



The first 1000 Days

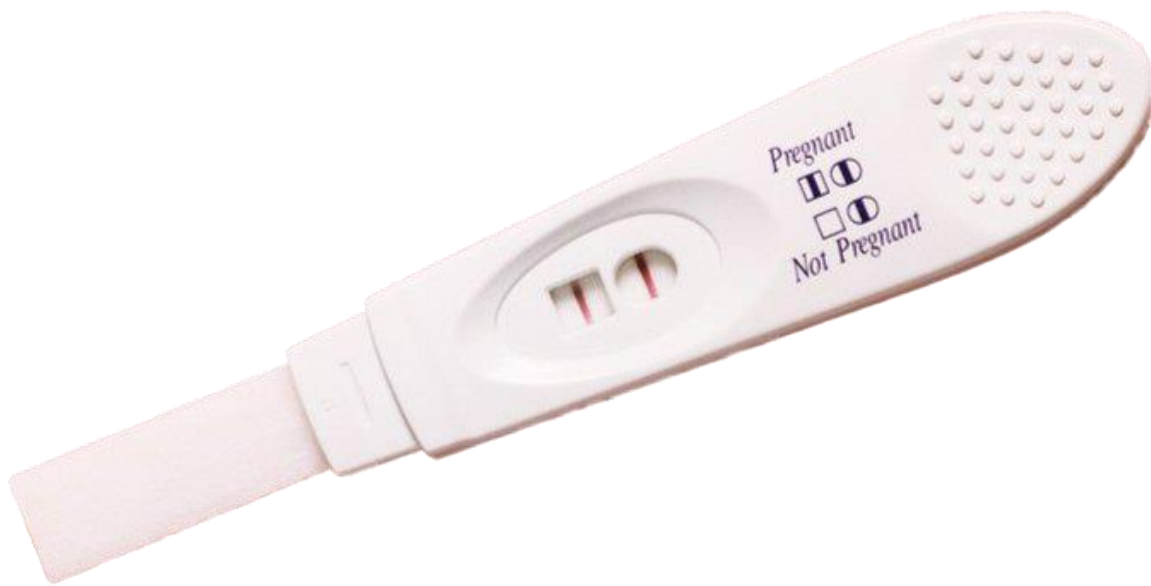
First 1000 days of a child's life.

The first 1000 days of a child's life consists from the moment they are conceived up until they are two years old. It is important that we give them all the opportunities that they require in the early years, as this will set them off to a good healthy life. It is highly important that the mother has a healthy diet nutritious diet and very little stress during her pregnancy, as this will be essential when the baby is in the mothers womb. When baby is born for the first six months of their lives the baby will drink milk whether it is breast milk or formula milk, this has all the essentials that the baby will need to help thrive and grow. Once baby is 6 months solid foods can be introduced and help to form a healthy balanced diet for baby to keep developing.

within the child's first 1000 days it is important that the child and it's parent's develop a strong and secure connection to one another, and build a loving relationship. Through doing this they will learn to understand and think and show emotions.

In the first 1000 days of a child's life as a parent it is crucial as you will be the child's main key person and will have to ensure that baby is developing healthy and growing well. When they are young, babies fully depend on you as a parent to help them reach their full potential.

Conception & Pregnancy



Conception

Having a healthy pregnancy will help towards the baby having a healthy start in life. During the 9 months of pregnancy babies will grow rapidly in the mother's womb, this is an essential part of baby's growth and development meaning that the mother will need to be healthy and active throughout pregnancy and not under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The first 1000 days of a babies life is a important time for development of interaction and physical skills, some babies will be diagnosed with disabilities during the pregnancy, others may not get diagnosed until they are born or maybe even later down the line. some of these babies will need special educational care, but in some instances, these may take a little longer than usual to get a diagnosis. The metal brain will begin to develop from conception as early as five weeks pregnant. (Public health England, 2016)

