

THE FIRST 1000 DAYS



Logan's Plate,
[image] (no
date)

“If a child’s body and brain are developed well then their life chances are improved” (House of Commons, 2019).

Introduction

What is the first 1000 days and why are they important?

[Nathan Wallis - First 1,000 days – YouTube](#)

This YouTube explains the importance of interaction and being present with the child in the first 1000 days has a positive impact on the child's development.

It is generally considered that the first 1000 days is from conception to 24 months. When thinking of this timeframe, professionals may think of things like the holistic development of the baby, the development of the brain and the senses along with the immune system. How can professionals and the wider community assist in providing an awareness of positive relationships, attachment and good nutrition to parents/carers. It may also bring to mind how occurrences such as poor nutrition, deprived living conditions and stress can have a negative effect not only on the mother's health but also on the holistic development of the baby. During this period of development from conception to 24 months, vital development of the baby's brain, body and immune system will occur (Likhar, A. and Patil, M.S. 2022). Furthermore, pregnancybirthbaby.org.au (no date), also supports that this period of time is significant for the child's development of their brain, body and immune system. In a very slight contrast Cusick and Georgieff (2016) comments that studies on neurodevelopment (brain development) outcome, both clinical and epidemiologic, and a close study of the course of anatomic and functional brain development shows an outcome that provides the suggestion of a broader window that is extended 3 years of age. Moreover, Cusick and Georgieff (2016) mentions that the first 1000 days and '0 to 3 years' have been emphasised by policy makers "...as golden opportunities to influence child outcomes".

Following on from this, a common theme is that the first 1000 days of a baby's life is very significant to a child's development, that this is the time to where good nutrition, positive relationships and strong attachments can help to make a difference to children's holistic development and their future. Pregnancybirthbaby.org.au, thousanddays.org and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) all agree that poor nutrition, stress, deprived living conditions and possible neglect can cause undesirable outcomes that can be profound and irreversible to a child's development. Research shows that the baby's brain, body and immune systems develop rapidly and that the child's and their mothers well-being are linked very closely during the first 1000 days (thousanddays.org, no date), thus meaning that the support, care and nutrition that the mother needs during this stage will help facilitate her own and her child's health and their future, and this is a vital timeframe of opportunity (NSPCC, no date), where parents/carers are in need of support and advice to best provide for their baby during and after pregnancy.

[The first 1,000 days: their impact on a child's future, narrated by Jay Rayner \(youtube.com\)](#). This video explains how negative effects such as lack of food, clean water or healthcare can affect the baby causing the baby be underweight when born and how the lack of nutritious food affects the development of the brain.

Caregiving

Exceptional care is important as professionals are able to support the wellbeing of babies and young children along with their families during this critically opportune window, as mentioned in the introduction. Pikler (1931) stresses the importance between the baby and their caregiver, developing a relationship that creates a sense of security, trust and attachment. A caregiver is someone who will provide the baby with a continuity of care, meeting their basic needs such as nappy changing, feeding and so on. Free movement is the basis of Pikler's approach (1931), mindful and respectful caregiving incorporates this by providing babies with a sense of security and meeting their basic needs (Cooper et al., 2023). Respectful and mindful care enables the caregiver to support the baby's natural learning and curiosity needs, whilst promoting their holistic development in line with the baby's interest and needs.

Maslow's physiological stage in his hierarchy of needs (1943), is the first stage where babies' basic needs are met. By meeting their basic needs such as personal hygiene, feeding and so on main caregivers are able to support the baby's holistic development during the first 1000 days (Pichère, and Cadiat, 2015). Maslow's theory (1943) is parallel with Pikler's approach (1931) to freedom of movement and respectful care, creating a strong bond between the baby and caregiver, allowing a sense of security empowering the baby to develop holistically and providing parents/carers with a support system to help their baby learn and grow at their own pace.

[Quality Child Care: Caring for Infants \(youtube.com\)](#) This YouTube video shows what to look out for in quality childcare

What is exceptional care giving?

