

ECEY 4005
2410146
Word Count 3138

I can confirm I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Slide 1- Title

Slide 2- What is the first 1000 days?

Slide 3- Why is the first 1000 days important?

Slide 4- What is exceptional care?

Slide 5- Why is exceptional care important?

Slide 6- What is the role of an early year's practitioner in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days?

Slide 7- The importance of effective partnership working.

Slide 8- Maternal factors that could impact on development and what support could be offered.

Slide 9- What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Slide 10- Activities, Do they provide meaningful learning?

Slide 11- International Approaches to development.

Slide 12- 17- Reference List

ECEY 4005
2410146
Word Count 3138

The First 1000 Days



What is the first 1000 Days?

The first 1000 days of any child's life, starts from the moment of conception to their second birthday. This part of a child's life is a critical time for growth and development (Karakochuk, Whitfield and Green, 2017).

Growth and development takes place more quickly during gestation and infancy than any other time over the child's life span (Bowden, 2024) . Thus, making the first 1000 days a particularly important time for the child. Not having the right nutrition or health care during the gestation period, could have a detrimental effect not only to the developing fetus within the mother's womb, but it can also have a considerable impact on the mother's health and well-being too.

The Minister for Children and Social Care Wales (Bowden, 2024) states a commitment to ensure that all babies and young children, irrespective of their background, are supported to have the best start in life.

Following on, the first 1000 days has been shown to be linked with later physical growth, brain development, problem solving, also language and literacy skills (Bust and Pedro, 2022).

(Source: Tijani, 2019)



Why is the first 1000 days important?

The first 1000 days are important, as from the duration of conception to age two, babies are exceptionally vulnerable to their surroundings. Babies are entirely dependent on their caregivers and later development is profoundly influenced by the amorous attachment babies have to their parents or caregivers (HM.Government, 2021).

Every year there are documents one of which was published by public health Wales in 2023, relating to the harmful issues of what are known as 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs). These are harrowing events, that can impact negatively because of exposure to poor parental mental health, abuse, neglect and parental drug misuse (Di Lemma *et al.*, 2019). Some reports show how parental struggle can have an influence on the mental health of the baby.

Following on, the first 1000 days programme (Public Health Wales, 2023) was designed to help and guide parents to improve results and lessen imbalances. Having programmes and reports show why it is so important that parents and carers get the accurate type of provisions to help them give their babies the best start for life.



The First 1000 Days programme - Public Health Wales
(Source: Public Health Wales, 2023)

What is exceptional care?



(Source: Welsh Government, 2024)

Why is exceptional care important?



(Source: Delaware Gives, 2025)

Exceptional care is imperative in an early years setting as this offers children with robust basics for their future learning, health and behaviour. During the first few years of life, children's brains form more than one million neural connections each second. The importance of their early experiences help shape their brains and their ability to learn (UNICEF, 2017).



High quality early years care can help children break the cycle of disadvantage and give them a good start in life (Welsh Government, 2024). It can lead to better developmental outcomes and readiness to learn. The education and care children have in early years can impact their future health and happiness.



Get to know the children within the setting, by spending time with the children, to know how they learn, what the children enjoy and what struggles they may come across. Emmi Pikler (Learning Journals, 2021) believed that children need to have a calm environment. Whereby the parent and carer is always giving babies 100 % of the attention.



This in turn helps to form good and positive attachments. When John Bowlby (NSPCC Learning, 2021) developed his attachment theory, Bowlby emphasised that children who experience positive and loving attachments develop confidence, self-esteem and trust. Children also learn to figure out themselves through the responses of others, which supports children to develop empathy.

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 when supporting children and their families during the first 1000 days, will have an impact on both the child and the parents. Being the designated person can help relieve any stress or concerns a parent may have, when talking to staff members within the setting (Jenkin, 2025). Early years settings know that fresh air, exercise and healthy snacks and meals all contribute to happiness and a child's health and well-being.

However, when an early year's practitioner becomes acquainted with the parents of the children in the setting, they have an additional level of responsibility. Nursery staff often have a close-knit relationship with the parents, far more than any healthcare professional, and often be familiar with the business that is going on within the family home.

