Little Lives, Big Futures

The Importance Of High Quality Care During The First 1000 Days

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AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Copilot in line with the guidance given by UWTSD for Module ECEY4005 between 01/12/25 & 18/01/26 to
I used the prompt(s):

1. Create me an image of a care wheel with the headings – consistency and stability, Coordinated support, trust and engagement, early identification and intervention and emotional support for parents. Use pastel colours

2. Create an image to represent an enabling adult using bright attractive colours – use the words respectful, calm, enabling, role models, sharers of joy, confident, proactive, conscious observer, nurturing, curious

3. Find me all UK reports and research on the sustainability of childcare services
4. Help me find all recent publications and reports on recruitment and retention issues in childcare / UK
5. Put all these Harvard references into alphabetical order

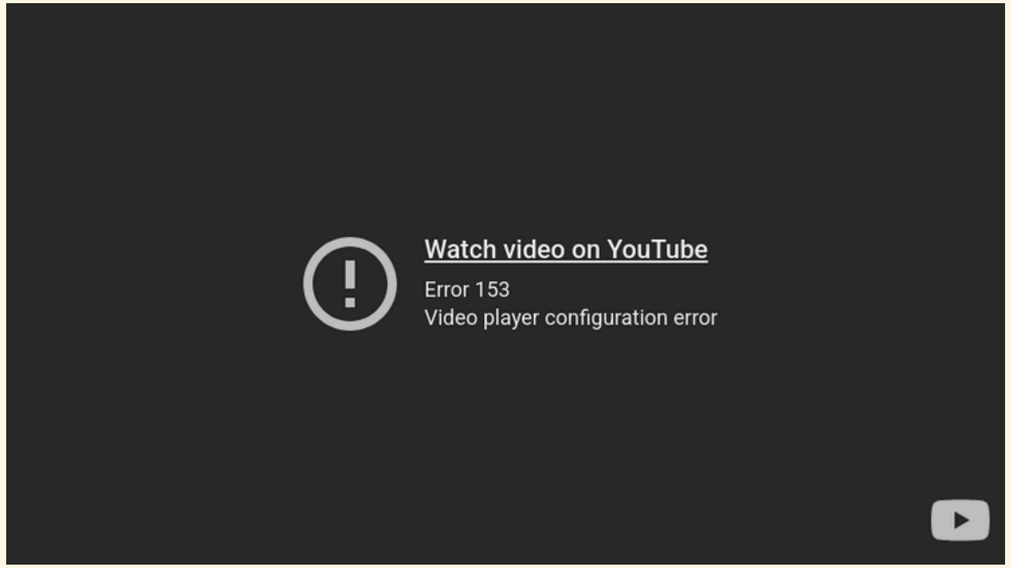
I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work

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An Introduction To The Importance Of The First 1000 Days



(UNICEF, 2023)

This video created by UNICEF highlights the importance that the first 1000 days has on a child's future development.

The first 1,000 days of life, from conception to the age of two represent a critical window for shaping lifelong health, learning, and wellbeing. Exceptional infant care goes beyond meeting basic physical needs; it is a holistic, responsive, and inclusive approach that prioritises secure relationships, respects individuality, and creates environments that foster emotional, cognitive, and physical development (UNICEF, 2023).

During this period, a baby's brain forms over one million neural connections every second and reaches about 80% of its adult size by age two (Centre for early childhood., 2021).

Ensuring high quality care and support for both the child and their caregiver throughout this time is essential, as inadequate nutrition and stimulation can leave one in three children under five at risk of not reaching their full developmental potential.

Comprehensive research tells us that early care and experiences profoundly influence brain architecture, emotional regulation, and social development during this period (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007).

Early experiences influence how babies neural connections form and strengthen, laying the groundwork for cognitive skills, emotional regulation, and social development in future years. Stable, nurturing relationships and supportive environments promote resilience and healthy growth, while adverse experiences or neglect can disrupt brain development, increasing the risk of long term challenges in learning, behaviour, and mental health (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007).

Exceptional care therefore integrates evidence based practices, cultural sensitivity, and professional collaboration to ensure every child thrives.

This scrapbook explores what exceptional care can look like in practice, weaving together theory, research, and creative approaches to nurture little lives for big futures.

The Importance Of The First 1000 Days

This model, developed by Public Health Wales and grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), offers a dynamic visual representation of the multiple, interrelated influences that shape a child's development.

