



Exceptional Care



Introduction.

The first 1000 days are critical for a baby's brain development. These first 1000 days set the foundations for a child's emotional, cognitive and physical development. Although the first 1000 days are the most important days in a baby's life, they are also the most vulnerable days they will experience in their developmental journey. As parents, care givers or professional practitioners we are able to identify needs that a child may have. If left too late some children might not have their needs identified until later in their life. Young babies at this stage are yet to develop appropriate language skills meaning that it is the adult, parent or care givers role to advocate for the child's needs at that time. Every baby and child deserve a healthy start to life meaning that babies will be reliant on their care giver or parents. A baby's development is dependent on their parents or care givers health also. Babies will develop a loving attachment to their carer or parent which will then influence their brain development later on in life. The first 1000 days are also critical for a child's

development and communication skills. By the age of two, a child should be able to walk, have a work bank of 50 or more words, kick a ball climb and scribble on paper. However, this does depend on the parents' interactions with the baby. The mother also needs to have a healthy mental state during the pregnancy and after birth to ensure that a bond can be created between mother and baby. Babies need at least one stable relationship with an adult in their life. Important skills are created from this relationship such as physical, cognitive and social skills. Having one stable relationship can lead to the baby having emotional scaffolding for early development.

Current Challenges



The Curriculum for non-maintained settings aims to ensure that effective planning will allow professional practitioners to make the best use of their settings environment and available resources. Professional practitioners will work with the relevant professional networks and will draw items and ideas from the Curriculum for Wales National Network to support professional and learning development. Professional practitioners should look for opportunities to share knowledge and skills between sectors. Some children entering the settings of education will already be familiar with the routine, sounds and sights. This would make the transition easier for these children from home to an educational setting.

The new curriculum allows children to work to their own targets for their abilities not to work towards a required target for their age. The foundation phase encourages children to be imaginative and creative to make their learning journey more enjoyable. (Welsh Government , 2021)

can be caused by physical, communicational sensory or learning difficulties. A healthy balance between children lead learning and practitioner lead learning ensures that these barriers can be crossed effectively or avoided. Learning through play is crucial to how children develop intellectually and how they become self aware. (WAG), 2015)

Activity Ideas



A common form of play in children is role play. Children will also use many different other types of play. Children will use language when playing that displays who they have connected with in their early life.

As early years practitioners we must offer hands-on, meaningful and purposeful experiences to each individual child. Professional practitioners must encourage independence in each child, allowing the child to take risks to experience success during their learning. Children should be able to have access to uninterrupted learning and should be involved in all activities available. By offering multi-sensory play to children, they are able to be inspired by the creativeness of others and potentially spark some creativity in themselves. A range of materials should be provided for the children which offer different opportunities for the children to discover new things. Children should be encouraged to develop their creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. (Kalkman, K. and Clark, A. (2017)

The Curiosity Approach is designed to allow children and babies to learn about items and ideas that interest them. By following the curiosity approach, the adult will swap commercialised toys for recycled materials and or authentic items. Loose parts can be collected from items that are no longer used or items that are no longer needed for a specific purpose. The loose parts can range from items as large as tyres to as small as buttons. By using these items the child has a chance to use their imaginative brain and develop creativity skills. (L.Helyn S.Bennett , 2019)

Environments

Factors such as an activity's location, a child's choice and the presence of an adult can influence whether the child feels as if the task is work or play. For example when observing children it is important that the professional practitioners make observation a part of the daily routine so that the children are not disturbed in their work or play.

Practitioners can also participate in the activities to ensure that the child is engaging in the activity. By providing an enriched environment, the child will be able to decide on their own learning activities. The child can also then show interest in their own activities within the enriched environment.

By providing an enriched environment and professional practitioners who are ready to educate, children will be able to enhance their knowledge, education and creative skills. (Karen L. Bierman, Celene E. Domitrovich, Robert L. Nix, Scott D. Gest, Janet A. Welsh, Mark T. Greenberg, Clancy Blair, Keith E. Nelson, and Sukhdeep Gill, 2008)

The UNCRC in article 31 states that children have the right to play. The foundation phase in Wales also emphasises the importance of learning through play, a play-based curriculum and the holistic development associated with play.

Professional Partnerships and Relationships



Practitioners inevitably develop a close relationship with the children in their care. This relationship can be described as 'professional love' and describes the loving and affectionate bond between child and professional practitioner. Adults who display professional love should be able to offer sensitivity towards the young children in their care and being able to understand what they need to do in order to make the child feel safe and loved.

(University of Sheffield, 2015).

Professional relationships between practitioners and children are important as many children will see the professional practitioner in their setting as a person they can trust and they could potentially look up to them as a role model. By offering a confident to the children, they will develop crucial communication and emotional skills. By doing this the children are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Bronfenbrenner's theory discusses the influence of social environments on human development. Their theory argues that the environment in which you are brought up in affects every aspect of your life. The social factors that you encounter will determine your way of thinking, likes and dislikes and the emotions that you will feel. (University, 2019)

Respectful Care



Professional practitioners must always offer respectful and meaningful care. An example of respectful care is baby lead weaning. The philosophy proposes that when solids are introduced to the baby, the baby should be encouraged to feed themselves with solid food as opposed to being spoon fed. Baby lead weaning is effective for some children but might present as an issue for some children who are developmentally delayed. (Wright, C.M. *et al.* (2011)

It is also important that a routine is established when the children arrive at the educational setting. For example, arriving at school, hanging their coat and bag up, answering to the register, waiting for the teacher to announce the daily activities and so on. This ensures that the child is aware of what is going to happen throughout the day. Routines can make a child feel safe and secure.

Working with children requires effective communication and is a crucial part when building relationships. Babies also take part in communication. Although babies do not use words to communicate, they will communicate in their own way what their needs are. When carrying out a daily routine with a baby, professional practitioners will often find themselves interacting and communicating back with the baby to initiate the early language skills. A baby's potential for communication will increase with their intellectual development as time goes on. (Petrie, 2011)

International Approaches



The Reggio Approach states that professional practitioners and children will learn from each other and together. This follows the idea that the child is leading the learning. Forest schools will also promote children lead learning and adapting key skills by learning from nature and risk taking. The forest schools support the holistic development of children by encouraging long term learning and having appropriately trained and professional pedagogues (teachers).

The Te Whariki approach in New Zealand views learning holistically also. This approach emphasizes learning through exploration and play. The Te Whariki approach will make the child aware of the cultures around them.

A safe and secure environment is needed for children to be able to learn and develop. Children need to feel safe in their environment in order to learn effectively.

The Foundation phase Wales focuses on learning through play. Learning through play is the main way a child will learn. The Foundation phase Wales focuses on language, literacy and communication skills, mathematic skills, Welsh language and creativity. One these skills are adapted in the child the child will be able to develop other social and intellectual skills.

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