Professionals are able to provide exceptional care by supporting parents/carers and babies through high quality training and continuous professional development along with being able to provide earlier interventions, where better outcomes are produced and becoming more cost effective. It is also becoming more acknowledged that the needs of the children and their families are to be met holistically rather than individually or with separate services. This is where exceptional care giving provides families with what they need in the first 1000 days but also enables more effective partnerships that can help reduce the inequalities in support (National Health Services Wales, 2011).

In a 2020 report of Nutbrown's Review (2012), quality care is a professional workforce that quality care by a professional workforce that is not only stable but knowledgeable and capable is the key to supporting a child's attainment and emotional well-being as early as possible. It is also well recognised that having skilled and qualified practitioners within the early years makes a difference to children's learning and development and practitioners play an essential part in an early education and care (Pascal, Bertram and Cole- Alback, 2020). Through high quality care and education, practitioners are able to support babies and children to reach their full potential, as well as being in the position to holistically help the family, with support and information or any concerns that may arise. Having a highly skilled and interconnected workforce such as midwives, practitioners, health visitors and other multi agencies, parents/carers and their babies and young children will receive support, information and education at a time when they will need it the most.

Why is exceptional care important?

This is further supported by the Wave Trust Addendum (2013) who also mention that early identification of the needs and provision of the appropriate support for children and their families is important during the first 1000 days. The report mentions that some approaches such as revising the roles and methods during health visitors and midwife training to their social and emotional well-being assessment, providing guidance to practitioners on their professional practice, reflective supervisions and reviews on individual practitioners practice and holistic practices within the setting enabling for best practice approaches and development of staffing skills, along with additional revisions to qualifications and considering additional factors in response to Nutbrown's 2012 review.

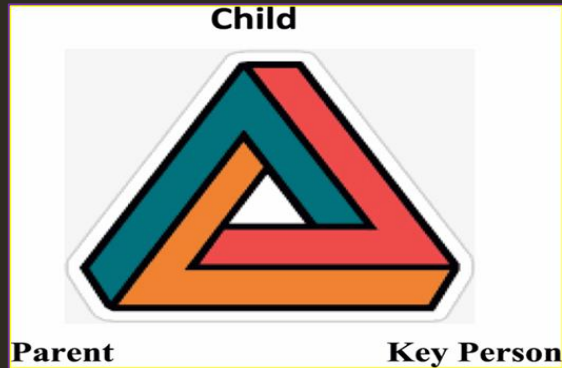
Caregiving

[NFD | NEW UI | 15s | EN \(youtube.com\)](#) A support centre such as Parents as Teachers, empowers parents/carers with the support, advice and education they need when they need it, so that they are able to give their child the quality of care and support they need when they are at home and in the community



(Borchardt, [image] 2023)

The Role of the Early Years Practitioner in Supporting Children and Families in the First 1000 Days?



(Walton and Darke-Sutcliffe (2023))

Between developing a triangle of trust and a well-established key worker system in place, babies and children are able to develop strong, nurturing and secure bonds with one or more adult. A keyworker is able to provide babies and children with emotional and social support whilst at the setting. Parents/carers will also have the confidence that their young child is having their needs met when they are at the setting but also have reassurance that they have someone to talk to about their child's needs, likes/dislikes, emotions and any concerns that they might have (Birth to 5 Matters, no date).

The role of the practitioner is to support, provide and develop stimulating activities for babies and children in their care, providing home from home experiences, create strong bonds with parents/carers and their babies and children. By working in partnerships with parents/carers and professionals, practitioners are able to support children and their families holistically in the first 1000 days. Practitioners are able to develop strong bonds and effective communication with children and their families through a keyworker system within the setting, this provides a safe and familiar caregiver for the baby/child whilst they are away from the parent/carer. A triangle of trust is created and through this; practitioners are able to foster a deeper bond between child, parent and practitioner, this will progress to forming a foundation that is stable and reliable. This will in turn support the child and their families through transitioning and promote a more connected teaching when the child moves through various journeys in later life (Walton and Darke-Stucliffe. 2023).