Research suggests that development does not occur in isolation but within a complex system of relationships and environments that interact over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

At the centre of the model is the child, surrounded by the most influential factors which are secure, nurturing relationships and responsive caregiving.

These primary connections are critical for emotional regulation, attachment, and early learning. They are strengthened by conditions such as adequate nutrition, language rich experiences, and predictable, positive routines, which collectively support cognitive and physical growth (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007).

High quality childcare which for many families acts as an extension of the home, plays a pivotal role within this core layer. It provides consistent, responsive interactions with skilled practitioners, structured opportunities for play based learning, and environments that promote social, emotional, and language rich development (Flying Start, 2023).

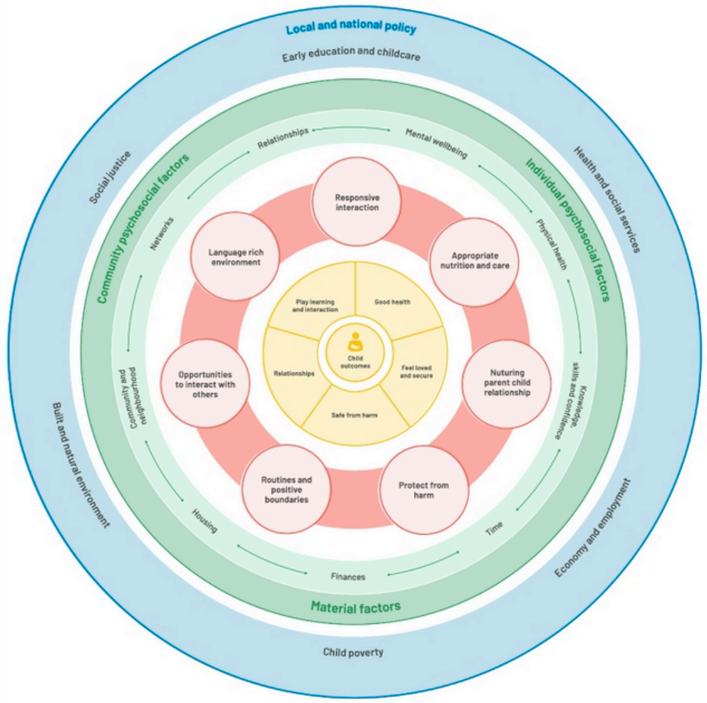
Moving outward, the model incorporates broader determinants, these include individual wellbeing factors such as parental mental health, community level supports such as social networks and accessible services, and material conditions like housing stability and financial security.

Each factor interacts dynamically with the child's closest surroundings, demonstrating how pressures or protections in one area can shape outcomes across others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Encompassing all layers are local and national policies, these include access to resources, equity of opportunity, and systemic support for families, including funding and quality standards for childcare provision

This highlights the importance of structural support in ensuring every child benefits from consistent, high quality environments that nurture long term development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Figure 2: A Public Health Model of Parenting Support



(Public Health Wales, 2023)

So Why Is Exceptional Care So Important?

Exceptional care during this time is vital, It offers rich social and linguistic interactions that scaffold early learning and self regulation. Guided participation and meaningful social interaction particularly through language and shared activities form the foundation for cognitive growth and emotional competence (Vygotsky, 1978).

In Wales, this principle is embedded in policy through initiatives such as First 1000 Days, The Healthy Child Wales Programme and Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan, all of which prioritise prevention, early intervention, and integrated family support (Welsh Government, 2017).

These frameworks exist because babies thrive when consistent, compassionate care is provided across all environments home, childcare, and community. Predictable routines, nurturing relationships, and collaboration between caregivers foster stability, trust, and belonging, enabling children to develop agency, attachment, and emotional security (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

High quality childcare is central to Welsh Governments commitments, These services provide parents with access to skilled practitioners, language and communication support, play based learning opportunities ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life (Welsh Government, 2025).

