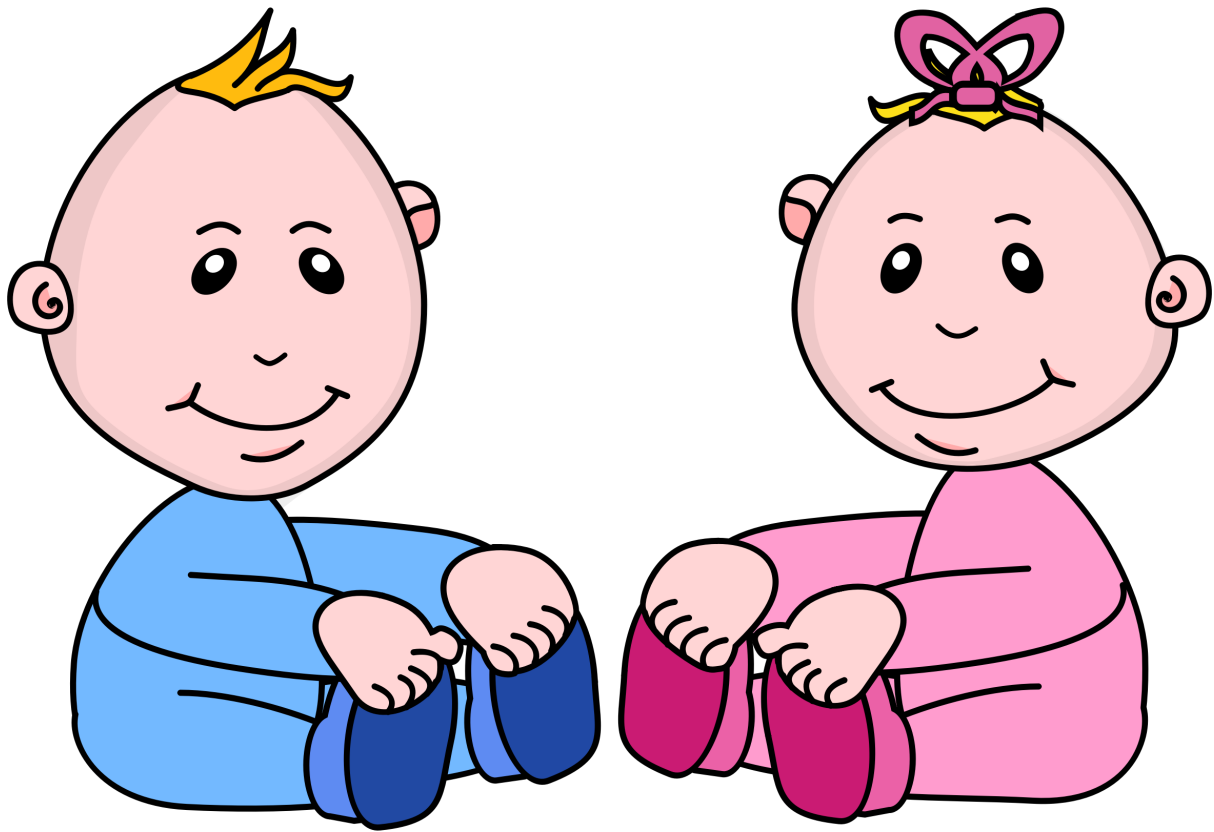




The First 1,000 Days

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Word Count: 3,032

ECEY4005/C

(I have not used AI in this assignment)

Introduction

This sway document will include why the first 1000 days of a child's life are important, as well as what is exceptional care, what are enabling environments and why are they important, what is the role of an early year's practitioner in supporting families, the importance of effective partnership working, what activities could benefit children's development whilst linking theories that support those activities

Why are the first 1000 days important?



The first 1000 days are very important in a child's development into becoming an individual. According to Pregnancy Birth & Baby (2024) the first 1,000 days refers to a child's life beginning from conception until they reach around 2 years of age (24 months). This time of development is crucial for their brain, body and immune system to develop. RBSK (2018) describe the first 1000 days of a child as a period of rapid physical growth and accelerated mental development, which offers a unique opportunity to build lifelong health and a good level of intelligence. RBSK (2018) also states that the mother of the child, whilst in the womb, is their main source of nutrition which can affect the babies mental, physical and emotional growth. World Health Organisation (2025) believe that nutrition is a critical part of health and development with better nutrition the child will likely improve maternal health and have

a strong immune system. Nutrition also reduces the risk of the child being born with non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.