(University of Oxford (Social Sciences), Image, no date).

Working in partnerships means that practitioners and professionals have the opportunity to meet the needs of the families collectively as well as individually, a united service is provided within the community. The idea of working together with the belief that children, parents/carers, families and the community will have access to a wide range of support and developmental services. This facilitates families to access the appropriate help they need from the necessary agencies. From this they are able to see what their needs are and develop a greater control over their lives. Their confidence and self-worth will be boosted along with feeling more fulfilled in addition to feeling that they are able to contribute to the wider community. Families will also feel more assured in themselves to develop their skills and education. Partnership working is also an opportunity for professional agencies to reflect, plan organise and undertake changes on their joint working such as team working from an individual perspective as well as skill set and being able to combine these skills effectively to work as an efficient unit (Gasper, 2009).



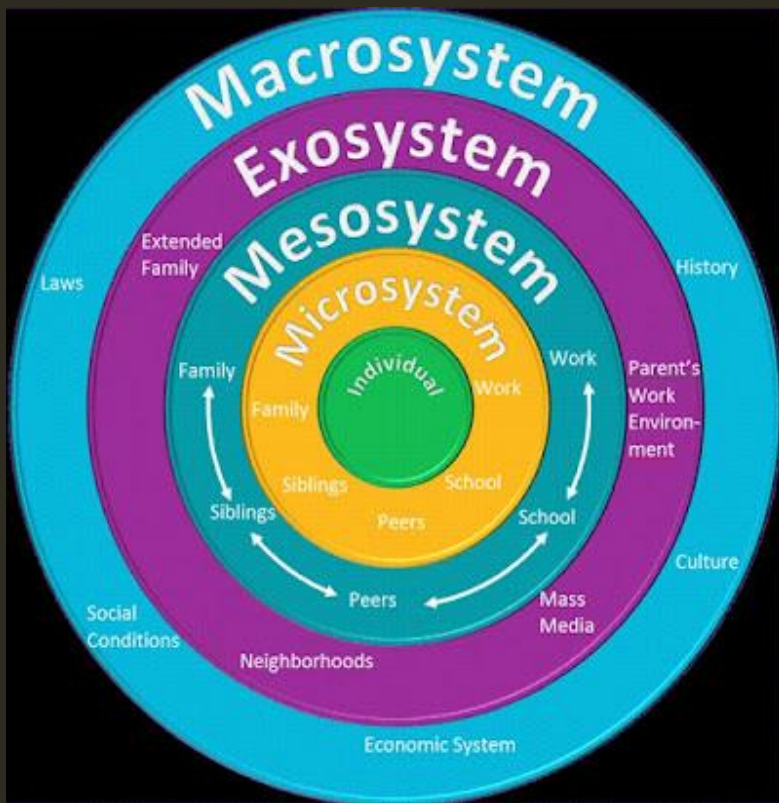
(National Portage Association, Image, no date)



(Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, Image, no date).

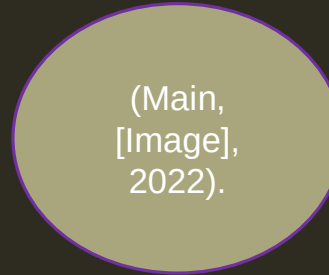
The Importance of Partnerships

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGtwk-L_VpI This video discusses the importance of working in partnership with parents.