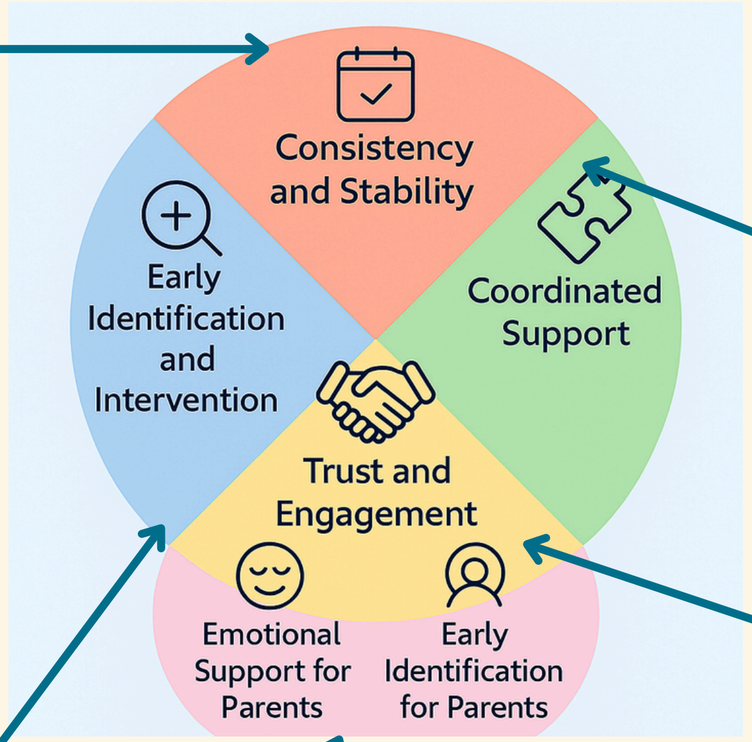
Together, these approaches highlight that investing in the earliest years is a strategic priority for building healthier, more resilient communities and breaking cycles of disadvantage for future generations.



(Canva generated image, 2026)

Professional Relationships And What Exceptional Care Looks Like For Babies And Parents:

Babies thrive in predictable, secure environments, and this begins during pregnancy. Strong, trusting relationships between practitioners, health visitors, and families ensure continuity of care from the antenatal stage through early childhood. This consistency reduces stress for expectant parents, promotes maternal wellbeing, and creates a sense of safety that supports healthy fetal development. By fostering stability and emotional security, professionals lay the foundation for positive attachment and long term outcomes for both parent and child (Bowlby, 1988).



The first 1,000 days involve multiple domains and access to a number of professional services such as health, nutrition, emotional development, and learning.
Effective professional collaboration enables integrated services, ensuring timely interventions and a holistic support package that has the child and the parent at its center (Public Health Wales (2020).

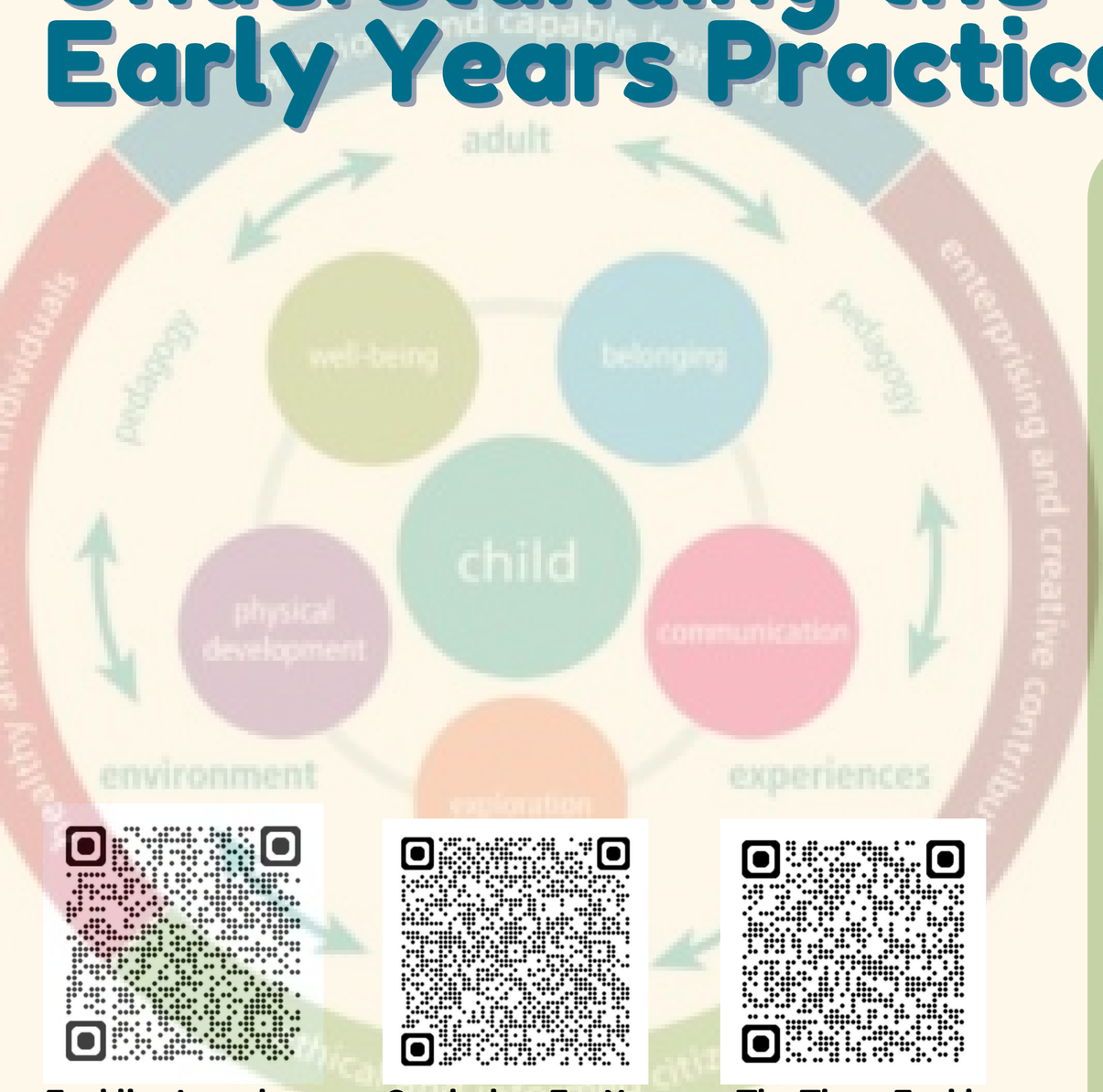
Multiagency teams such as midwives, health visitors, social workers, and childcare practitioners can identify safeguarding risks or specialised support needs early and act quickly to prevent harm or to access the services needed.
Shared protocols, joint assessments, and routine information sharing strengthen collaboration, enabling timely responses to issues like poor nutrition, attachment difficulties, or safeguarding concerns (BMC Health Services Research, 2023).