Magda Gerber was the founder of the Resources for Infant Educators in the United States in the latter part of the twentieth century. Gerber's heart paved the way for pre-verbal children and the adults who worked with them (Hammond, 2021). Gerber believed that the less is more methodology with children. In Hammond's article about Magda Gerber, it states that Gerber viewed babies as an intelligent, capable feeling person, with just as much right to respect as an elder.

Following on, as early years educators, the quality of the relationships that babies and young children have, is vital to building the bases of future success (Department for Education, 2023). Early involvement that focuses on supporting early interaction has encouraging effects across the children's life span. Early years practitioners, have a critical role to play in supporting early interaction.

(Source: Jenkin, 2025)



The importance of effective partnership working.

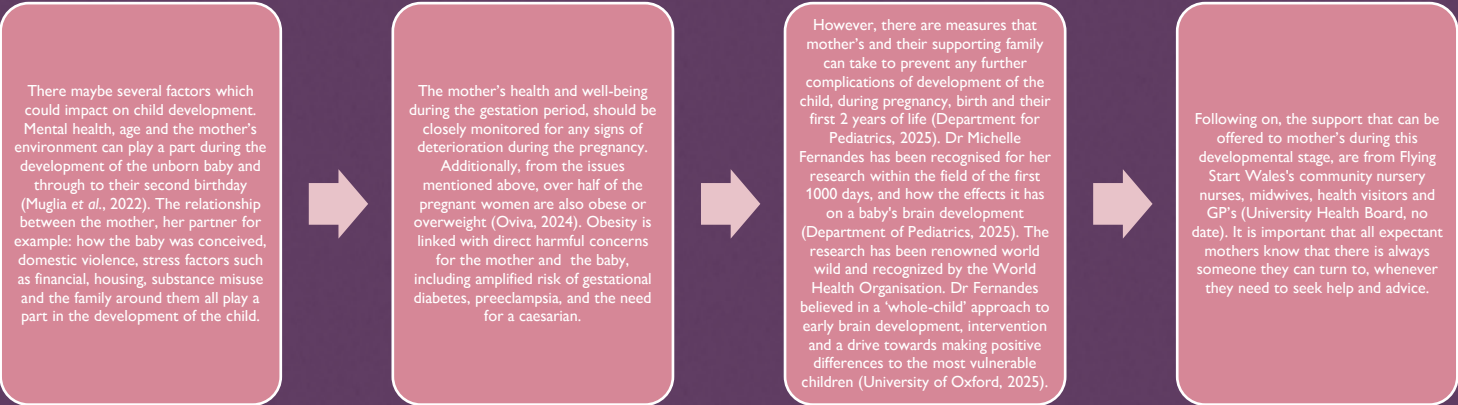
Early Years Practitioners are in a fortunate situation to support parents, who attend their settings through reassurance, comfort, modeling and conversation (Department for Education, 2023). Encompassing parents and giving them the opportunity to contribute to their child's learning, is the most central factor in facilitating a child to do well, irrespective of their background (Jenkin,2025).

As mentioned previously, having members of staff who are informed and that are capable to sign post parents with any queries that may arise, can help build positive relationships between staff and parents (Jenkin,2025).

Furthermore, having a well organized display board with an abundance of information, from domestic abuse, food banks, play groups and coffee mornings (Government,2023). This can get parents and carers informed about what initiatives are available locally, so that parents who may feel under pressure can be signposted on to formal support. The importance of working in partnership with parents to support children cannot be underestimated.



Maternal factors that could impact on development and what support could be offered.



(Source: Gnoll Primary School, no date)



What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

There are many factors that could impact on providing high quality care for early years. Firstly, high childcare costs for working families, although there are childcare vouchers and universal credit which can help top up the payments made to the provider (Goddard, 2023). Many families still struggle to find adequate childcare providers.

