

Exceptional Care in the First 1000 Days

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What are the First 1000 Days of life?

The first 1000 days are essential to a child's development as it is a time of high-speed development where a holistic approach to care is needed. Holistic development is when all aspects of learning are linked to each other as a whole which includes growth, learning and development and how children's progression is made up of all these components. (Wall, Litjens and Taguma, 2015: 41).



Why is it important?

The first 1000 days are seen as the 'window of opportunity' (UNICEF, 2013) this is where the main factors of a child's development are formed such as growth and development of the mind. This vital time frame of a child's life will also include the rapid period of growth for a child's brain. (UNICEF, 2013)

Parents and carers of children have the most vital impact on a child's development and a home territory also contributes towards development as this is where children will spend most of the time with parents or carers before starting pre school or nursery. Many experiences and opportunities will arise whilst attending the home setting and some may play a crucial role within the first 1000 days of development. (Save The Children, 2016)



Babies search for responses from primary caregivers such as parents and carers and will learn from these experiences with parents who create a response of interpersonal reactions. These experiences that the child has will set out a mould for the way the child is and produce thought about how a child will feel about own self personally. (Bavolek, 1996)

These first days start from pregnancy to nearly two years old are crucial as it sets the boundary for children's emotional, cognitive and physical development. It is an important time for a child's development as this is seen as the time a child may be the most at risk and vulnerable to the outside world. A child's needs will be identified mostly at this stage of life and some may come out with certain developmental needs which could eventually turn into educational needs where extra provision may be required for the child. As babies are too young to be able to communicate effectively, parents will need to act and voice opinions for the child instead. (HM Government, 2021)



The first 1000 days are significant in an infant's life as it is a time of high speed development where a holistic approach to care is needed from practitioners to aid this development for the young child. Children thrive off early influences in own lives such as parents and carers who have a large impact on how a child will develop early on. (Birth to 5 matters)

Mothers need to ensure a healthy pregnancy as it creates a healthy life for the unborn baby. Physical and mental development of the mother will have an impact on the unborn child's life. That unborn child

is responsive to the mother's environment, if the mother is stressed then the baby may react to the mood, the baby can also hear what the mother hears. It is important to ensure a healthy lifestyle and environment as much as possible in order to devise a healthy development for mother and child. (HM Government, 2021)

Families of unborn children will need guidance and access to a large range of multi-agency support within the first 1000 days of life. This support should include mental health services, midwifery, health visitors, social services as well as education and childcare services. Strong multi-agency working is essential to these first days of life, as lack of information can cause challenges and problems when dealing with information for the unborn child. (House of Commons, 2019)

Rich Sensory Environment



The Curriculum for Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (2022) wrote that there are five developmental pathways for a child which are to include a sense of belonging, communication, physical development, well-being and exploration. All children need to be given the opportunity to explore these pathways and progress into own learning. These pathways will encourage learners to become ambitious learners, creative contributors, informed people of society and confident beings. (Welsh Government, 2022)

Children must learn how to communicate with others, communication is important in regards to development as it is a vital component for play, learning and social situations. Practitioners must encourage children to listen to others, practice speech and try to understand how to be understood by others by having time to think and process own thoughts. Developing more social relationships will ensure a child will be more confident in own self and progress in developing into a optimistic individual. (Welsh Government, 2022)



Practitioners should ensure that stable and strong connections are created between a child's home environment and the setting which will allow children to feel more comfortable and create links between home life and attending setting. Professionals as well as parents and carers work best when following a child's own learning and curiosity encouraging professionals to learn together with the child and find out more about the world. (Stacey, 2009)

Some other activity ideas for a setting could include...



1 - Dancing and Singing

Dancing and singing can allow children to express feelings and acknowledge the importance of doing so. Dancing can aid a child's physical development and also own well-being. (Therapy Focus, ND)



3 - Water Play which encourages sensory involvement



4 - Colourful Play



5 - Messy Play



6 - Sensory Room

Some settings may even have a sensory room for children to use and can provide a calm and relaxing environment for all.