Parents are more likely to engage with services and follow guidance when they trust professionals.
Positive relationships foster open communication, allowing practitioners to identify concerns early for example developmental delays, maternal mental health issues, drug and alcohol reliance
(Welsh Government, 2017).

The transition to parenthood can be overwhelming. Strong professional relationships provide emotional reassurance and practical advice, reducing parental stress and improving caregiving quality.

James, L. (2026) Conceptual illustration of holisitc care wheel (Image). Created using AI design tools.

Understanding the Three Enablers in Early Years Practice



In 2022, the Curriculum for Wales introduced the three enablers, offering a shared understanding of how children's learning and wellbeing are best supported in early years settings ensuring that exceptional quality of care sits at the centre.

While not new concepts, they draw on established early childhood theory, placing trusted thinking within a contemporary Welsh context.

The enablers reflect Froebel's holistic view of learning, Emmi Pikler's focus on respectful, child centred care, and the Reggio Emilia principle of the environment as an active partner in learning.

Together, they highlight that learning happens through relationships, meaningful experiences and the spaces children inhabit.

By bringing together enabling environments, rich experiences and responsive adults, the three enablers work in harmony to support high quality pedagogy across early years provision in Wales, placing children's wellbeing, learning and sense of belonging at the centre of practice (Curriculum for Non Maintained Settings, 2024).

(Curriculum for Wales, 2023)

Enabling Learning - Curriculum For Wales

Curriculum For Non Maintained Settings

The Three Enablers and their link to Froebelian principles

Enabling Adults



James, L. (2026) Conceptual illustration an enabling adult (Image). Created using AI design tools.

Within the three enablers the enabling adult sets the tone for children's wellbeing and learning within the setting. They move at the child's pace, offering time, trust and autonomy through calm, predictable routines that honour agency, curiosity and competence (Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, 2024).

Enabling adults → Engaging experiences:

Care and learning moments are unhurried and relational. Feeding, nappy changing and settling become shared experiences, where adults prepare the child, invite cooperation and narrate what is happening. Face to face, attuned interactions supported by sensitive touch and eye contact build trust, attachment, self regulation and a sense of self as an active partner (Pikler,2001).