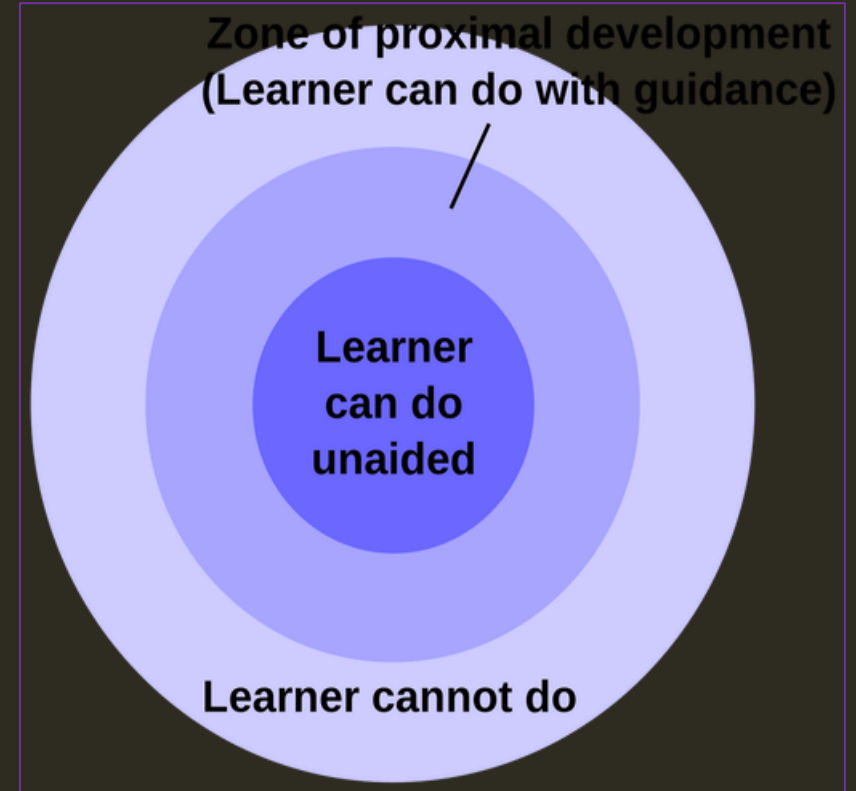


Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems (1979) demonstrates the close link between the home (parents/carers, siblings, family) and the early years setting (practitioners and peers). This provides opportunities for the child to grow, learn and develop whilst encouraging parental involvement to make positive connections with practitioners, who will be able to develop a better understanding of the child's background outside the setting and within the exosystem and macrosystem of Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979). Working in partnership with parents/carers provides an encouraging starting block for open communication, promotes attachments and confidence in communicating with each other on different subjects that can range from the child's likes/dislikes to sensitive matters for instance a parental spilt in the family. Partnerships enables practitioners to support the child and the family holistically and establishes as mentioned by Bronfenbrenner (1979) a team of individuals as the "...primary and direct influence on children's lives" (Hayes; Halpenny; and O'Toole, 2017, p. 15).

(Susan Marie, Image, 2017).



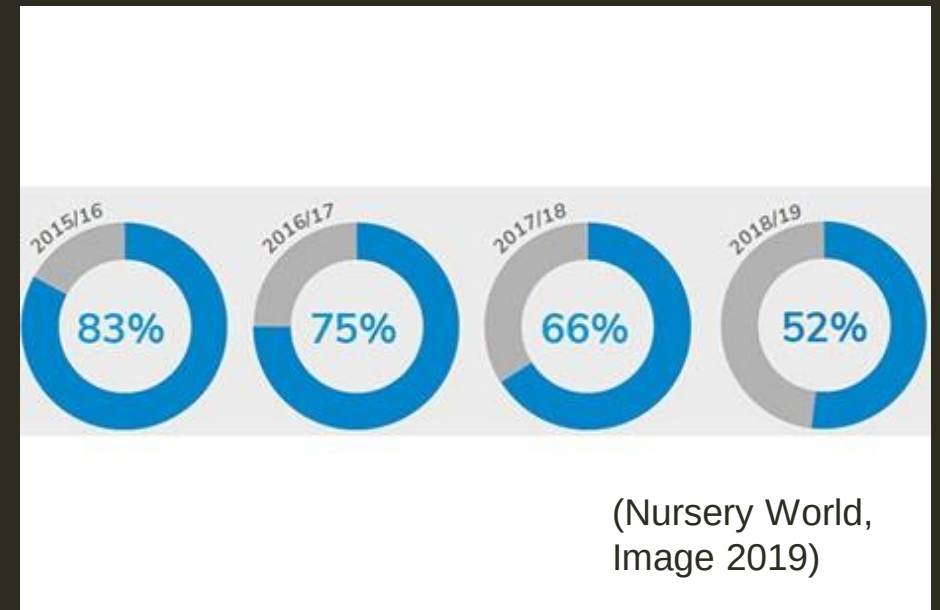
This is supported by Vygotsky (1962) who believed that children learnt through observing adults and peers, such as those mentioned within the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979). Vygotsky developed the 'zone of proximal development', where parents/carers, practitioners and peers are able to support the gap in children's learning and highlights the contributions made by others and is known as 'social constructivist view'. Through supporting and working with parents/carers and their families during the baby's first 1000 days, practitioners and parents/carers are able to provide babies and young children with play and imagination opportunities, that Vygotsky also believes is important to a child's development and learning that follows the child's interests and ideas (Pound, 2005).