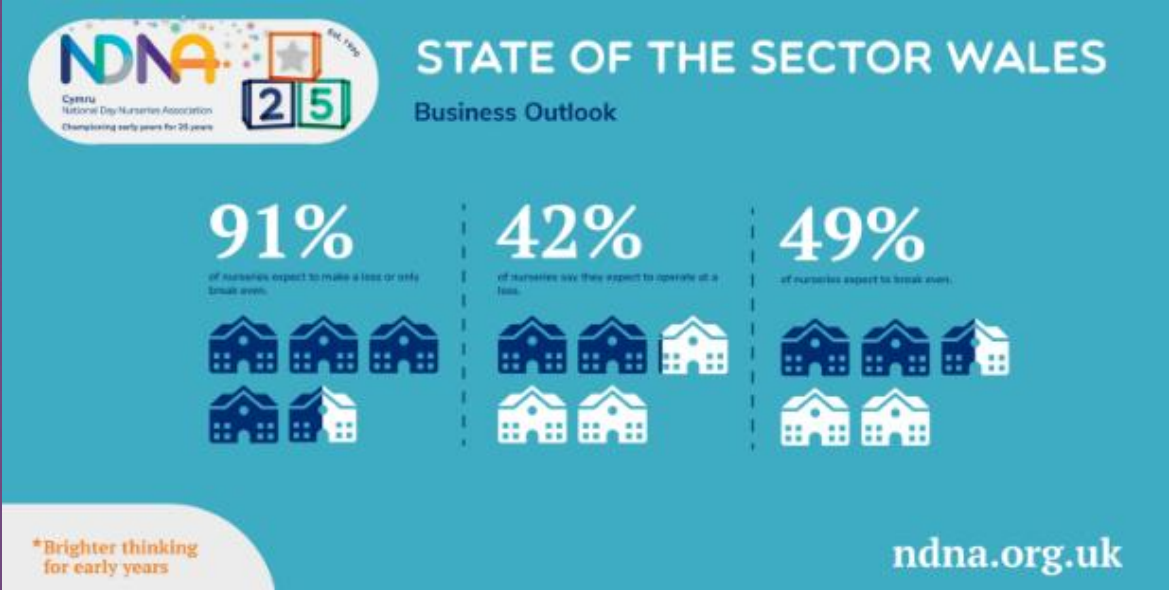
Secondary, not only the cost of the childcare, also the covid-19 pandemic seen many settings close permanently due to the lockdown measures. Figures from Ofsted showed in March 2023 there were 63,200 registered childcare providers in England alone, a 7% reduction compared to March 2022 figures (Goddard, 2023). There are also issues in recruiting and retaining highly trained staff due to the wages being low.

Local authorities have statutory duties as regards to early childhood services, together with obtaining them, but also reflection on the quality, quantity and right number of local providers. There is a struggle for local authorities as they must meet legislative requirements for funded places such as excellence, whilst having a duty for the abundance for places (Local Government Authorities, 2023). Therefore, local authorities' requirement to balance the necessity for high quality places, with the need for adequate places.

Thirdly, there are strengths and challenges, and early years settings appear to be attractive to certain groups of people, particularly women. However, the challenges that exist are a lack of public awareness, increasing demand, and drawing candidates from diverse backgrounds (Social Care Wales, 2024).

There are added responsibility to providing high quality care, ensuring the well-being and development to babies and young children, whilst being compassionate, caring and determined. This can increase stress levels of the staff, as the educators strive to meet each child's diverse needs (International School Ho Chi Minh City, 2024).

Finally, not enough funding available to disadvantaged areas. In April 2024, the UK Government declared that all working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare (Senedd Cymru, 2024). However, the issue with this new amendment, is that this will not apply to all working families in Wales, which leaves families thousands of pounds worse off than English equivalents.



(Source: NDNA, 2024)

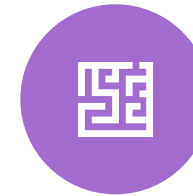
Activities, Do they provide meaningful learning?



Activities for early years learners can often provide deep and meaningful learning. Such is the theory of loose parts, which was developed by Simon Nicholson in 1971 (The WIDE School, 2022). Nicholson believed that loose parts are resources that can be moved, carried, combined, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in different ways. The idea of 'loose parts' uses materials to allow for original imagination. The theory behind the idea, is that loose parts should have no characterisation in the use of the play (Louv, 2019). Early years educators must support the children when they choose to change the shape or the use for the items they are playing with. In other words, learning through assimilation by integrating new experiences into existing schemas and accommodation by transforming existing schemas to fit new information (Brodie, 2025).