Douglass (2017) suggests that care given during the first 1000 day of the child's life has more influence on the Child's personality, morality and overall future than any other time in their life. NSPCC (n.d) states the first 1000 days are important as it can affect the child's development and mental health especially if the environments that they are raised in and the relationships they have built with parent/carers aren't solid and dependable. A poor environment and/or relationship with a parent/carer can cause the child to develop negatively, potentially causing them to grow up with mental health problems or issues with attachment and behaviour. Health for under 5s (2024) believe that the main reason as to why the first 1000 days are vital to the development of a child is because by their second birthday, around the end of the first 1000 days, the brain is already around 80% developed and has been making one million new connections every second. Health (2021) goes on to say that these years of a child's development impact their lifelong health, learning and success. This further demonstrates the importance of the first 1000 days of a child. 1,000 days (n.d) provides insight on what could happen if the child isn't looked after during these first couple of years of life. They start by stating that the first 1000 days from pregnancy to age two offers a crucial window of opportunity to create a bright and healthy future for their child. They also state that whilst it gives the opportunity to nurture tremendous potential, it comes with the enormous vulnerability. The level of care offered and facilitated by a mother has a profound impact on a child's ability to grow, learn and thrive. This is due to the child's brain beginning to grow and build the foundations for their lifelong health.



The idea of the first 1000 days of a child is a health improvement program established by Public Health Wales in response to strong evidence which suggests the period during pregnancy and up to the child's second birthday offers the greatest potential for impact in both improving outcomes and reducing inequalities, according to Public Health Wales (n.d). A big priority of this program is to prevent problems arising, improve outcomes and reduce inequalities. This helps try establishing a fair playing field for each child regardless of environment and backgrounds. It improves the chances of every child to flourish and reach their own personal potential. Suri (2024) believes that it is essential to provide children with proper nutrition, health care and social and emotional support during this period as these effects can have an ever-lasting effect and consequences on the child going into adulthood

What is Caregiving?



Caregiving is defined by Hargraves (2018) as the action of genuine attentiveness, the act of always being there with a hands-on approach to nurturing and caring for the infant. According to James (2021) this helps the babies learn that they are important and that they are valued. Attentiveness can also help the babies understand that others can be trusted to look after them. Care learning (2024) states Bronfenbrenner's theory helps us understand

that caregiving isn't just about immediate interactions with the child but also outside influences. The theory explains how different environmental factors can have just as much of an effect on a child's development as attentiveness. Bronfenbrenner suggests by doing so we can support children's growth and development in a holistic manner. Thrive learning centres (2024) states that the Bowlby theory differs from Bronfenbrenner as Bowlby believed that attachment to other humans is a basic survival technique. Without attachment, negative impacts occur to children's long term social, cognitive and emotional development. NHS Wales (2023) states that during the first 1000 days of a child's life their experiences and interactions are predominantly provided and mediated by their parents. This means it is vital to provide good care for the child as a good environment and interactions will lead to them doing better in life with good social skills and mental health, whilst bad environment and interactions could cause them to not do too well in school, have bad or uncomfortable social skills and would also struggle later in life with mental health problems. Affinity Workforce (n.d) adds to this as they suggest through their early year's children form deep connections that lay the groundwork for healthy relationships in the future. This can provide emotional support for them which contributes to a child's overall sense of well-being and security. Birth to 5 Matters (n.d) effective early year provision is equally impactful on a child's development and overall well-being as play and learning is.

What is the role of an early year's practitioner in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days?