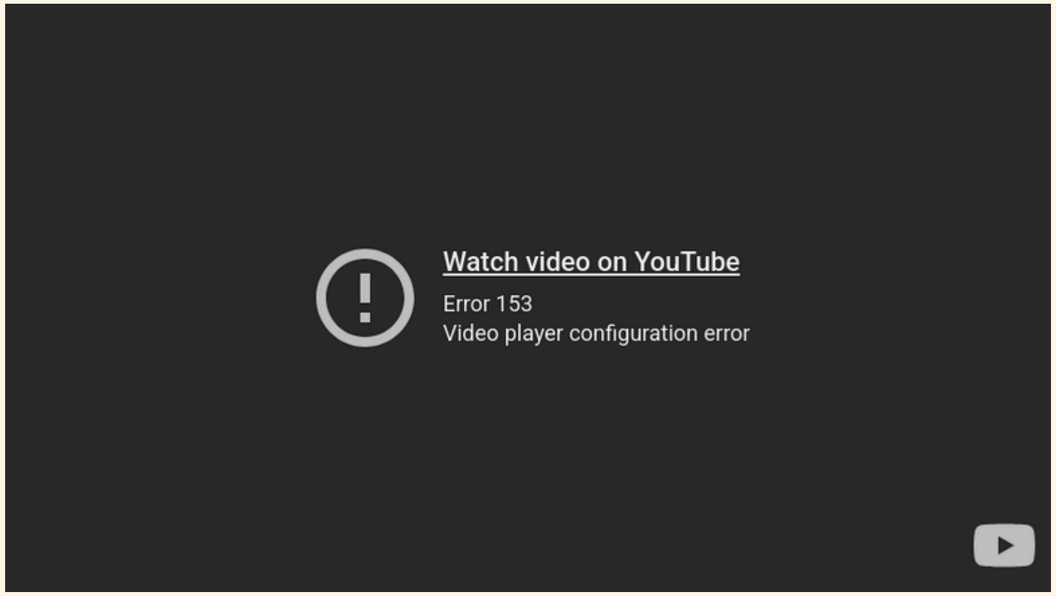
Enabling adults → Enabling environments:

Adults curate spaces and materials that provoke curiosity, collaboration and deep thinking, then document children's ideas to make learning visible and inform next steps (Malaguzzi, 1998). Observation is disciplined: wait, watch, wonder, then offer just enough help protecting uninterrupted play and concentration. Consistency of caregivers provides emotional security so children have meaningful opportunities to explore and master skills through free movement and self-initiated play (Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, 2024).

Professional Relationships And What Exceptional Care Looks Like In A Childcare Provison:

Professional Love and The Importance Of Attachment

The concept of professional love, developed by Professor Jools Page at the University of Brighton, emphasises the importance of emotionally warm, trusting relationships in early years care, while maintaining clear professional boundaries. Rather than viewing affection as unprofessional, this approach recognises that genuine, ethically grounded care supports children to feel safe, valued and secure, which is essential for learning, wellbeing and development (Page, n.d.). When practitioners combine empathy with responsibility and provide consistent, responsive care, they create nurturing environments that promote a sense of belonging and support exploration, learning and the formation of secure attachments (Bowlby, 1969).

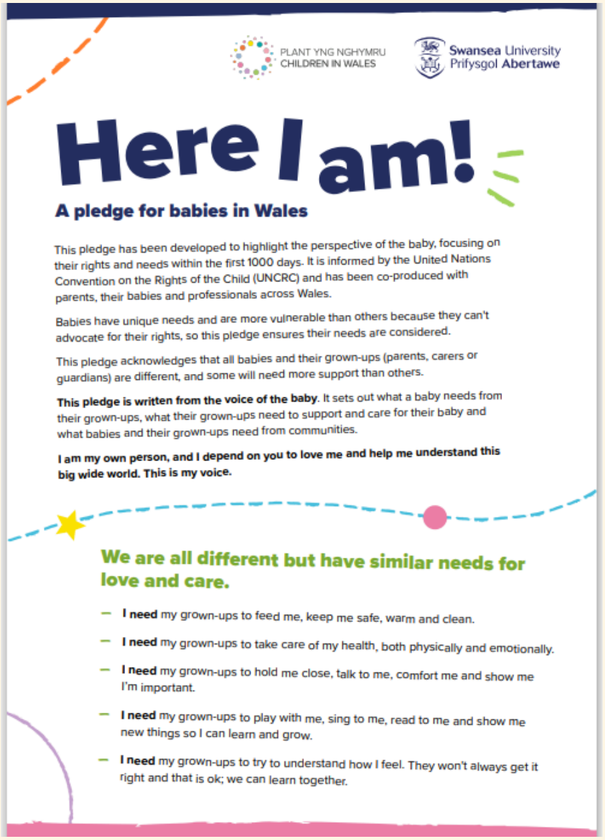


(YouTube, 2024)

Connecting The Babies' Pledge To Professional Practice

Developed by Children in Wales in partnership with Swansea University, the Babies' Pledge is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and emphasises the importance of the first 1,000 days of life. Co-created with parents, carers, professionals and babies, it brings together academic evidence, professional expertise and lived experience (Children in Wales, 2023).