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Practitioners and professionals should aim to have an impact on a child's well-being in a positive way by practicing kindness as well as modelling good behaviour for children. Professionals need to ensure that respect is shown for all children by supporting all in own choices. Children also need to have the opportunity to adapt to change, whether this is sensitively or not, practitioners should aim to support

children to prepare for many life changing experiences and how to deal with changes in routines that happen day to day. (Welsh Government, 2022)

Babies are in need of many different components every day such as care, stimulation nurture and secure attachments in order to progress with a healthy development. (Welsh Government, 2022)



Enabling Environments

An enabling adult is effectively a leader and facilitator. These adults are role models for children and will be professionals and take pride in working with children. Enabling adults are also expert educators who care for children in settings and provide enabling environments for children to learn and develop. (Birth to 5 Matters, ND)

Enabling environments offer children opportunities to communicate with other children and develop social and emotional skills as well as take risks to question own holistic properties such as physical and and cognitive capabilities. (Birth to 5 Matters, ND)

Children advance in development whilst in environments that support all aspects of developmental needs such as social and emotional. An enabling environment will ensure that children have the opportunity to engage, have different choices and feel comfortable and secure in own surroundings.

Children's learning is always supported greatly by practitioners but more so when offered opportunities to move around, use creativity and own imagination and also, to be independent in regards to development and own progression whilst learning. Children benefit greatly from having plenty of opportunities to control own learning and experiences especially when practitioners allow 'free play' and encourage choice as children move around quickly and especially between activities. (Welsh Government, 2022)



Enabling experiences should include a child's own choice and/or generate from local interests. These experiences need to aid a child's holistic development which will help young children to create links and connections between vast areas of learning and also learn from experience. These first hand experiences should help to develop a child's emotional resilience as well as social skills, children should take time to process thoughts and feelings as well as the thoughts and feelings of others and how it might affect those who are all around. Practitioners need to ensure that activities are planned for both in the setting as well as outside, offering children a change in scenery which will hopefully stimulate own development and learning. (Welsh Government, 2021)

Outdoor Play

During early years learning in settings, practitioners should ensure that direct and important opportunities are offered to all children. Independence should also be promoted within learning environments as well as offering risk and challenges to enable children to learn by own experiences. (Welsh Government, 2022)

Children need to experience a different range of physical activities both outside and inside the setting whilst using and having access to different tools and resources. Young people should have the opportunity to use these resources in order to gain recognition of own bodies in regard to balance, strength and own co ordination. In addition to this, having these vast amount of different experiences will allow children to develop fine and gross motor skills giving the child more opportunities to improve own development. Outdoor play will assist children to think about decisions, teach children how to manage risks independently as well as (Welsh Government,2022)

Outdoor learning when appropriate, can offer distinctive experiences and opportunities for children. Within enabling environments, practitioners are able to make the most of children's learning potential by offering a vast amount of learning opportunities both outside and inside the classroom environment. (Birth to 5 matters, ND)



As well as a rich sensory environment, children need to have access to a language rich environment in order to develop speech and language skills. By providing a language rich environment for each child this will allow them to communicate effectively with others, be creative and inclusive inside and outside of the setting and also, be responsive and aware of surroundings. (Welsh Government, 2021)

Giving children access to the outside world and having the freedom to play in it will generate opportunities to explore and allow children to relax in open spaces. Being outdoors creates authentic

experiences to encourage children to use own senses such as smell, touch, hearing and seeing. By encouraging children to use senses to learn, this will help to enhance own learning. Practitioners should value being outdoors and the many skills and opportunities it provides. It is important that children can access the outdoors when possible in order to stimulate development, it can also generate higher values of confidence and engagement for the child or young person. (Welsh Government, 2021)



THE FIVE SENSES



SIGHT: I see with my **eyes**.



HEARING: I hear with my **ears**.



TASTE: I taste with my **tongue**.



SMELL: I smell with my **nose**.



TOUCH: I touch with my **hand**.



