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The First 1000 Days

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What is the first 1000 days of a child's life?

Maalouf-Manasseh, (January 2016) States that the “First 1000 days” refers to the vital period from conception to the child second birthday. It is said that during the 1000 days the child development is especially vulnerable and is influenced by nutrition, caregiving and their environment. A child needs adequate nutrition as they implies that it is essential for their development of the child's brain, physical health and their emotional and social well-being. If the child is having bad nutrition during this period, it can affect the child as they say it can cause long-term impact on the child which can affect their cognitive, social and emotional growth and can limit the child's potential and future opportunities. Talor and Francis, (2018) goes on to say that when a women is pregnant, they need to ensure that they are looking after their bodies and giving themselves enough effective nutrition as it wont only affect them but will affect the baby inside and can cause problems with their growth and development. By having the correct care during the pregnancy, it states that it can support their neurological development which is Neurological development which refers to the growth and organization of the brain and nervous system, which is crucial for cognitive, motor, sensory, and emotional functions. It says that the neurons form connections that enable learning, memory, and movement. The development of the brain also shapes how children perceive the world and regulate emotions, forming the foundation for social interactions and overall well-being. Early experiences, including nutrition and caregiving, play a key role in supporting this development (Talor and Francis, (2018)).



Caregiving

What is exceptional Caregiving?

Nurturing-Care (2018) states that exceptional care giving is all about how the mother takes care of themselves whilst pregnant and then to ensure that the baby is fully supported and safe growing inside the womb and that they are doing everything they can that they in order to develop and grow safely giving them the best chance and start into life. The parents will then need support from their partner or a close friend, family member to encourage and make them feel at ease when trying to achieve this.

The Nurturing-care (2018) talks about some of the key factors that state what exceptional care is about. One of the key factors is that they need an adequate nutrition as it is essential for setting the stage for a child's health, development, and future well-being.

Adequate nutrition during the first 1000 days of a child's life is critical for optimal growth, brain development, and long-term health.

Another key factor that is mentioned by Public Health England (2016) is having good health and responsive care. They say that it is vital during pregnancy that they have good health as it will be safer for them when giving birth and a healthy birth weight in order for the child to have the best start to life.

Another key factor Nurturing-Care (2018) states that by allowing there to be opportunities for early learning. It declares on Birthto5matters (no date) that having an enabling environment is what supports the children with their diverse developmental needs by providing security, comfort, choice, and engagement. This means the main care giver should nurture and love their baby by showing affection, spending quality time singing songs helping their baby get ready for tummy time and work on their eye contact ready to help recognize important voices and sounds.

HM Government. (2021) implies that the first 1000 days of a baby's life are crucial for development, but also a time of vulnerability. It says that some babies may be diagnosed with disabilities or developmental needs that could become special educational needs in their later life. HM Government. (2021) say that the needs might not be identified right away as they are only babies and cannot yet communicate. It is essential for caregivers to support them and ensure that appropriate support is provided as much as possible. Bronfenbrenner's theory supports this as he claims that a person's development is affected by their surrounding environment so this shows how important the environment the child is born into as it shapes their growth and development. This shows how exceptional care giving is important as it will have a big impact and will mainly come from the main care giver and their home (Brodie K, 2025).

Why is it important?

According to Cureus (8 October 2022) The first 1000 days is really important as it is when the child develops their physical, cognitive and emotional development. It states that one important fact is in the first 3 years of a child's life their brain develops and forms at least 1,000 new neural connections per second. It says that their brain is twice as active as an adult. They also point out how important it is for the mother to look after themselves by looking after their nutrition, well-being and stress levels. It claims that how they are during their pregnancy can affect the unborn baby. A mother needs to make sure that they are doing everything they can to support themselves but also the baby as it can affect both physical and cognitive growth. Calderdale Public Health Annual Report (2017) Elaborates that the first 1000 days are important for the role of the parent as it is their desire to ensure their child has the best start to life. It is when they lay the foundation of what is expected when developing their human development. It is how they develop on their intellectual and emotional health. It can have a life long impact on their health and well-being it says that by not doing things right for their health and well-being can cause long term affects such as obesity, heart disease or their mental health. It also reflects on their educational achievements and economic status. It says that it is important that parents have support, good communities and safe environments around them in order to ensure their child has the best possible start to their lives.

