



12 weeks and 4 days 🐼

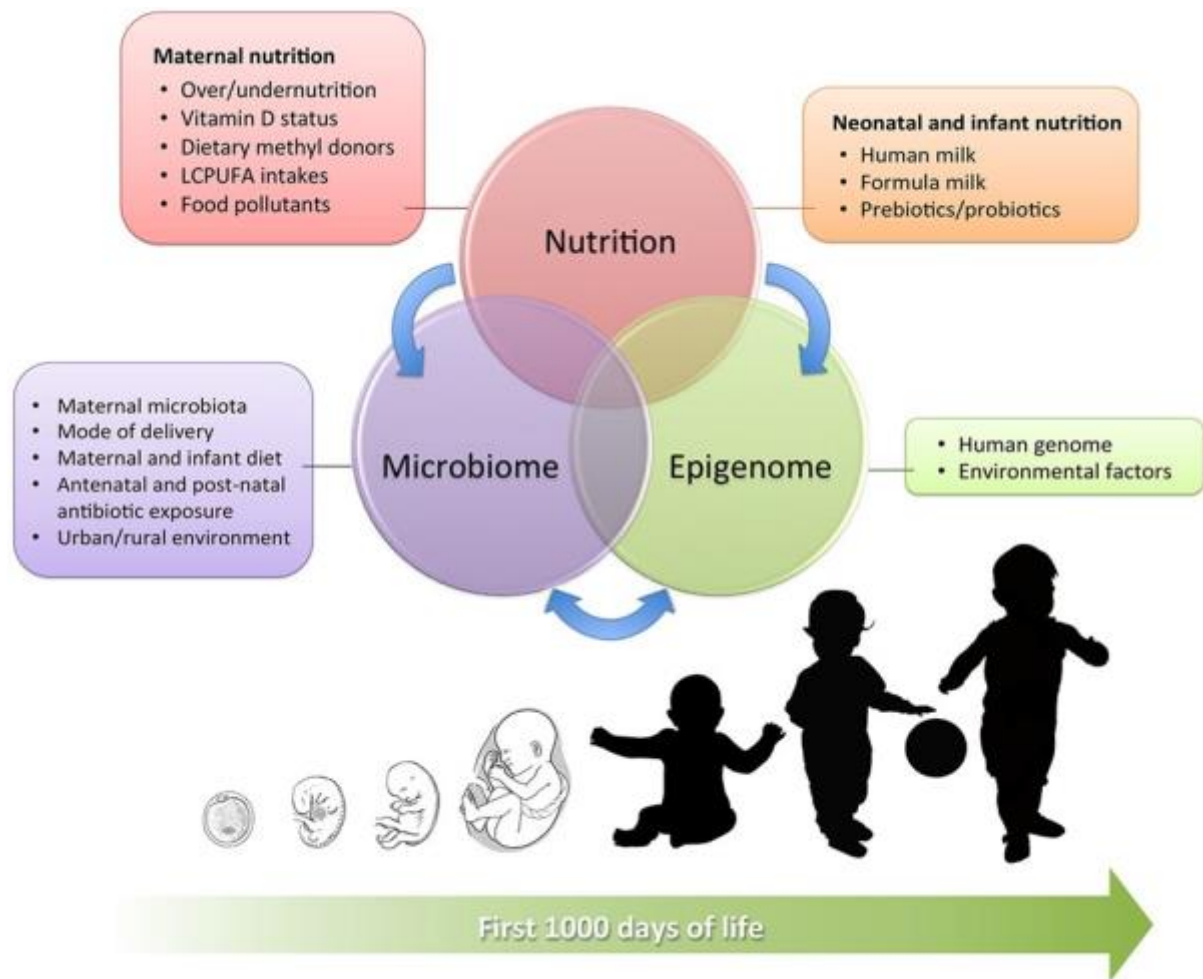
First 1000 days.

Introduction.



This sway document will detail and show why the first thousand days are so important and what practitioners can do to enable positive relationships, provide exceptional care and support to children and their families. It will look at enabling environments, enabling adults, opportunity to engage in learning opportunities, this document will discuss how this is linked to both theoretical frameworks and practice.

What is 1000 days?



One thousand days is a conception to two years, one day in a child's life. The first thousand days of a child's life are crucial, there is a significant and influential phase in development. During this time, the foundations of a child's well-being, learning opportunities and experiences, health and future are molded. (Parent-infant foundation, 2022).