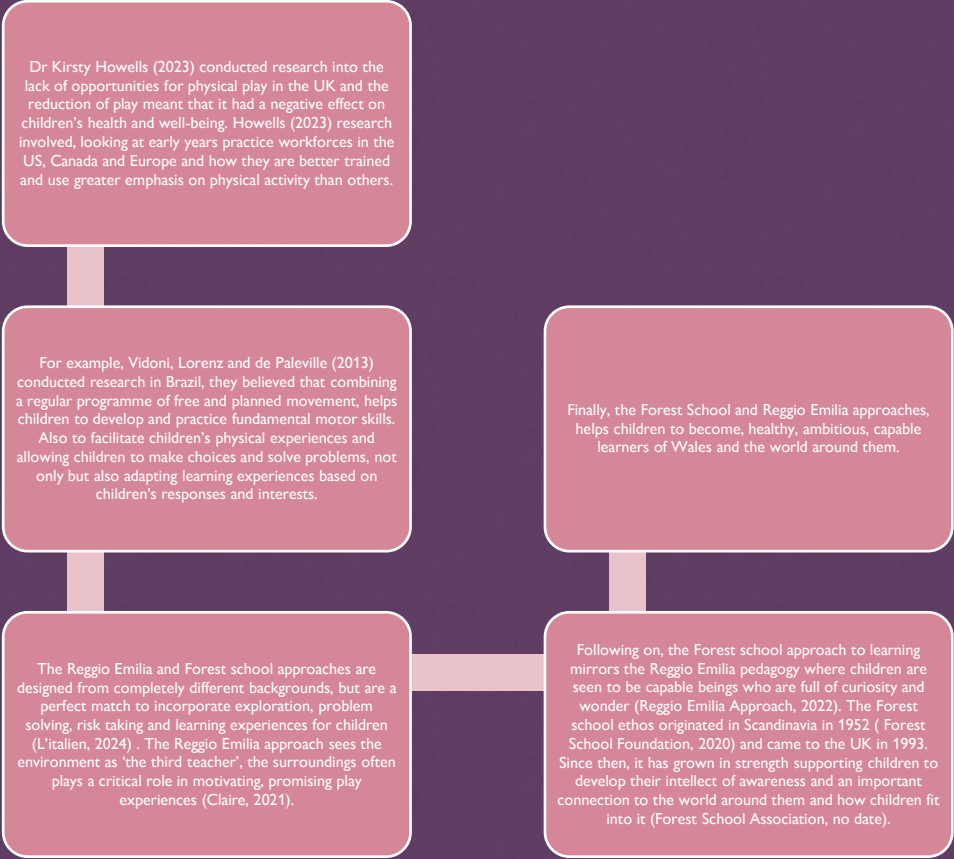


Additionally, to the loose parts theory is the curiosity approach. The curiosity approach was co-founded by Lyndsey Hellyn and Stephanie Bennett (Hellyn and Bennett, 2024). The curiosity approach draws from a number of other viewpoints of early years education, including the Reggio Emilia approach, Montessori, Te Whariki, Pikler and Steiner (Berg, 2024). Hellyn and Bennett believes in an environment that is calm and neutral for children to play, learn, grow and develop. The strategies in their approach is to replace plastic resources with natural ones and moving away from recognised planned activities to enable child-lead play.



However, there are some concerns with the use of loose parts play and the curiosity approach. Firstly, there must be adequate supervision when enabling child-lead play. The reasoning behind this, is that babies and young children are known to explore new materials by mouthing, as this is how they learn (Joe, 2020). Risk assessments need to be in place prior to activities taking place, as well as ensuring the staff to children ratio is correct. There are measures that setting can take to reduce the risk of choking with pre-school children, an example of this is finding a cardboard tube and if an item can fit through the hole in the tube (Education, 2022), it could possibly be a hazard for younger children.

International Approaches to development.



Reference List

Argile, A.-M. (2024) 'Wales Childcare Crisis: Nine in ten nurseries expect to make a loss or break even'. Available at: <https://ndna.org.uk/news/wales-childcare-crisis-nine-in-ten-nurseries-expect-to-make-a-loss-or-break-even/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Berg, V. (2024) *The Curiosity Approach to early years learning*. Available at: <https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/advice/the-curiosity-approach-to-early-years-learning> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Bowden, D. (2024) *Plenary, Welsh Parliament*. Available at: <https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/14137> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

Brodie, K. (2018) *The Holistic Care and Development of Children from Birth to Three: An Essential Guide for Students and Practitioners*. Oxon: Taylor & Francis Group. Available at: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/trinity/detail.action?docID=5257704> (Accessed: 13 January 2025).