Why is Caregiving important?

Caregiving is said to be important as it is what the child needs to help support them with their development skills which are Brain development, Emotional security, language development, physical growth and Trusting adult.

These are essential skills to shape the child in their first 1000 days of life as they are to help the child to have exceptional opportunities for their future development (VNS, no date).

It states that Brain development is so important as it starts to build expectations while in the womb before even being born, they like to hear their main care givers voice and soft touches on to the belly when growing making them feel protected. When they are born they rely on main care giver to come to them when their sad or hungry this provides them with comfort and help then understand how similar responses will happen in the future. The way the main care giver acts in these moments are so important as it will start to build trust in their adult and give them some sense of emotional security. Every act a baby receives their brain tries to navigate how they feel and store their feelings from certain experiences in the brain which develops as the grow and experience life. Language development is supported by caring relationships and how caregivers model gentle speech and language (Mangione,P, may 2017).

To achieve these important caregiving skills cherry,K (22 February 2023) speaks about Bowlbys theory on understanding attachment as he believes that when early bond and trust is formed in the earliest stages of a child life is most important because it will impact the child's chances of survival. This then relates back to how important Enabling the environment, enabling experiences in a child's life and being an enabling adult.

Professional partnerships

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

Mariam (2024) states that the role of an early practitioner is to support the children in the best way in order for the child to develop. It is said that early practitioner have a crucial role as they are the ones that are responsible when the child's parent or guardian isn't around. They have the responsibilities to ensure that they have good health so looking at their nutrition and supporting it. To make sure that they are providing meaningful learning experiences such as giving them the real life experiences, allowing risks to happen but ensuring they are on a safe and secure environment. Some children can be put into a creche, nursery/pre school as their parents may work and will need childcare. Child act (2006) states that it is the duty on the local authorities to secure childcare for all parents who choose to work or are in training for them to go into work. It says that in order for a practitioner to support the families they need to have effective communication. Conversations between the practitioner and carer are important as this is how they are going to figure out the child and can share information.

It is said that by the practitioner working with the parent they can also learn and mirror of them what they do in the house so, both setting and home is having the same process. Practitioners need to have patience and good understanding as the carers of the children will know more about their child as they are with them a lot more hours than them (Mariam 2024). Care learning (2024) They say that practitioner need to support the parents by reassuring them that their child is in safe hands by doing this they should allow them to come in and have a welcome meeting so that they get to see what type of environment their child is going to and then they can make a discission if they think that setting would suit their child. It is essential for them to see where their child could potentially have naps as some children will only be 5 months-2 years old. Another way Care learning (2024) says a practitioner can support the families and children is putting on events, such as baby classes, sing and story groups, play groups. It says this will help the parents also develop new skills but also will help them with their social support where they would meet other parents and could form their own support groups on the outside.

The importance of effective partnership working

Kelly (2016) talks about the importance of effective partnership working. She says when the practitioner connects to the children and fully put all their effort into them to ensure that they get their full potential in life. It says even though every child is different the theories of a child's development can each be applied to each child but in their own unique way. She expresses that looking out for the children who may have ALN, they will need a different approach in some ways. She says that effective partnership is the theory of having 'attachment' with the child this will help the child feel secure and safe around you and the environment. If the child is feeling like they bare safe and able to express themselves this is when they will start to develop and learn new skills as they will feel confident.

Department of education (2024) says that the importance of effective partnership working is having a strong and connecting relationship with the parents and carers. To make it effective is allowing the parents to get involved with their child's learning. Each parent has the right to know what their child is doing and how well they are doing. To do this it is said that by inviting the parents in to allow them to share all the information about their child so that the practitioner to get a good understanding of the child. It will allow the practitioner to not only get to know the child but to know them as they might express about their family backgrounds, home life or culture. It also shares on how to have effective partnership with the parents is by having daily talks with their child's key person, doing home visits to see the environment that the child's being brought up in, the practitioner can then comment if they can support them with their environment or their environment may already meet the needs in order to support the child. Last thing that they mention is logging their learning and what the practitioner is doing so the learning can be carried out at home.