Challenges

Within the early years' sector, settings may come across challenges that might cause issues with high quality care. One of these challenges is the lack of qualified staff within the sector, in Nutbrown's review (2012), she mentions having a rigorous set of qualifications to ensure a workforce that is both competent and confident in the care that they provide. Although she does mention within her review that with the current qualifications system being confusing, there are minimal qualifications that support the practitioners with the skills and knowledge needed for quality care and early education. In a similar stance to Nutbrown's Review (2012), Bonetti and Brown (2018) also highlights that it is still a confusing area for those entering the sector along with for those already in it. Alongside Nutbrown's review, a report by Cwlwm (2022) on the expansion of the flying start scheme also states the importance of highly qualified staff with those in a managerial role at a Level 5 qualification, or Level 3 qualification for practitioners. Bonetti and Brown (2018) further mention that having an early year's workforce that is highly qualified is vital in providing quality care, although they mention that the research is still trying to work out what it might mean to be qualified within the sector. Cwlwm's report (2022) does mentions that with the current issues surrounding the training, retaining and recruitment of staff has given the early years' sector as a whole, some difficult obstacles in providing high quality care within the setting. This is further supported by a survey completed in 2019 by the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), showing that nurseries are struggling with being able to offer the high quality care they strive for. Providers are stating that they gave a lesser number of level 3 qualified staff compared to the previous year. The image on the left from Nursery World provides a visual of the decreases from the NDNA's survey.

[Early Years Sector Insights - What are the biggest challenges we currently face in Early Years? – YouTube](#) This video reflects on the challenges within the early years' sector. It touches upon the challenges in staff retention and recruitment particular since Covid, confusion over the sector and what it offers and difficulty in paying practitioners what they deserve. Another factor that is mentioned is the lack of funding is not available to everyone particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. But also having additional funding for resources and understanding of how skilled and dedicated skill force who have supported children's development and learning particularly in light of the pandemic.



Wooden blocks were introduced by Frobel (1837), to provide babies and children with the opportunity to move from simple play to more complex play as they develop. They provide babies with the chance to explore different connections, providing simple and easy learning as they play with simply designed blocks. Wooden blocks provide children with holistic development opportunities such as creative, exploration of the environment and physical development (fine and gross motor skills). Wooden blocks provide social and language development and enables sensory and co-ordination skills. As children grow beyond their first 1000 days, wooden blocks will continue to provide children with various developmental skills including imaginative play and along with phantasy (using blocks to recreate real life experiences) and fantasy play (creating imaginary worlds such as dinosaurs, unicorns and more). Block play also lends itself to loose parts play as practitioners are able to provide items such as twigs, wooden pegs, pine cones and so much more to enable children's holistic development (Whinnett, 2023).