When the pregnancy gets to about 10 weeks the baby's brain will be very small but structured. As the weeks go on during the pregnancy the baby's brain will develop more and more, this will then enable baby to move around in the womb and stretch and start sucking. By the second trimester of pregnancy around 12 to 13 weeks, the brainstem will control the vital organs like the heart, lungs and more coordinated movements in the second trimester (NHS pregnancy week-by-week, 2022).

while the foetus keeps growing inside of the mother's womb, they are becoming aware of the environment around it and will start to hear noises like the mothers voice and loud noises that the mother can hear. While the baby is growing it is connected to the mother by the umbilical cord and placenta, this means baby will consume what the mother is eating and drinking, it is vital that the mother has lots of good nutrients to pass onto the growing baby. This will also be a way of carrying out any waste.

Please find attached a video of a foetus growing inside of the mother throughout the 2 different trimesters.



Current challenges



Current challenges

Early years practitioners frequently face obstacles and challenges due to the lack of training they receive and how to support children's mental health. Covid-19 has had a surprisingly big impact on not only children but also their parents and families and childcare practitioners. Babies in lockdown (2020) states that nearly 7 in 10 parents thought that the circumstances of Covid-19 affected their unborn baby, or young child.

As an early year's practitioner, you need to form skills to enable yourself to build positive relationships with children and parents and ensure you have good effective communication. Sometimes this can be particularly hard especially when a parent does not co-operate well. You will have to find mutual grounds and persevere with the parents and caregivers.

Activity ideas



1 - Messy Play



2 - Reading stories together



3 - Treasure Baskets

Activity Ideas

From birth babies are beginning to explore their senses and take on board all new information, this will encourage them learn about the ever-changing world around them. As they participate in different sensory activities their brain will develop and begin to learn. Babies will be able to recognise different objects by touching and feeling them, this will also help babies to improve on their fine and gross motor skills and they will start doing things such as gripping, pulling, and throwing objects. As babies will get older their sensory skills will support their language progress and will help to encourage them to interact in conversation while they are playing. Sensory play will help to encourage babies to discover independent thinking, this will increase their imagination, it has been studied that sensory play can improve a child's progress and learning in many ways. A treasure basket is one way of helping babies develop on their sensory play. Gascoyne, (2012) implies that a treasure basket is a collection of natural items you can find outside or in your home for example pinecones, spoons, and different materials. These objects are seen as "treasures" to young babies and children. Gascoyne, (2012) also suggests that by making a carefully crafted treasure basket it can benefit babies and children in many ways, whether this is learning independence and decision making, or helping develop their fine and cross motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination. A treasure basket should consist of many different items what will stimulate the babies five senses of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.



Messy play is another good activity to do with babies and young children. Forbes (2004) highlights as babies movement progresses so does their opportunities for messy and creative play. This can include mark making in food while they are in a highchair on the tray, or maybe on a table. As babies grow up, they will start to play with sand or paint. Forbes (2004) suggests that practitioners and parents need to be confident enough to offer babies these opportunities as it is all fun and helps children develop good sensory skills.

Some of the following materials are good for messy play with young babies and children:

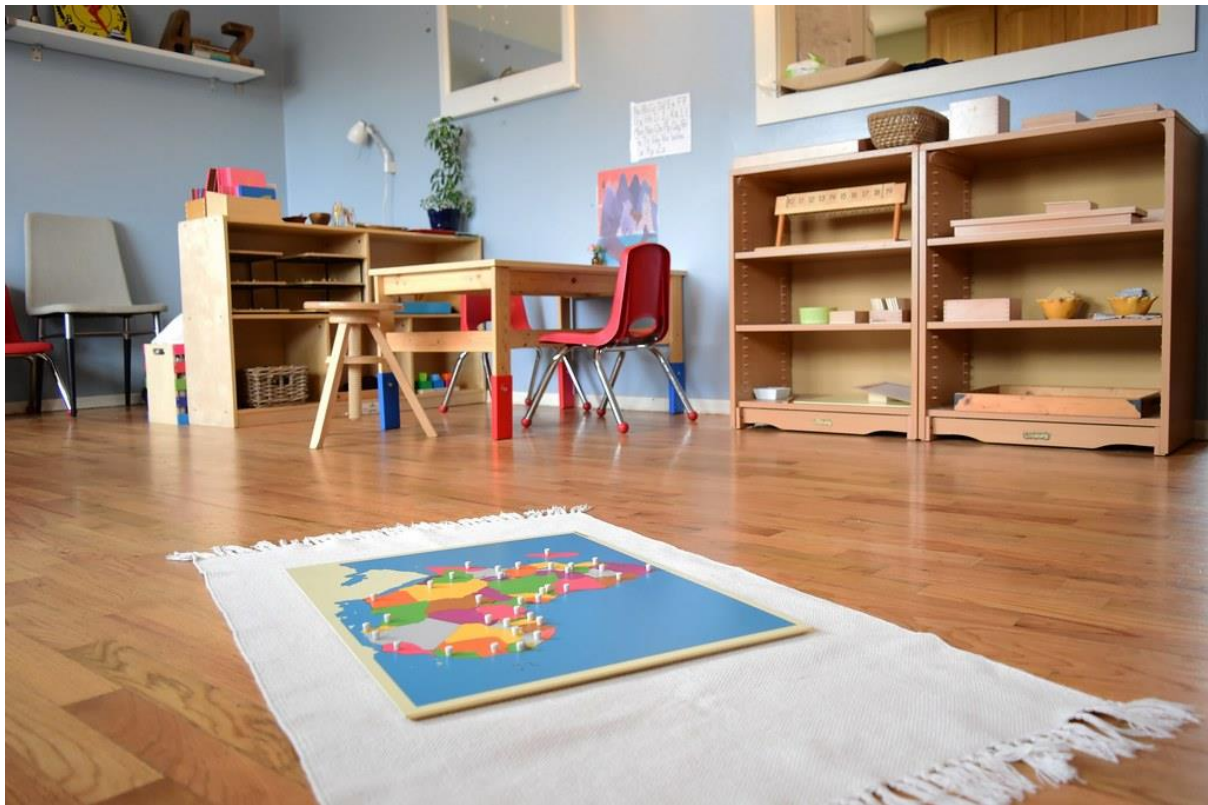
- Shaving foam or gels- uncented varieties
- Jelly
- Bubbles
- Dry sand mixed with washing liquid, this forms a smooth paste children can play with their hands or their feet.
- Gloop- this is made from paint and starch.

Young babies and children who experience messy play can use their senses with these materials to see how they feel and whether they are warm or cold, or if they are a solid or liquid and also the different textures of things (Forbes, 2004).



4 - Here is a video of some ideas for messy play and what you can create.

Environments



For young children and babies, the environment they are in should be stimulating and have freedom to move around, they should also be filled with safe and child friendly objects that the children can interact with on a safe manor. Please find attached a copy of the curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings: [220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220914/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf)

In this link there is a section on Effective Environments, this goes into more depth about how the environment children are in needs to be welcoming and how children will need to be provided with various types of experiences to ensure that all children can express themselves imaginatively, physically and creatively and allowing them to find their interests weather this is on their own or with other children. Children need opportunities to help them develop their fine and cross motor skills. A well organised environment will help children develop and scaffold different skills.

Isaacs, (2018) highlights how Montessori suggests that settings must have considered having room for movement and physical activities when providing for babies and young children. Isaacs, (2018) also implies that toddlers must be given plenty of opportunities for moving around freely and in a safe manor, they will also need objects that they can push and pull and transport themselves in order to strengthen the upper parts of their body, as well as developing on their balance and spacial awareness. Movement is not to be seen as 'letting off steam' but as a key factor of learning. A young child will not develop fully if she/he is immobilised by inactive activities.