Strong professional relationships are central to the Babies' Pledge, as the quality of interactions between practitioners, leaders, parents and health professionals directly shapes babies' care experiences (Children in Wales, 2023). Consistent, responsive and attuned care relies on trusting partnerships that support continuity, shared understanding of individual cues and coordinated approaches to babies' holistic needs (Brodie, n.d). The Babies' Pledge helps align these practices across settings and professionals, ensuring babies receive predictable, respectful and responsive care regardless of who is with them (Children in Wales, 2023). By centring babies' rights, voice and dignity, it recognises them as active, competent individuals and strengthens the quality of everyday care moments such as feeding, settling and nappy changing where wellbeing and learning are shaped.



PLANT YNG NGHYMRU CHILDREN IN WALES

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

Here I am!

A pledge for babies in Wales

This pledge has been developed to highlight the perspective of the baby, focusing on their rights and needs within the first 1000 days. It is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and has been co-produced with parents, their babies and professionals across Wales.

Babies have unique needs and are more vulnerable than others because they can't advocate for their rights, so this pledge ensures their needs are considered.

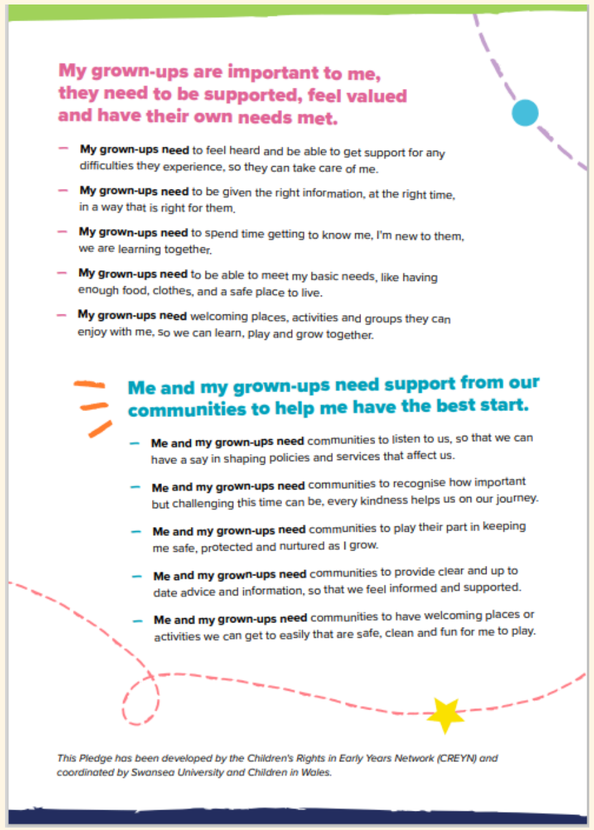
This pledge acknowledges that all babies and their grown-ups (parents, carers or guardians) are different, and some will need more support than others.

This pledge is written from the voice of the baby. It sets out what a baby needs from their grown-ups, what their grown-ups need to support and care for their baby and what babies and their grown-ups need from communities.

I am my own person, and I depend on you to love me and help me understand this big wide world. This is my voice.

We are all different but have similar needs for love and care.

- **I need** my grown-ups to feed me, keep me safe, warm and clean.
- **I need** my grown-ups to take care of my health, both physically and emotionally.
- **I need** my grown-ups to hold me close, talk to me, comfort me and show me I'm important.
- **I need** my grown-ups to play with me, sing to me, read to me and show me new things so I can learn and grow.
- **I need** my grown-ups to try to understand how I feel. They won't always get it right and that is ok; we can learn together.



My grown-ups are important to me, they need to be supported, feel valued and have their own needs met.

