health

- **Physical health** is promoted by a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight and regular exercise.
- **Mental health** is promoted by being active, connecting with others, managing stress and getting enough sleep.

Health conditions and disability: A person's health and well-being can be affected by different conditions:

- **Chronic conditions:** Long-term conditions that can be managed but not cured, such as asthma, diabetes and arthritis.
- **Congenital conditions:** Conditions present from birth, such as spina bifida and Down's syndrome.
- **Disabilities:** These can be physical (e.g. cerebral palsy), learning, sensory (e.g. hearing loss) or related to speech and language. They can have a significant, long-term impact on day-to-day life.
- **Mental illness:** Conditions like depression, anxiety and eating disorders.
- **Accidents:** Can cause physical injuries and mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Having a health condition or disability can affect all aspects of life, but with the right support, individuals can achieve a good quality of life.