In the link above it also suggests that early years settings should offer hand on experiences that are meaningful for the child. The environment around children should encourage independence and challenging opportunities to help the children throughout their learning journey. All opportunities and experiences should support the child's holistic development. Opportunities like these should be carefully thought through and planned out to help the development of children's attention and listening skills in a range of contexts, both indoors and outdoors.



Being Inclusive



Inclusive practice is vital as it promotes the diversity of children and their families. By being inclusive this ensures all children are treated with equal respect and receive the appropriate support to ensure they have the correct and full potential of learning. While a child is in a setting it is important that all children gain confidence in who they are as a person. By implementing inclusive practice this will ensure that all children and babies will have that sense of belonging and that they feel valued and cared for and they all have equal chances to thrive. Young children will learn from their environment and the people around them by seeing and hearing everything we do. As an adult it is our responsibility to help guide children with development by creating an inclusive environment in the setting.

Children's environment should:

- Have good organisation to ensure accessibility for all. For example, wheelchair users.
- Include diverse and realistic representation with the resources, images and text for example, gender, ability and religion.
- Make suitable alterations to remove barriers to participation
- Offer flexible resources that replicate diversity and are not gender specific.

[Summary-of-the-UNCRC.pdf](#)

Above is a link to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 29 and 30 state that every child is an individual, they are unique in their own way from a rich diversity of backgrounds, belief, and cultures. All young children have the right to be treated with respect and positive regards and dignity. they also state that respect and recognition for the child's own cultural identity, values and languages should all be part of their education.

Inclusion is about partnerships where practitioners work together with families and government. It is about valuing everyone and doing things differently (Page and Clare and Nutbrown, 2013). By working together with the children's parents and other professionals all staff in an early year setting acknowledge that everyone who is involved in a child's life have an important contribution to make (Page and Clare and Nutbrown, 2013).



5 - Above is a short video explaining about the importance of inclusion in an early years setting and how to implement inclusion in settings.

Professional partnerships/relationships



The role of a practitioner or adult is vital to all children's development, but it is specifically important in this period of learning. The enabling adult sets out an expectation for children's learning by building safe surroundings that will help to encourage children to express their feelings and behaviours in a positive manner.

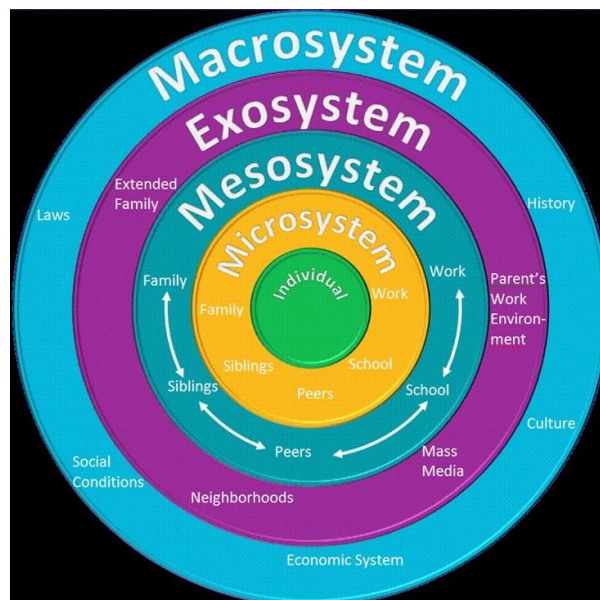
Adults and practitioners are consistent in children's care and are role models towards children, practitioners should model a welcoming and warm approach towards learning to help inspire children's natural interests. As adults it is our responsibility to ensure we provide strong positive connections with the child's home and community, to improve on their sense of belonging. Adults and practitioners will also need to improve their understanding of the developing needs of all the children, it is vital for adults to observe and then respond in a sensitive way to the children. They will then have to make decisions about how they need to intervene to support the children in constructing meaning. Adults and practitioners should encourage all the children to begin to work collaboratively to resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. Enabling adults build a setting that is communication rich, by demonstrating various ways of expression. They support all children's understanding through skilful connections, increasing on the children's current knowledge to support and them in making connections with people, places and things. They model suitable use of context-specific language and concepts.