Challenges

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

When it comes to challenges in the quality-of-care NHS Wales (2011) discusses on what challenges they may face when it comes to caring and supporting the children. Practitioners may see that the parent or carer may be struggling with the financial side or not having the financial funds. They talk about how teenage pregnancy can come under this it is strongly associated as deprived and socially excluded young people. This could be resulted from poor family relationships, no enjoyment in school or low self esteem. Another challenge that is stated is someone not having the right support or guidance behind them can result a child's development not progressing. Newly parents or carers may not have had enough experience or the understanding on how they should be looking after their child this can occur because their own relationship with their caregiver have broken down or they didn't have a strong bond and care. Loneliness can become a challenge for the caregiver when becoming a parent as you can feel isolated (Baby college,2025).

Another challenge stated by Leatherbarrow,K (9 January 2025) is Low staffing and budgets, this means the quality or care delivered may not be met which can result in a potential risk of children's well-being. This can then relate to higher stress levels in staff and feeling burnt out which is said to leave a negative impact on staffs mental health.

How to support parents, caregivers and practitioners with the challenges

The Caregiver (2025) points us in the direction of the correct support for parents, caregivers and practitioners based on their situation. One of these support systems that they talk about is sharing information about the child and the main challenges that have occurred then they will point you in the right direction on what to do next. This can be going to support groups if needing advice on how to care for given child, Toddler groups is also advised to parents for friendly support and social skills with building confidence. If a parent is facing a financial challenge how to apply for food vouchers, food bank, clothes donations that are available and financial support worker can be put in place if needed.

Nursery Story (2024) states the importance of prioritise communication and support with staff this can result in improving the quality of care a practice can provide for children under its care by investing in training that's up to date and needed. Prioritizing communication with parents can be very effective as they earn trust and build strong relationships that then benefit the Childs care and well being. They declare by having good leadership skills within a setting as a practitioner they believe it is important because it builds relationship to work together, build on each others skills to make sure they are capable to resolve each challenge.

Activities

Meadow Waldorf School(10th December 2013) talks about the importance of meaningful learning and how it opens the interest of the world around us and encourages inquisitive attitude towards learning through music and art allowing each individual to express themselves through so many different types of play and learning rather than prioritizing the more simply day to day ways of learning. This is said to enhance a child cognitive and imaginary play and growth

Berg V,(15 October 2024) Talks about the theorist Reggio Emilia and his philosophy in expressive activities such as dramatic play, construction to express themselves and their knowledge through painting he believes that they should be in control of how they learn from their environment and how they build relationships with others meaning they should discover the world around them as much as they can and that all caregivers should allow this happen. The benefits of Reggio theory is for every child to be their own intelligent individual and to have an unlimited potential for their future.

Similar to Reggio Emilia theory the Montessori theory believes that every child should be focused on learning through hands on activities which encourages the curiosity and independence to provide a flexible but structured environment from a young age. These activities can be things like playing in the garden with mud and natural sources that they find. Activities that involve using all a child's senses e.g. for a baby putting a soft blanket down with textured toys and materials so the child can explore what they feel and see(Mansio Montessori of Geneva,4th January).

International approaches in educational activities

Sher M, (No date) States that when looking into comparison and contrasts in international approaches to activities of learning they could see that China was a developing county and Pakistan was the underdeveloped country this could be because in Pakistan the mother didn't have a good nutrition when being pregnant and the lack of support and wellness this meant the child didn't have the best start in life because of the circumstances that they were being born into and the main care giver didn't have a choice or the luxury of getting the support and help needed. This resulted in further delay in development as they didn't have the best resources to develop skills through lots of activities with out the right knowledge and support. Where as China is a thriving country and have good technology and education in place ready for children's future. Mothers may also have more support and a better chance with keep their well being and health in order.

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Image 4

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Image 5

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Image 6

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