



Exceptional Care in the First 1000 Days

Introduction

What is the first 1000 days and why is it important?

The first 1000 days takes place between contraception and the age of 2, it is a duration of opportunity to support the child to reach their full potential. Bust and Pedro (2022) implies that this period of time creates exposure and has a significant impact on a child's future development, such as, physical, a time for muscle expansion and a use of motor skills, social emotional development, the child begins to interact and become aware of the world around them, health, in which condition the child is in, and cognitive progress, where the child's mind begins to think and remember. Throughout pregnancy, there are a list of factors that can cause lifelong effects on the child. [Maternal factors during pregnancy influencing maternal, fetal, and childhood outcomes | BMC Medicine | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#). If the mother is stressed or has poor nutrition, it can affect the baby's future health and well-being. A healthy nutrition, safety, and a caring home environment should be provided for the infant during the first 1000 days of life (Australian Government, No Date). These needs are important because it is a period of rapid development, it focusses on building a child's qualities in a short amount of time because it is where the brain is most sensitive to external influences. It covers their holistic approach to PILES and interrelated factors which include, learning positive and negative behaviors and adjusting to different environments (UWTSD, No Date). When examining risk variables, keep in mind that those that are detrimental may and should be minimized to prevent a persistent disadvantage. However, positive factors are what help the child thrive and reach their greatest efforts. These positive learnt factors are often developed through nurture received from the parent or caregiver, where a child's first 1000 days consists of eat, play and love, it creates the best possible start. Moreover, Raghavan and Ruta (2022) suggest that future connections are shaped by the connections formed during infancy; for instance, if a child forms weak connections within the first 1000 days, such connections are likely to be ongoing. These interactions are frequently provided by parents and other caregivers who should be knowledgeable on how to provide the correct care. Although, if parents and caregivers feel they do not have enough time or are uncertain on how to offer the correct care, support and guidance is available to help them become more familiar with a child's needs through community engagement initiatives. Karlsson and Karlsson (2022) discuss an example of this, where a mother is experiencing postnatal depression, interventions can be put into place to support this.

[My First 1000 Days: Summary \(youtube.com\)](#)



Caregiving

What is exceptional care and why is it important?

James (2018) believes that exceptional care can be defined as high quality care, providing a secure relationship with your child to ensure consistency, time and patience are just a few examples of this. When caring for a child, whether a parent or practitioner, it is important that the child's priorities are met to help them feel safe and supported. Babies often flourish when they are surrounded by enabling adults, babies need to be able to depend on their parents and/or practitioner in order to head in the correct direction. UWTSD (No Date), implies that an enabling adult will consist of a strong understanding of their child's development, they are often positive and ensure the child feels secure in the setting. Enabling adults are willing to create well-built relationships for the child's benefit, they should create environments that will satisfy progress and create curiosity, finally, to be an approving role model the adult needs to show kindness, respect and interest.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, as an adult, especially a mother, it is important to consider nutrition for oneself and for the child. Schwarzenberg and Georgieff (2018) argue that if nutrition is neglected during the first 1000 days, there may be a number of long-term consequences, these adverse impacts include diabetes and neurodevelopment. Maintaining a balanced diet is essential for receiving the right number of calories and essential nutrients, a healthy diet as such can prevent negative impacts on brain development and concerns with obesity.

Moreover, when considering a childcare setting, practitioners can show care through providing an emergent curriculum. An emergent curriculum is where the setting advances and grows after observations, depending on a variety of factors, for example, the children's and parent's interests and concerns. This is key because it shapes the child's future. Stacey (2009) describes an emergent curriculum as a book because it makes us think about order and what comes next. Adults should use their expertise and curiosity to work together as a community. According to Stacey, the greatest approach for a child's growth is one that involves breakdowns and reflections, as well as decision-making, meetings for communication, listening and thinking skills, being ready for what comes next, and letting go to reflect.

Finally, to expand on the idea of an emergent curriculum, parents and caregivers need to think about enabling environments. When representing care for the child, adults can show this through choosing and creating the correct environment for the child's development because our circumstances, from the first 1000 days to the workplace, have an intense effect on who we are as adults. An appropriate setting should supply plenty of space to prevent children from becoming frustrated, as well as a secure environment to confirm their safety and content. In order to make the child feel drawn to the setting, the parent/professional should also consider the colour and inventiveness of the space. Within the first 1000 days, the environment is seen as a place for learning, it is the root for a child's brain development and growth mentally and physically, so it should be cautiously planned, provide high quality toys and opportunities to create fascination and curiosity. According to UNICEF (No Date), article 29 discusses goals of education, one of these goals is to admire children by providing an environment that reinforces them in reaching their full potential. For example, Watson's Little Albert experiment showed that a response could be classically conditioned. This implies that the environment plays a huge role when it comes to child's development, in this case the environment was able to create an on-going fear in a baby. [The Little Albert Experiment \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/the-little-albert-experiment-2786187)



Activities

What are meaningful activities and why are they important?