Imaginative play is important in a child's development. It helps to enhance a child's learning and well-being by giving the child an opportunity to pretend play. By speaking or interacting with other children will aid speech and language skills so that children can learn how to develop own speech. Imaginative play also encourages young people to think and explore problem solving skills which can be learned and be applied to different situations in the future. Children of all ages can interact with imaginative play and encourage others including professionals and practitioners to join in too. (Therapy Focus, ND)



“Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul.” (Frederich Froebel, ND)

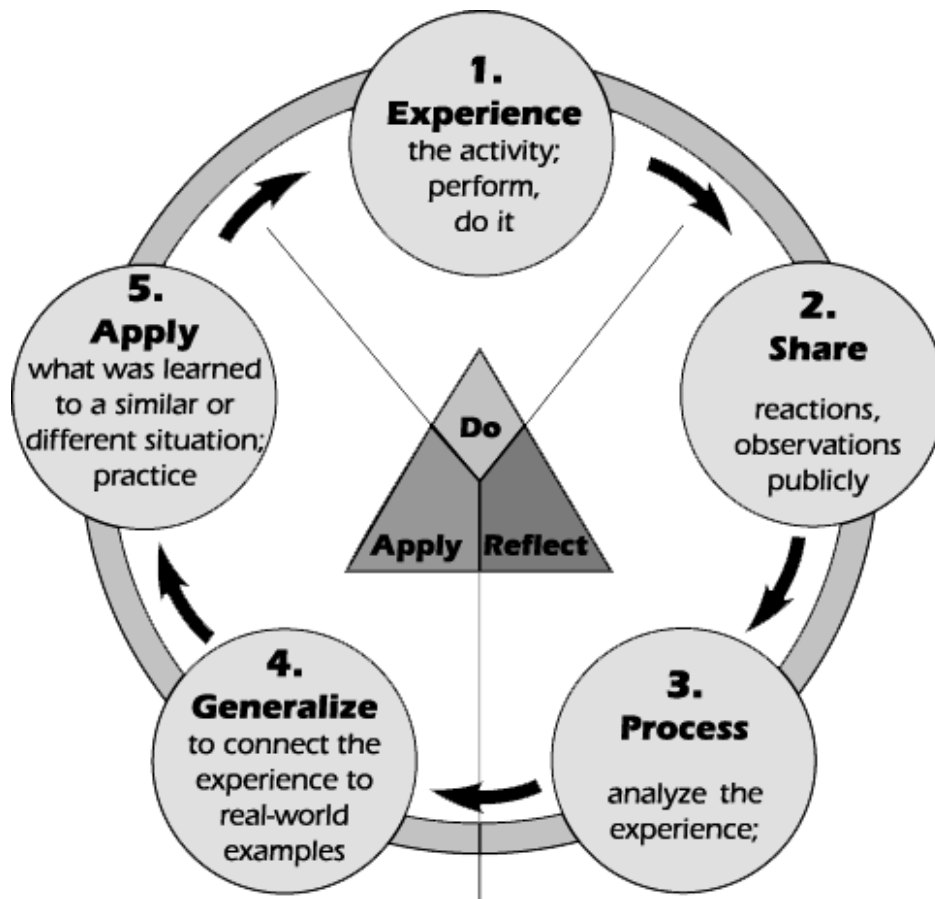
Frederich Froebel believed that play is at the centre of a child's development during childhood years and that children should have plenty of opportunities to do so. The right to play is included within the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and that children should have freedom to play and plenty of space to play in order to aid development inside and outside of learning environments, this is emphasised for home life too. (Froebel Trust, ND)



7 - Frederick Froebel



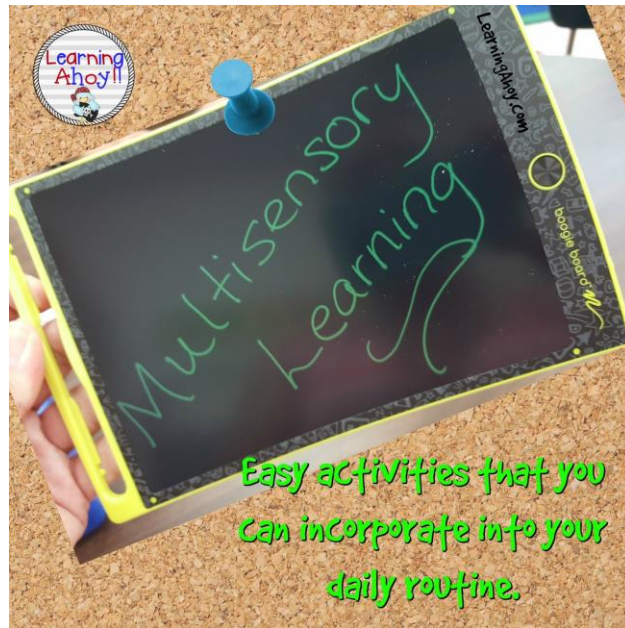
8 - John Dewey



9 - (Pedagogy4Change, ND)