During pregnancy



During pregnancy, an unborn baby takes on the environment in which the mother lives, this is the food the mother eats, if the mother eats a nutritious diet, it will have a positive impact on the baby's brain development, and the baby will be born at a healthy birth weight, if the mother eats unhealthily, it may have a negative impact on the baby's health, causing obesity in later life. The unborn baby hears and takes on the feelings the mother feels, if the mother is anxious or stressed the unborn baby may suffer with social and emotional issues. The mother's well-being is a vital part of the baby's development; therefore, the promotion of a healthy pregnancy is critical as this supports the baby having a healthy life. (Gov.uk, 2021).

The first thousand days a child forms a bond/relationship usually with their primary caregiver, this is when the child forms an attachment. Attachments support a child's social and emotional development, having positive experiences with attachments helps the child to form relationships, it enables the child to feel secure and safe allowing them to trust. (Durkan, N, et al, 2014). Bowlby's attachment theory supports this, Bowlby suggests children attach to one main caregiver in their life, usually their mother, by forming these attachments provides serve and return opportunities, where the child cry's/smiles the mother's instinct is to respond and interact with the child. Bowlby believed without these attachments a child could struggle with their cognitive, social, and emotional development. (Mcloed, 2017).

Enabling Adults



The role of the adult is significant to the child's development, practitioners should support and guide children in a holistic way, seeing the child. By providing an inviting safe environment will ensure the child settles well during a transition allowing them to grow and develop, practitioners can support this by observing and gathering information to be able to plan accordingly for the child's individual needs. This falls in line with the National minimum standard 3.2, ensuring a child's needs are met. This will give the child the learning opportunities needed to support their stage of development as well as taking into consideration their interests, likes and what engages them. This gives the child a voice and involvement in their planning. Welsh Government, (2021). Also, the practitioner's role is linked with article 3 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child which states, "best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children. UNICEF (date unknown).

Role models

Practitioners are role models for children, therefore being a positive role model is vital, using appropriate rich language, behavior, and actions demonstrates to the child how to engage, interact, and respond to others, showing respect ensures the child understands how to express themselves and their feelings while feeling supported and more importantly heard, furthermore knowing, and recognizing others have feelings too. Children learn from those around them, practitioners should support and give empathy to ensure children reach their full potential. National day nurseries association (2019). According to Bandura children learn through observation and mimic behavior they have seen (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, p135). Additionally, Dewey was convinced that children's learning was social and places the child at the Centre of their learning (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, p8). Notably these theorists' frameworks are used in today's practice, Wales foundation for policies children and young people are based on the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and have a law in place named the rights of the children and young persons (Wales) measure 2011 to ensure that this principle is put into practice. Gov. Wales (2016). This legislation is linked to article 42 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child which states the government must make sure children and adults know about the convention. UNICEF (date unknown).

Keyworker

Using a key worker system enables practitioners to build relationships with children and their families. This is where trust and attachments are formed. Maslow's hierarchy of need theory suggests both parents and practitioners' attachment to the child will motivate the child's learning. (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, p108). The keyworker puts the child at the forefront of decisions made and their learning, making the child feel secure, cared for and building their confidence and self-esteem. Birth to five matters (date unknown). Using a keyworker is linked to standard 14.5 of the National Minimum standards which says, the keyworker is responsible for the child's well-being and to engage with parents. Welsh government (2016). The keyworker can form a close relationship with the child and use personal care strengthen the connection and attachment using close interaction time, nappy changing is an opportunity for the keyworker to have quiet, interrupted interaction with the child, one to one time, this is a time the keyworker will have the child's full attention, care routines support a child's learning and development, the keyworker can take direction from the child, this time is great for developing language and communication, physical development, and bonding with the child. Another opportunity to support care routines is during snack time, here the child can build relationships and start to show respect for those around them when the child is sat with a small group of other children, it gives them time to observe the other children and their behaviors, interact with other children this supports the development of their social and emotional skills, sharing and waiting their turn, mathematical development. The child can make their own choices regarding food and drink, this gives them a sense of control. Sitting at a table helps to develop the child's gross motor skills. There are many care routine opportunities for the key worker to support and guide the child ensuring they feel a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. Using these care routines to strengthen relationships, attachments and connections supports the child in all aspects of their development, allowing the child to take the lead and use a child centered approach. Tassoni (2018). The United Nations convention of the rights of the child, article 6 states, ensures that children develop and reach their full potential. UNICEF (date unknown).