(The Bump, Image, 2023)



(Pacella, Image, 2023)

Activities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhZcUhQvD>

[og](#) This Video explains the benefits of Piaget's triangle for children's development and some different activity ideas for different ages and stages



Cereal scoop and crunch box

Nanny Gunna
ARTS, CRAFTS & PLAY

Messy/creative play provides babies and children with hands on experiences to explore different textures, tastes, senses, develop confidence and imagination, understanding of the environment, concentration and so on. Different creative and messy activities can be offered to babies and children, some examples are painting, shaving foam, edible sand, crunch/nature boxes (Jackson, 2023). Creative and messy activities can be adapted to suit the child's age, stage and maturity. Messy/creative play enables babies and children in their first 1000 days to develop foundational skills that will enable them to progress on to more complex learning skills. Messy/creative play promotes babies and children's natural curiosity alongside the development of senses, motor skills, cognitive and language skills (Headstart ECLKC, 2022). Natural materials can also be used within messy/creative play such as twigs and leaves, providing the opportunity for mark making in paint, sand, shaving foam and more. Fragrant flowers/shrubs, herbs, spices and natural materials can also be added to water play and playdough for further sensory development.

(Nanny Gunna, Image, 2020)



TUMMY TIME PAINTING

(Mama.papa.bubba, Image, 2016)

[Open ended toys for 2 year olds: This is why they need them! | How to start Montessori at home \(youtube.com\)](#)

OUR FAVOURITE OPEN-ENDED TOYS ON A BUDGET



www.littlelifelonglearners.com

(Little
Life Long
learners
Image
2018)

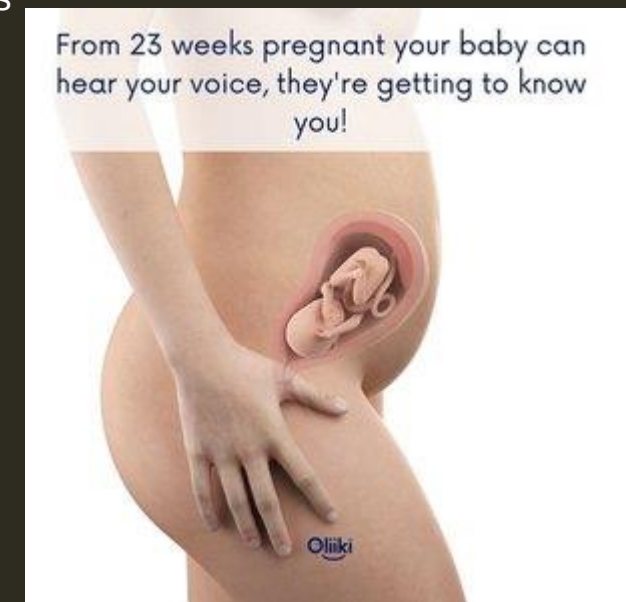
Reading aloud during pregnancy and throughout the first 1000 days and beyond is beneficial to the baby's brain development. Introducing reading aloud to babies and children develops their communication skills and provides them with information about their environment. Alongside these skills babies and children will also be introduced to listening, memory and vocabulary skills. By their first birthday, babies will have learnt the sounds they will need in their native language. Babies who have been read to and have been talked to more often, will know more words by the age of two than those who have not been read to (Lewis, PhD, 2023). Parents/carers and practitioners are able to expose babies to the same language, vocabulary and patterns of speaking enabling babies to develop language, vocabulary and grammar skills they may not usually be exposed to. Reading aloud fosters bonds between babies and adults, giving opportunities for attachments to be made. Being held whilst being read to will engage the baby's neurons in the brain making them more receptive to cognitive and language stimulation (Sheldon-Dean, 2023). It is never too early to start to read aloud to the baby, parents could start reading aloud during pregnancy. This is due to the baby's hearing starting to develop, whilst they are in the womb, at around 15 weeks. Babies may start to hear your voice, heart beat and muted sounds from the outside world (NHS, 2021). At around 22-24 weeks, the baby will start to respond to external sounds. By birth, the baby will be able to recognise their parent's voices and this is where reading aloud can provide babies and parents the opportunities to develop those early bonds and language skills that will benefit the baby's development (Charlotte Lozier Institute, 2023).



(Gordon.
Image
2022)



(raisingchild
ren.net.au,
Image,
2023)



(Oliiki,
Image,
2021)

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