The role of early years practitioners in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days is vital for a child's development. Twinkl (n.d) states that the main role an early year's practitioner has is to not only provide a safe and enabling environment for the children to learn but also develop important life skills like communication and empathy. They also help develop their core educational skills like mathematics, numeracy and literacy skills. Partou (n.d) states that the roles and responsibilities of an early year's practitioners are likely to include looking after the children's day to day physical needs. For example, feeding, nappy changing, toilet learning and administering first aid. Another role is to provide a range of fun and stimulation activities like reading stories and messy play. Developing close attachments and building trust with the child is important if the practitioner wants to be successful within their work. The early years practitioners have the responsibility of safeguarding the children and reporting any concerns they may have. They must also

monitor children's progress and report it back to their parents, this allows the practitioners to also develop a relationship with the children's parents. VIC.GOV.AU (2024) adds that the role of an early year's practitioner is to plan and put in place programs for individual children's needs, prepare and supervise play and learning activities, maintain a safe and clean environment, observe and record the children's learning and development, report back to other professionals and most importantly the children's parents.

Effective working partnership with Parents



It is important to have an effective working partnership between parent/carer and teachers can have a massive effect on a child's development. According to Global kids (n.d) a strong parent-teacher relationship can lead to improved academic performances, an improvement in behaviour and a more positive attitude towards school. This gives the child more motivation and enthusiasm towards work and learning as good reports and praise from a teacher will translate to praise and acceptance from parents/carer. Life with after baby kicks (2024) states that the importance a parent and teacher partnership in early childhood education cannot be exaggerated. The relationships prepare the path for the child's academic success, social and emotional development and a love for continuous learning which will stay with them for most of their childhood and their years in education.



Open a nursery (2023) states early years practitioners have a responsibility to provide parents and carers with clear and concise information on the curriculum, assessment, learning outcomes and guidance on how they can further develop and better their child's learnings from home. This can come in the form of homework and reading books from school at home. Practitioners hold a lot of responsibility when looking after children as they would be the first ones to be alert to early signs of needs, like autism or global delay. Once they have seen these signs they can then report back to the parents/carers and implement provision to meet the needs at an early stage, with the hopes of preventing the child from falling behind according to Nottinghamshire County Council (2022). Similarly, London Borough of Lambeth (n.d) states that the role of the early year's practitioner is to provide and co-ordinate structured support and interventions to families to help them change their behaviours. Birth to 5 Matters (n.d) believe that practitioners have the responsibility to actively plan to help children develop positive peer relationships. This belief is supported by Minnie and Mamma (2019) who states that children who make friends at nursery (age 2-3) are more likely to have a positive outlook on life. Making friends at this age also helps them feel more confident and secure about themselves later in their childhood.

Factors that affect Children Development



Some factors that could affect a child's development is their home life, without a stable and secure environment they may struggle focusing and committing in learning and/or activities. Sandstrom (2013) states that an unstable environment can result in a poor academic performance, a lack of social competence and an inability to regulate their emotions correctly. Twinkl (n.d) suggests that to support those children who grow up in these less-than-ideal environment, the teachers in schools may provide an enabling environment in classrooms. This environment could include a construction zones, where a child can use materials to build something, or a water area where they can move various objects through the water and see what objects sink and what objects float. Another factor which affects children's development is the lack of access to education. Welch (2024) states that a lack of access to education can hinder a child's learning and cognitive development, meaning the child will lack key knowledge and skills which will impact negatively on them later in life. To overcome this Citizen's advice (2023) suggests help will be made available to deal with the costs of sending their child to school. This support including paying for the cost to send the child to school, cost of uniform, cost of school meals, the cost of transport and the cost of uniform.

Challenges of Providing high quality care

There are many challenges that come with providing high quality care. GOV.UK (2024) gives an example of if a child is uncomfortable or shy around new staff. This stops them from engaging and participating to activities that teacher may have planned specifically for them. on the other hand, if the staff doesn't know the child very well it can affect the quality and progress of their interactions. Another example they give is that a high staff turnover can result in an inconsistency in a key person relationship. Without a consistent key person, the child will find it harder to feel safe and comfortable causing a halt in progression and a new staff member would be unaware of the child's individual needs. Rayitode Sol (2024) provides another example of a challenge that comes with providing quality care. They suggest that

the emotional and psychological stress a child in their care could bring. They must learn how to handle the breakdowns and tantrums in a calm and supportive way. This could be overwhelming and cause them to not be as enthusiastic when teaching the children. A big challenge in providing care for children, according to Staffing (2025), is understanding the difference and finding a balance. Between balancing fairness with discipline, sensibility and fun, encouragement and criticism. These difficulties provide unique hurdles in day-to-day life. Many aspects like balancing the needs of an individual child, managing challenging behaviour, parental communications and expectations, time management and workload are all different challenges one will face when providing quality care.