EYR (2020) believes that activities that support the early years will play a part in helping them develop a range of necessary skills such as social, emotional, and physical. These activities often use loose parts, loose parts are where a child has access to objects that can be moved from one place to another, for example, treasure baskets or outdoor play (natural). Loose parts create this idea of independency, it engages the children in uninterrupted learning for a long period of time, resulting in the child to feel self-mastery, become more familiar with the world around them and enhance creativity. The theory of loose parts was created by Simon Nicholson 1971, he was convinced that if caregivers were not providing children with activities that involved loose parts, it would represent a way of cheating children. He thought loose parts were important because it gives children the opportunity to feel equal and explore all their curiosities.

Furthermore, to expand on beneficial activities, engaging experiences for a child will also provide development in skills such as language and communication. UWTSD (No Date) suggests that engaging activities can and should be taken place both indoors and outdoors, this is important because it allows the child to experience all five senses. Granting these unchallenging experiences for a child will strengthen their retention and empower them with the feeling of acceptance. For example, senses are something that a baby will use as soon as they leave the womb and activities such as, play dough, a nature walk or story time, will stimulate these senses. An engaging experience is where an adult should provide a child with meaningful, physical opportunities to inspire real life situations. According to Rallie and Payne (2016), providing play opportunities can offer success within literacy and mathematic skills meaning that these challenges can set off cognitive uses, such as, planning, thinking and comparing. When providing activities for the early year's foundation, according to Obee (2021), risky play is important because it allows the child to feel excitement and enjoyment, however, many caregivers are often too nervous to authorise risky play activities, this will then have a negative impact on a child's physical development and place a block on granting them to build resilience. Moreover, when considering a child's development, always consider a holistic approach, a holistic approach will refer to building relationships and connections with the child, whether it is supporting them mentally or being there for them physically. In order to carry out this support successfully the adult will need to be able to provide a range of skills, for example, being able to recognise the child's emotions. To illustrate, Te Whariki believe in the 'woven mat', which is working together as a whole for the purpose of making each other powerful together. On top of that, Germany and Denmark also retain a holistic approach for the early year's foundation (Brodie 2018). Finally, activities ought to demonstrate a wide range of culture, in this case, practitioners may want to think about providing diverse race dolls with different hair types, story books that reflect a variety of religions or for example, if a child has come from a household where their first language is different, consider learning simple phrases or songs in their language. Kinds Kinder Childcare (2022) believes that cultural diversity in a childcare center displays acceptance, equality and it shows the children that they are appreciated just as much as the other children.

Day nurseries (2024), discusses Reggio Emilia's theory which is based on her belief that a child should be in-control, she thinks that children should be given as many opportunities as possible to meet their curiosities. These opportunities then push children to develop a range of skills such as confidence and motivation, as well as giving them the chance to fail and succeed. As children get to know the world around them, adults should give children experiences and activities that bring them enjoyment and that are appropriate for their learning. This method places more emphasis on philosophy and the learning process rather than the final outcome. [What is loose parts play in the EYF5? - Early Education \(early-education.org.uk\)](https://www.early-education.org.uk/what-is-loose-parts-play-in-the-eyf5/)



(Source:Pinterest,2019)



(Source:Rawpixel,2020)

[From start up to scale up, Shopify tools support your business so you can focus on what you do best \(youtube.com\)](#)