Practitioners rely on information of a parent about their babies and children, down to their care routines to food choices and if babies have certain soothing techniques. Parents know what their babies need as they have been their primary carer up until the child starts an early years setting.

Practitioners will need to have good effective communication skills to be able to communicate with the child's parents on a respectful manor and be able to meet the child's specific needs (Brodie 2018).

Brodie, (2018) implies that settings should provide parents with any up to date information on their child's progress and development, parents and carers should be actively involved with their child's learning and care in the setting.

Brodie, (2018) highlights that Bronfrenbrenner suggest that children are influenced by a number of social systems, this is called an ecological systems theory. This is where the child is in the centre and then starts with the microsystem being immediate family and peers. The next circle is called the mesosystem where the school or childcare setting forms strong bonds with the Childs immediate family. The third circle is the ecosystem and this includes the child's extended family, their parents friends, neighbours and mass media. and the final circle is the macrosystem which covers the child's culture, religion and the government laws. The closer the circle is to the child being in the centre, the more influence they will have on the child's development. Bronfrenbrenner, (1979) theory is very interesting as it recognises not only the social influences but also the the extended influences.



Respectful care and meaningful learning



From the start babies enjoy being around people and having company of others, especially their main carer. Brodie (2018) implies that babies are fascinated by faces and facial expressions, they will

respond with games, such as sticking out tongues. Babies will express how they feel with their whole body when they are being spoken too, they will move their arms and legs with excitement. Additionally, Brodie (2018) indicates that as babies grow up, they will start to smile and maintain eye contact while being spoken too. Babies will encounter other emotions such as frustration and fear and will again use different body language to communicate with their caregiver, as well as crying.

Early years practitioners play a big role in young babies and children's lives, some babies start nursery from as early as 6 months old. Communication is key when it comes to babies and young children, whether this is communication through eye contact or through reciprocity 'serve and return' or talking to older children in conversation. Babies will copy what you do as adults, if you smile at a baby, they will tend to smile back at you, if you wave at a baby they will wave back at you. This is a term called 'serve and return'. As practitioners we must always communicate to babies and young children so that they can form bonds with you. Babies are always learning new things and as an early years practitioner or even a parent you will find yourselves talking to babies about what is happening, for example while you are changing a baby's nappy you may find yourself talking to them and telling them what you are doing.

International approaches



Although in Wales and England we follow the new curriculum now, there are other countries that follow other curriculums and have different approaches to early years development. Te Whariki is an early childhood curriculum approach for children ages 0-4 years old in New Zealand, Children usually do not start school until they are five. The meaning Te Whariki means 'woven mat'. This can be visualised as development and learning being woven from the foundation, or from the beginning of life. Te Whariki values the importance of development through different play opportunities based on childrens needs. Te Whariki has five principles or 'strands' these are

- Mana atua – wellbeing.
- Mana tangata – contribution.
- Mana whenua – belonging.
- Mana reo – communication.
- Mana aotūroa – exploration.

Secondly there is The Reggio Emilia approach to teaching children. In the most basic form, it is a way of observing what children know, are curious about and what challenges them.

Fundamental Principles of Reggio Emilia

- Children can construct their learning. ...
- Children learn their place in the world through interactions. ...
- A child's environment is also their teacher. ...
- The adult is their guide. ...
- Document your child's thoughts. ...
- Children have many languages.

Finally, there is another approach, and this is called A forest school this has originated from Scandinavia, but more recently become more popular in England and Wales. This is a form of early years childcare what usually takes place outdoors in natural forests and woodlands. This curriculum is based on child-led outdoor play, which aims to build children's' curiosity and exploration. Children need to have the ability to assess risks for themselves.



6 - Above is a video explaining what forest school is and how it can benefit young children



7 - Here is a short video of the Reggio Emilia approach



8 - Please watch this short video on what Te Whariki is.

Reference list



Reference list

[220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf](#) (accessed on 16/01/2023)

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