Activities



Water Play is described by Busy Bees (2020) as play that involves water as well as using tools like buckets, containers, toys and many other things, The play allows children to splash, scoop, pour and submerge with the water which allows them to explore their senses. Crosser (2012) states it is important for children to experience water play, or something similar, as it helps children learn physical skills. The negatives of water play, suggested by Waterschool (n.d), is that it does not expose children directly to a specific concept of learning, like letters and numbers, and can be deemed ineffective.



Loose parts play is defined by HowToDayCare (2013) as when children use materials, which have been provided by teachers in the classroom or in their garden and create their own inventions or imaginary scenarios. Loose parts could include logs, stumps, grass, rocks, logs, sticks, shells, buckets, fabric, planks, pebbles, ropes, tires and many much more. PennState Extension (n.d) adds that loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, taken apart and put back together in different ways. They can be used separately or combined with other materials. There is no direction for materials to use with loose play as the child is the direction. Children (2025) states that playing with loose parts can build on a child's learning by increasing their physical activity, enhancing their cognitive skills, increases their focus and engagement with activities, improves their curiosity and willingness to learn and develops their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Early Impact (n.d) states that even though loose parts is a useful way of enabling a child, there are also risks that come with it. The risks of loose parts play are the risk of choking, children throwing things, falling off structures and hurting themselves and being hit with objects accidentally.



There are many ways of executing loose parts play with every individual environment being different to others, even differs with culture and location around the world, for example in northern Italy they use a unique approach to loose parts play called the Reggio Emilia approach. Reggio Emilia is the philosophy of learning which empowers children to think, question, investigate and explore. According to Sis Prep (2023) there are 5 principles to the Reggio Emilia theory of loose parts. One major principle, and the most important one, is that the child is the protagonist. It is important for them to lead their own learning as only they can truly keep themselves interested. It encourages them to explore and question. Another principle is that the environment should be seen as the third teacher. Resources should be carefully chosen and organised to allow the child to interact with materials in a meaningful way, improving the level of engagement. Another principle is understanding the hundred languages of children. Children express themselves in multiple different ways, through spoken language, body movements, drawings, painting, building, clay work, shadow play and many more. Another principle is a collaborative work between teachers, children and parents/carers. Reggio Emilia emphasizes this as then teacher must respect that the parent is the child's first teacher and should include them in educational processes. They should exchange perspectives and support their children's growth. The last principle of this theory is the teacher being the researcher and co-learner. The teacher takes these roles along with the child, carefully observing them, facilitating work and questioning their work.



A similar learning experience to Reggio Emilia is forest school. Forest school, as defined by Plymouth Marjon University (n.d), is a child-centred learning process, providing learner inspired, hand on experiences in the natural environment. They teach building, making and using tools, foraging and cooking with fire. Forest school promotes self-esteem, creativity, confidence and independence. Dias (2024) explains the differences between these philosophies. the Reggio Emilia approach has a heavy emphasis on artistic expression, the child directing their own learning, while forest school prioritize a strong connection with nature and outdoors exploration. Outdoors play is important for children as, according to Early years alliance (2022), outdoors play acts as an integral part of a child's learning opportunities and can help benefit the child's mental and physical health.

Conclusion



To summarise all the points made in this sway document, the first 1000 days are crucial for a child's development as it has a lasting effect on their future. Enabling environments and practitioners can help to support positive outcomes and better the child's development. Attentiveness is a crucial part of caregiving as it develops the child's social skills and gives them a sense of value. The role of a practitioner in the first 1000 days is to support the child's development by offering an enabling environment whilst helping them improve their social and communication skills. They also develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Having a strong parent-teacher relationship can benefit the child as it can improve academic performances. Factors that could affect the child's development is a poor home environment and a lack of access to education. However, there is support available to ensure the child can have equal opportunities as they have the right to an education. Without a key person a child's development can stagnate. Activates like water play, loose parts play and outdoors play can benefit the child in many ways as each type of play helps their development.

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