Professional Partnership

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

The arrival of a baby is an overwhelming feeling, both exciting and scary, therefore, every new family should receive support. However, it is often said that these new families are left with no support and an uncertainty about where to find it. Nevertheless, there are a variety of services that involve skilled professionals that can provide help during the first 1000 days (HM Government, 2021). In order for these early years professionals to support families and children during the first 1000 days, their roles may consist of a list of activities. One may be sending out health visitors, according to Parent-Infant Foundation (No Date), their job is to take care of the healthy well-being of the parent and child, they need to ensure that they are both secure, will be able to flourish and are not facing any disabilities. If and when the parent and child are struggling, the professional may put interventions into place to assist their needs and provide them with opportunities in their favour. To illustrate this point, one might refer to UNICEF (No Date) Article 23, it focusses on children with disabilities, it points out that children and families with disabilities should receive the best achievable life and as much support as possible. As well as health visitors, practitioners will also need to play a role in deciding whether the child is mentally and physically healthy, along with noticing social development, disabilities and safeguarding concerns. To support the mother and the child mentally and physically, professionals and practitioners will pick up on these health issues rapidly, if these concerns are gone unnoticed, it will cause future implications. For example, Mahmood (2022) says that FTB worked with Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System to look after parent-infant relationships. The way in which they decided to support these health concerns and relationships was to focus on using high quality communication about emotions and difficulties and help them feel comfortable due to provided trust. Moreover, International Step by Step Association (1999) suggests another effective way of supporting a family throughout the early years may be regular quality home visits, these home visits should offer further needed information, calming reassurance to reduce cortisol levels, programmes that support parents to provide effective environments and social developmental skills for their children. Effective environments support children's responsibilities and relationships, for example, Pickler believed that all children discover their motor capabilities naturally. Pickler counted on 7 key principles, those that relate to this current topic is undivided attention, free movements, respect and building trust, these principles provide exceptional care and allow qualities that develop confidence due to freedom of movement and the opportunity to experience risks, learning, and becoming familiar with getting to know frustrations and limits. [Respectful care in Early Years – Exploring the Pikler Approach to nappy changing | Under 2's | Teach Early Years](#). Finally, the last factor I am going to point out that is important to look out for during the first 1000 days is safeguarding issues. Practitioners and professionals are trained to notice vulnerable children and parents, their role is to protect them from harm. Signs and indications of concerns may be as simple as picking up on behaviour, over-eating, avoiding relationships, desperate for attention, anxiety and furthermore, these signs represent emotional harm. Having said that, there are a variety of types of harm including physical harm, where the child or parent may be often covered in bruises, sexual harm, where there are signs of inappropriate sexual knowledge and, neglect, which reflects poor hygiene and lack of energy (Barking and Dagenham, No Date). The practitioner's job is to know how to recognise a safeguarding concern and refer it to professional authorities, while keeping records and updates.



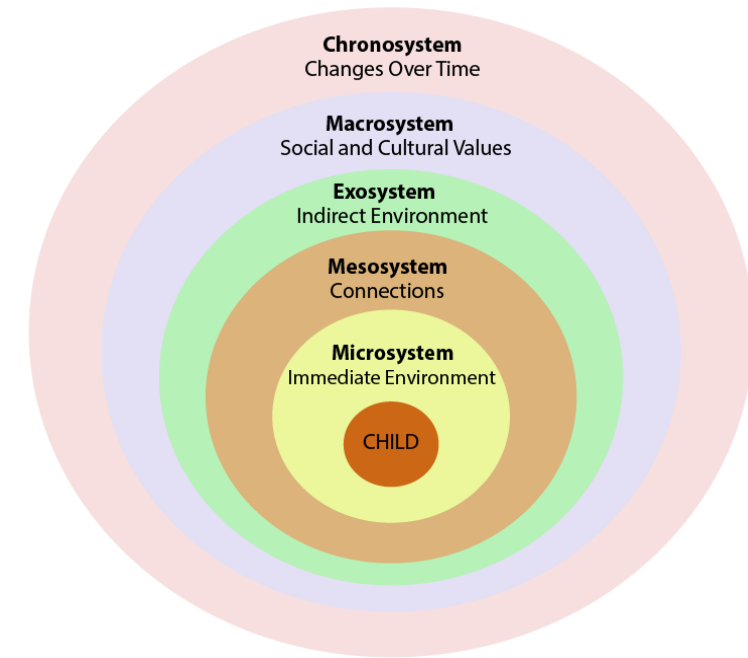
Professional Partnership

What is the importance of effective partnership working?

Professional and Parent. [cycr3-extended margin:listening-babies \(earlychildhoodforum.org\)](https://www.earlychildhoodforum.org/cycr3-extended-margin-listening-babies). Overall, partnership is a key component throughout the first 1000 days, in a partnership, the parent and the professional work together to address the child's needs; this necessitates effective communication to reach a goal. Good communication is crucial because it helps practitioners better understand children, improves their ability to express ideas, and encourages them to ask questions of one another when they have concerns. World of Work (2021) believes that the 7 c's checklist is exceedingly advantageous to ensure successful communication. These include clear and correct discussions so that both parent and professional will have an easy understanding while avoiding any false or misleading information. Concrete and complete, meaning conversations will be specific and precise and then acted upon. Finally, to be courteous and considerate so that both communicators are polite, positive and consider both opinions. Due to their honesty, trust, and goodwill, the parent and practitioner will appreciate one another, which will be reflected in the relationships that are cultivated by this checklist. These attributes will subsequently be reflected in the child as they move into daycare and help to advance their overall development. To expand on this, Bronfenbrenner believed that a child's development is influenced by a variety of contexts throughout their life, such as social, biological, cultural, and interpersonal elements. For example, the ecological system represents a child's development step by step and he believed that if a child does not consist of these specific surroundings like family, norms and structure they will find it difficult to grow into an adult (Ecological Systems Theory, 2017).