John Dewey devised a theory which was based on children learning through first hand experiences. It was believed that children did not learn just by listening to practitioners, children must have opportunities to explore and learn with hands on learning in order to gain knowledge and understanding of the world. Dewey believed that children should experience the activity, share observations with others, process the experience and analyse, generalise the experience to the real world and apply learned knowledge to other situations. (Pedagogy4Change, ND)

In many settings, practitioners should ensure that there a range of activities and experiences for children to participate in. These activities should include multi sensory experiences for children to be supported in the communication and expression of own creative thoughts. Some children may find it difficult to communicate and show thoughts and feelings with others. Multi sensory activities allow children to do this and supports children to feel at ease whilst doing so. Sensory activities should include different materials which have different textures and colours so children can explore and use own imagination to solve problems, learn more about the world and increase knowledge and creativity. (Welsh Government, 2022)





Role of a Practitioner

Practitioners must ensure that good relationships are formed with children and parents to produce a healthy development for the young person. Children should also be offered opportunities to become more physically active whilst in settings and should be encouraged to move around and be active. Play based routines and activities should be encouraged within settings as it allows children to learn through doing. (Brodie, 2018)





Challenges

Resources within settings are a great way of aiding children's learning and development, but sometimes there may be little to no funding available to buy and source more equipment and resources for the setting which may be a challenge. Children need different resources in order to learn.

Anxiety may be another challenge that is faced in settings. Children may seem anxious and worried to leave parents to attend settings but on the other hand, these parents may be fearful to leave the child attend setting away from the parent. It is important that practitioners and professionals develop stable and trust worthy relationships in order to feel more confident with children attending settings and leaving children in the care of the practitioner.



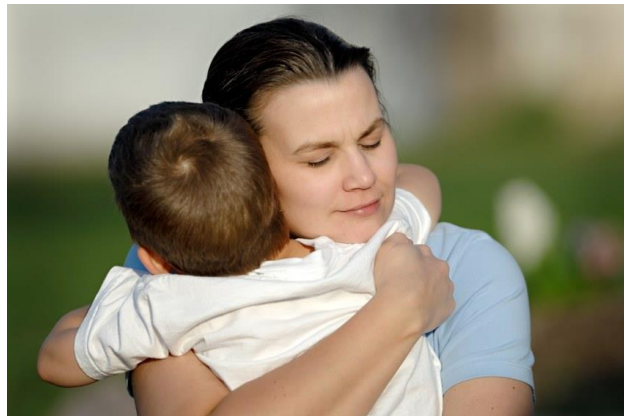


The quality of staffing and quantity within settings may come across as a challenge. Some children may have special additional needs so more practitioners are required to work at the setting in order to provide extra provision for those children. Some settings may struggle to find additional staff members to work so may have difficulty providing provision for all children. Settings should ensure that the correct amount of staff are available at the settings to ensure optimum provision for all children.



Professional Love

Professional love is needed in every setting and will allow a child to feel more comfortable and at ease. Professional love is when practitioners and professionals act sensitively towards a child in order to put best interests forward and ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount. Children need that extra bit of reassurance and loving attitude from adults as it is received in home environments so practitioners need to act upon this and mirror the type of love given by a parent in those situations that the child needs it the most at any time. (University of Sheffield, 2016)



Being Inclusive

Inclusive practice encourages diversity of all children and families and ensures equal opportunities, treatment and respect towards all individuals. Practitioners need to ensure that all children and families are respected and that different cultural experiences are acknowledged and that children and young people in settings have guidance in order to take part in learning as best as possible. (Welsh Government, 2022)





All children should feel confident about own self and background and it is a duty of the professional to encourage this as best as possible in settings. Learning environments should be planned well to be accessible to all, include diverse representations in activities such as religions, gender and disabilities and also remove appropriate barriers to participation if there are any present so all children can be treated equally and have the opportunity to take part in all activities. This will allow children to feel valued, have equal opportunities to progress in development and have a secure sense of belonging in life. (Welsh Government, 2022)

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