Brodie, K. (2025) 'Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development: In-Depth Guide', <https://www.earlyyears.tv/>. Available at: <https://www.earlyyears.tv/piagets-theory-of-cognitive-development/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Bust, E. and Pedro, A. (2022) "'Your baby's life depends on those first 1000 days": community health workers' perspectives of the first 1000 days of life', *Early Child Development and Care*, 192(6), pp. 904–913. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1815720>.

Care Learning (2024) *1.2 Describe partnership working in relation to current frameworks*. Available at: <https://carelearning.org.uk/qualifications/level-2-early-years/eyp-13/1-2-describe-partnership-working-in-relation-to-current-frameworks/> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Reference List Continued

Claire (2021) *Reggio Emilia and Forest School, a match made in heaven @Wildlings!, Wildlings*. Available at: <https://www.wildlings.sg/post/reggio-emilia-and-forest-school-a-match-made-in-heaven-wildlings> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Day, S. (2019) *The Curiosity Approach · University of Birmingham Day Nurseries, University of Birmingham Day Nurseries*. Available at: <https://daynurseries.bham.ac.uk/blog/the-curiosity-approach-an-interview-with-founders-lyndsey-hellyn-and-stephanie-bennett/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Delaware Gives (2025) *Exceptional Care for Children | DEGives*. Available at: <https://www.degives.org/orgs/exceptional-care-for-children> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).

Department for Education (2023) *Primed for Language: The Importance of the First 1000 Days | Stronger Practice Hubs*. Available at: <https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/em/em-eyeph/resources/primed-language-importance-first-1000-days> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Department of Paediatrics (2025) *Michelle Fernandes*. Available at: <https://www.paediatrics.ox.ac.uk/About/team/michelle-fernandes> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Di Lemma, L.C.G., Davies, A.R., Ford, K. and Hughes, K. (2019) 'Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences', *Public Health Wales* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/news/responding-to-adverse-childhood-experiences-an-evidence-review/responding-to-adverse-childhood-experiences/>.

Educational, B. (2022) *Where are you going wrong with the Curiosity Approach? How to effectively implement it across your nursery*. Available at: <https://blossomeducational.com/blog/where-are-you-going-wrong-with-the-curiosity-approach-how-to-effectively-implement-it-across-your-nursery/> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Reference List Continued

Forest School Association (no date) *What is Forest School? | Forest School Association*. Available at: <https://forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Forest School Foundation (2020) *A Brief History of Forest Schools Around The World*. Available at: <https://www.growingwildforestschool.org/post/the-brief-history-heritage-of-forest-schools-around-the-world> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Gnoll Primary School (no date) *Flying Start – Gnoll Primary School*. Available at: https://gnoll-primary-school.j2bloggy.com/flying-start/?doing_wp_cron=1737059298.6449639797210693359375 (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

Goddard, J. (2023) 'Early years education: Trends, issues and the impact of Covid-19'. Available at: <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/early-years-education-trends-issues-and-the-impact-of-covid-19/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Government (2023) *Development Matters, GOV.UK*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Hammond, R.A. (2021) 'Seeing infants differently: Magda Gerber's contributions to the early care and education field and their continuing relevance', *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(7–8), pp. 1302–1315. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1865942>.

Hellyn, L. and Bennett, S. (2024) *The Curiosity Approach*. Available at: <https://www.thecuriosityapproach.com/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

HM Government (2021) 'The Best Start For Life A Vision for the first 1,001 Critical Days'. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/605c5e61d3bf7f2f0d94183a/The_best_start_for_life_a_vision_for_the_1_001_critical_days.pdf (Accessed: 2 December 2024).