Professional and Child. According to John Dewey's theory, children learn best when they start interacting with other people, for example, children start interacting with new role models such as practitioners when they begin daycare. There are numerous methods that may help the practitioner to build a rapport with the kids, something as simple as carrying out on-going interactions with them. A relationship based on trust and comfort is formed when a child receives time, honesty, and attention. Scharer (2018), however, asserted that in order to prevent becoming overly connected to a child, experts should keep their personal and professional lives apart. All children should receive the same treatment in care and other settings. A practitioner will stand out for their professionalism and politeness if they have involved every family, taken the time to listen, and took the child's agency into consideration.

[Mastering the Five Levels of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory: A Guide for Social Workers \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



(Source:Blospot,2022)



(Source:Careforkids,2023)

Challenges

What are the challenges in providing exceptional care?

There are many challenges that parents, professionals and children will face throughout care. Professional love will often be seen as a challenge when discussing exceptional care. Pacey (2016) says that the relationship between professionals and children is known as professional love, and it differs greatly from parental love in that although some practitioners may find it simple to deliver caring practices, others may find it challenging to communicate their feelings without going beyond safeguarding issues. Examples of professional love may include sensitivity and touch, it is something that is developed over time however, it frequently causes practitioners to feel stressed and uncomfortable. This is difficult because the love and affection creates bonds and relationships and without these bonds, the child is likely to feel un-safe in their environment due to lack of serve and return, therefore, children will miss out on key experiences. [Attachment and Professional Love in Early Years Settings | A Unique Child | Teach Early Years](#)

Secondly, during the first 1000 days, adjusting to change is another challenging task. Any kind of adjustment to a child's routine is considered a change. Aurrum Kids (2020) implies that when face to face with experiences such as starting a childcare center, moving homes or adjustments to daily activities and time schedules, the child will frequently react negatively. These unfavorable outbursts may include disappointing behaviors, anxiety, stress, frustration and so forth, this is because disruption will regularly create heightened emotions causing the child to feel overwhelmed. To expand, experiencing the transition into a childcare center is often one of the most difficult changes because it involves separation, for example, J. Bowlby's theory says that a child's brain begins developing and learning in the womb, as a result, the child forms a large attachment to its mother and its earliest influences so when there comes a time where they have to be away from their parents for a long period, the child is likely to become unsettled and participate in separation anxiety.

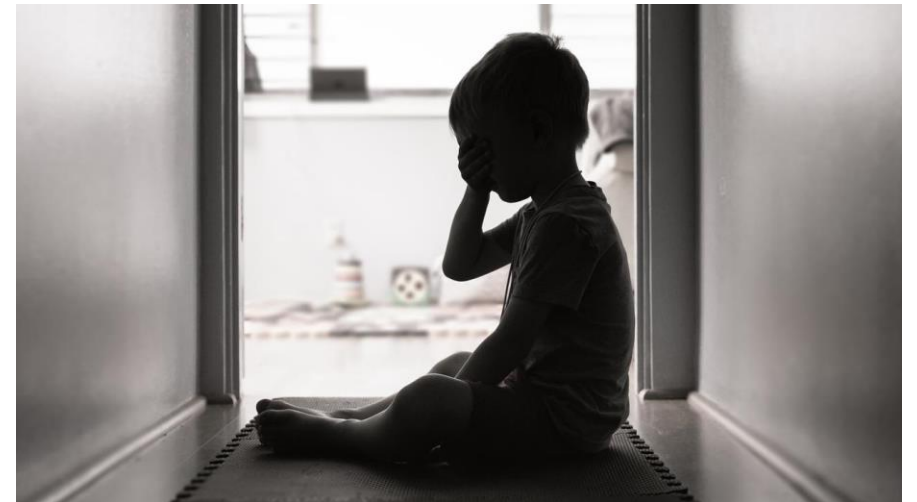
Neglect, whether it occurs in the home or in another context, is another potential issue that a professional or parent may identify. While mistreatment can take many different forms, neglect is mostly associated with an inability to provide a child with the correct care. BHSCP (2018) discusses that a number of behaviors can be indicative of neglect, such as an un-hygienic appearance, hunger, need, or social isolation brought on by a lack of support and relationships. Neglect leads to delay and effects to a child's learning development, this can be indicated as a challenge because as a professional, it is their job to try their best to put support into place to prevent this from happening, however, it is frequently more difficult for the professionals to support the families in poverty. This may be due to fact that these families do not want to communicate and co-operate because of the feeling of embarrassment or the fear of being judged which leads to setting inappropriate examples to their youngest children. For example, Danubina (2020) suggests that exposure to neglect in the early years has a standard effect on developments such as, health issues in the present and future, social qualities and cognitive difficulties.

(Source:Firststepscornwall,2018)



[The Impact of Early Emotional Neglect \(youtube.com\)](#)

(Source:Goldcoastbulletin,2023)



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