The keyworker will work in partnership with the family, communicating effectively, this encourages the family to feel comfortable when leaving their child, building trust and relationships with the family allows them to be open and share relevant information needed regarding the child, their interests, likes/dislikes, and any concerns they may have. The keywork should always be available to

feed back to the family concerning the child, how their day has been, any accomplishments should be praised and celebrated. Tassoni (2018).

Building these professional relationships with the family and the child has a significant impact on the child and their development, seeing their main care giver and keyworker working so closely together will give the child reassurance, allowing them to become confident and independent in their learning. Early years matters (2022).

Foundation phase Wales is for 3-7 years old's and focuses on 'play' supporting the holistic development of children, meeting all their needs, working in partnership with families. Gov. Wales (2015). The Te Wháiki curriculum is compulsory to the age of 6 and too promotes 'play' based learning. They want children encouraged not taught, they concentrate on children's well-being, social and emotional development to enable children to be competent citizens in their community. The Te Wháiki approach reflects on the heritage of New Zealand, family and community are part of their learning experience. (Lee et al. 2013, p1-4).

Foundation phase has guidance for practitioners along with additional resources for them to use when supporting a child's development. Gov. Wales (2015). In contrast, Te Wháiki curriculum lacks in guidance supporting practitioners in planning. (Lee et al. 2013, p1-4).

Enabling Experiences



Piaget believed children learn from their experiences and it is an ongoing process. Piaget's theory can be linked to Wales foundation phase as it states, children need knowledge of their own learning and opportunities. Practitioners can support this by planning for the child's individual needs, and when they observe the child gathers information that enables them to plan accordingly, by doing this supports a child's thinking development and helps them to understand the world around them. However, Vygotsky suggests children scaffold, they use experiences to progress and develop and in doing so allows them to develop the skills to build and advance. Vygotsky also thought both adult-led and child-initiated play were both equally important, this supports Wales foundation phase as the framework states children learn through participation in both indoor and outdoor experiences but need the help of other children as well as adults. Pacey.org (2016). The United Nations convention on rights of the child article 31 states "play is a fundamental right for all learners".

By enabling experiences practitioners are supporting a holistic meaningful way of learning for the child. The experiences the child is presented with should support independence, challenge, and opportunity. When a child is given an opportunity to have new experiences, they become

independent in their learning, they will start to ask questions, they become self-regulated and motivated in their learning experiences (Dowling, 2014, P 62-65).

Practitioners must adhere to the policies in their practice and frameworks, NMS Wales, therefore, must work with families daily. Notably they may find this a challenge and may come across barriers – language barriers, diverse cultural backgrounds, ALN. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to overcome these barriers and promote diversity and inclusion. These barriers should be overcome during the induction meeting when the family and child come to the setting and meet the keyworker for the first time, this is the start of the enabling adult and enabling experiences, it is vital this is done correctly to ensure a smooth positive transition for the child as they may find this a challenge, entering an unfamiliar environment. Facing challenges enables children to become resilient in their learning. Promoting diversity and inclusion and a child's development in the setting can be done using different activities as a learning experience. (Dowling, 2014, p111, p190). Article 2 of the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) states, Applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities, or family background. UNICEF (date unknown).

The use of treasure baskets, story sacks, celebrating festivals, interest tables, discussion, songs, and pictures/photographs support a child in their learning, and inclusive to all. Open-ended play experiences can support a child's creativity, imagination, extend curiosity and language skills. Sensory activities are beneficial to all children but are a valuable resource for children with additional learning needs, this could be the first time they have had an opportunity to engage in a sensory activity, this opportunity not only supports brain development, fine and gross motor skills, cognitive development, and social skills but also allows the child to use their senses which enables sensory development and supports them in learning about the world around us. (Gascoyne, 2012, P1-3). Piaget suggests even as a baby a pattern or scheme is present. These are nourished in their physical and sensory actions when they repeat these actions and interact with others, this allows them to make connections. (Dowling, 2014, P16). Bruner believed children learn by doing and in doing so supports memory development, he believed children between the age of 1-6 years use their memory for sensory images when experiencing something new, and they use their senses to link things together. Mcloed, (2019). The use of treasure baskets, sensory activities and songs are child-led, these activities help to build a child's confidence and encourage self-belief, they support sustained thinking and allows the child to feel comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas with others. This gives the practitioner time to stand back, observe the child's interests and dislikes and be able to plan accordingly in the future. (Dowling, 2014, P79).