Reference List Continued

Howells, D.K. (2023) *Physical Development: Exploring international approaches to training practitioners*, *Nursery World*. Available at: <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/content/features/physical-development-exploring-international-approaches-to-training-practitioners/> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

International School Ho Chi Minh City (2024) '7 Common Challenges in Early Childhood Education (ECE)', *ISHCMC*. Available at: <https://www.ishcmc.com/news-and-blog/challenges-in-early-childhood-education/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Jenkin, L. (2025) *Child development – Why the first 1,000 days of children's lives matter most | A Unique Child, Teach Early Years*. Available at: <https://www.teachearlyyears.com/a-unique-child/view/child-development-why-the-first-1000-days-of-childrens-lives-matter-most> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Joe (2020) *Risk In Loose Parts Play (And How To Assess It)*, *Early Impact Learning*. Available at: <https://earlyimpactlearning.com/risk-in-loose-parts-play-and-how-to-assess-it/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Karakochuk, C.D., Whitfield, K.C. and Green, T.J. (eds) (2017) *The Biology of the First 1,000 Days*. Boca Raton. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315152950>.

Learning Journals (2021) *Reggio Emilia, Emmi Pikler, and Rudolf Steiner: Different Approaches to Learning*. Available at: <https://learningjournals.co.uk/reggio-emilia-emmi-pikler-rudolf-stein-different-approaches-learning/> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).

L'italien, M. (2024) *In the Heart of the Forest: How Reggio Emilia and Forest School Philosophies Blend for the Perfect Early Childhood Education Experience*. Available at: <https://www.tideviewnatureschool.ca/post/in-the-heart-of-the-forest-how-reggio-emilia-and-forest-school-philosophies-blend-for-the-perfect-e> (Accessed: 19 January 2025).

Louv, R. (2019) 'Loose Parts Play', *Play Scotland*. Available at: <https://www.playscotland.org/loose-parts-play/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Reference List Continued

Marketing, R.M.S. (2024) 'What is Maria Montessori Theory?', *Rockingham, Montessori School*. Available at: <https://rms.wa.edu.au/what-is-maria-montessori-theory/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Muglia, L.J., Benhalima, K., Tong, S. and Ozanne, S. (2022) 'Maternal factors during pregnancy influencing maternal, fetal, and childhood outcomes', *BMC Medicine*, 20(1), p. 418. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-022-02632-6>.

NSPCC Learning (2021) *Attachment and child development*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-health-development/attachment-early-years> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).

Oviva (2024) *Obesity and pregnancy: understanding and managing health risks*. Available at: <https://oviva.com/uk/en/obesity-and-pregnancy/> (Accessed: 15 January 2025).

Parliament (2019) *First 1000 days of life - Health and Social Care Committee - House of Commons*. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhealth/1496/149605.htm> (Accessed: 2 December 2024).

Public Health Wales (2023) *The First 1000 Days programme, Public Health Wales*. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/the-first-1000-days-programme/> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).

Reggio Emilia Approach (2022) *Reggio Children - Loris Malaguzzi*. Available at: <https://www.reggiochildren.it/en/reggio-emilia-approach/loris-malaguzzi/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Social Care Wales (2024) 'Understanding early years and childcare attraction and recruitment in Wales and the role of WeCare'. Available at: <https://insightcollective.socialcare.wales/assets/documents/WeCare-reports/Early-years-report.pdf> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Reference List Continued

Stead, C. (2024) *The first 1000 days | Early brain development and nursery room design| Community Playthings*. Available at: <https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/the-first-1000-days> (Accessed: 2 December 2024).

The WIDE School (2022) 'The Theory Of Loose Parts was developed by Simon Nicholson'. Available at: <https://thewideschool.com/the-theory-of-loose-parts/> (Accessed: 18 January 2025).

Tijani (2019) *The First 1000 Days | Logan's Plate Blog, Logan's Plate*. Available at: <https://logansplate.com/blog/the-first-1000-days> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

UNICEF (2017) *Early childhood development | UNICEF*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).

University Health Board (no date) *Flying Start, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board*. Available at: <https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/services/hospital-services/children-young-people-and-family-health-services/health-visitors/flying-start/> (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

University Of Oxford (2025) *Michelle Fernandes*. Available at: <https://www.wrh.ox.ac.uk/team/michelle-fernandes> (Accessed: 16 January 2025).

Vidoni, C., Lorenz, D.J. and de Paleville, D.T. (2013) 'Incorporating a movement skill programme into a preschool daily schedule', *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(8), pp. 1211–1222. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.856895>.

Welsh Government (2024) *Children and young people's plan | GOV.WALES*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/children-and-young-peoples-plan> (Accessed: 11 January 2025).