Enabling environments



The environment is central to a child's learning, it supports the child's development at home, in the community and in the setting. Both indoor and outdoor environments are vital to a child's learning experiences. The environment should give the child the opportunity to grow, develop and feel a sense of belonging. When planning a practitioner should factor in if there is enough natural light in the room, if the room temperature is ok, have the children got appropriate clothing for the outdoors – wet weather clothing/wellies, sunhat/sun cream. The practitioner should factor in everything that could hinder the child's learning opportunity, by making sure the child is comfortable while engaging in play ensure positive learning outcomes. Gov. Wales (2021). Practitioners should plan from a child's perspective, having profound knowledge and understanding of child's development should enable them to understand how children learn and how they see play. Using observations allows the practitioner to see how the child learns as an individual and can therefore plan for their individual learning needs to ensure the best possible learning outcomes. White (date unknown).

Montessori said, "Children absorb their environment and are invested in the world around them, their eyes see, and their ears hear." White (date unknown).

- Scientific research confirms children need to repeat experiences to strengthen connections in the brain.
- Remember the process of an activity is more important than the end result.
- Provide experiences that are child-led, let the child explore, learn, wonder, and question.
- Plan the environment so it is diverse and inclusive to all.
- Plan for schemas so the child has opportunities to post, scatter, transport, and fill. White (date unknown).

Emotional environment

Practitioners should provide a warm, welcoming environment where the child feels safe and secure. This is when a child can form positive relationships, they will observe and listen to those around them. Provide them with a rich language loving environment, role model how to treat and interact with others. Gov. Wales (2021).

Mcmillan said “Try to create an environment where education is certain to happen.” White, (date unknown).

- Plan activities based on observations.
- Ensure children have access to resources so they become independent in their choice making.
- Allow children to repeat activities to support brain connections and development.
- Remember practitioners have many faces – SMILE. White (date unknown).
- Involve children in the planning process.

When children use an outdoor space, it encourages them to take risks, build on their spatial awareness, and coordination and supports mathematical language. Children learn about nature, living things and the world around them. Children come alive outdoors; children that are quiet indoors thrive from being outside and may need more outdoor opportunities to support their learning. Activities are set up on a larger scale outdoors giving children the opportunity to develop their gross and large physical skills. Being outdoors encourages children to work together, there is more opportunity for lifting, carrying, balancing, by cooperating and working together develops the child’s listening and communication skills, develops resilience and patience, turn taking and sharing and extends a child’s language skills. White (date unknown). Some children feel more comfortable outdoors and may find it easier to express themselves. White (date unknown).

- Provide opportunity in the environment for the child to reach their full potential. Article 6 of the UNCRC states, ensure that children develop to reach their full potential. UNICEF (date unknown).
- The environment will scaffold the child’s development.
- The environment should give the child the opportunity to explore living and non-living things both indoors and outdoors. Standard 7.1 to 7.11 of the National minimum standards support opportunity for play and learning ensuring children are given opportunity to learn both indoors and outdoors. Gov. Wales (2016).

Children need time, especially those children whose second language is English or a child who struggles with communication or is nonverbal. Practitioners should plan activities that can be adapted accordingly to include all. Practitioners could use visual aids, Makaton, and sign language to support children with ALN, or key words in a child's home language so they understand and do not feel isolated. Adapt activities so they can be moved around or made on a smaller scale for children that cannot walk, stand, or use a standing frame or are in a wheelchair. Gov. Wales (2021). Standard 4.1 to 4.11 of the NMS supports meeting children's needs, regardless of their stage of development or ability. Gov. Wales (2016). Article 31 of the United Nations convention on the rights of a child states "Play is a fundamental right for all learners" UNICEF (date unknown).

Exceptional care



Exceptional care is when a natural, nurturing learning environment promotes working in partnership with families and other professionals and is diverse and inclusive to all regardless of race, religion, sex, gender, or ability. It is somewhere where children feel wanted, loved, and supported, giving

them a stimulating environment where they can grow, develop, and thrive. Practitioners should have an exceptional knowledge and understanding of child development and their individual needs and keep up to date with relevant training opportunities to support this. Pardee, (2021).

Conclusion



This document shows how important the first 1000 days are in a child's life. It demonstrates the importance of enabling adults, experiences, and environments, how they are all interlinked and play a monumental role in the early years of a child's life. When put into practice and rolled out efficiently and effectively the practitioner can have a profound influence on a child's development. Using theoretical frameworks, national minimum standards, foundation curricula and United Nations convention on the rights of a child ensures the practitioner is competent within their role putting the needs and development of the child first.

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