- **My grown-ups need** to feel heard and be able to get support for any difficulties they experience, so they can take care of me.
- **My grown-ups need** to be given the right information, at the right time, in a way that is right for them.
- **My grown-ups need** to spend time getting to know me, I'm new to them, we are learning together.
- **My grown-ups need** to be able to meet my basic needs, like having enough food, clothes, and a safe place to live.
- **My grown-ups need** welcoming places, activities and groups they can enjoy with me, so we can learn, play and grow together.

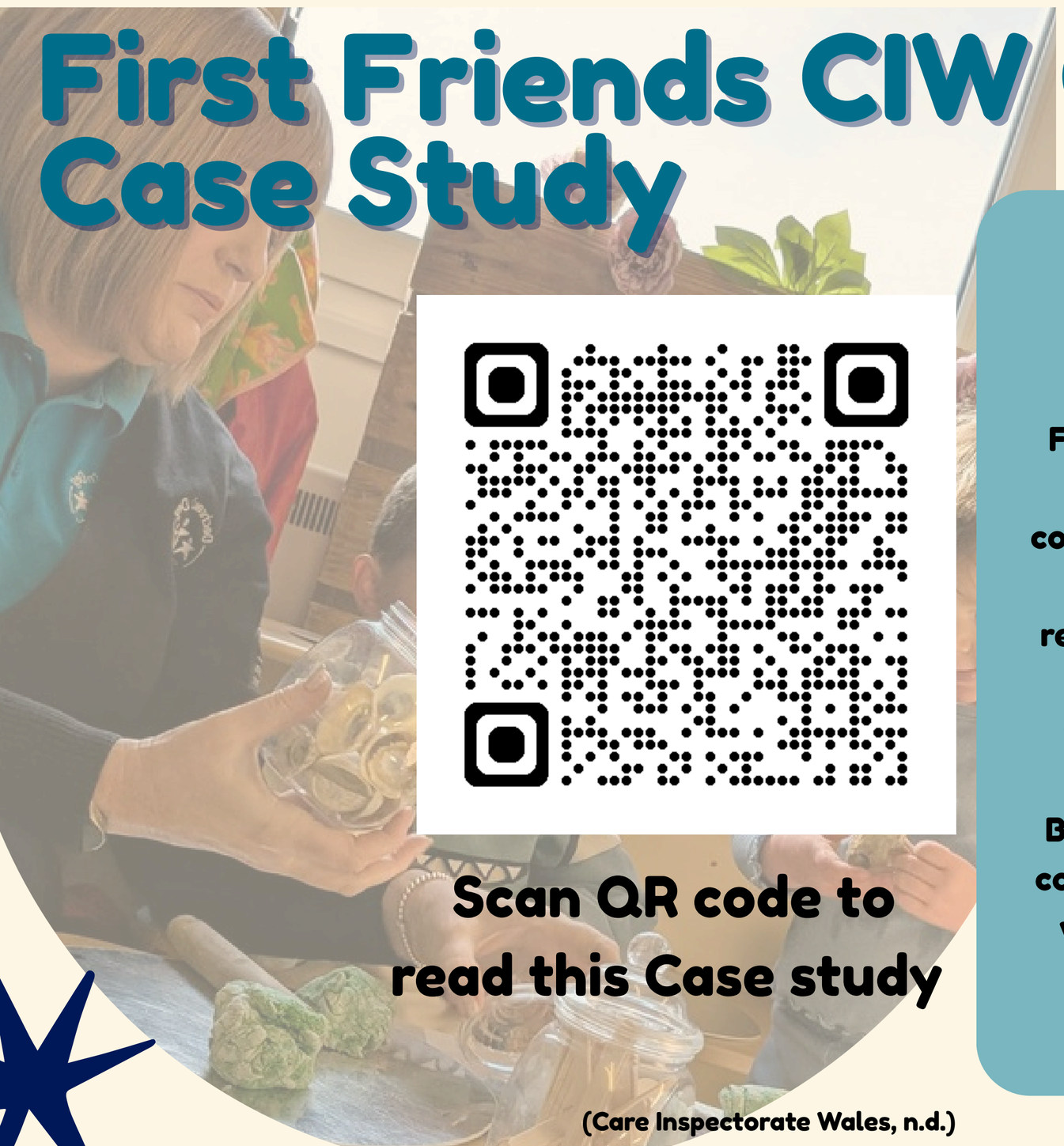
Me and my grown-ups need support from our communities to help me have the best start.

- **Me and my grown-ups need** communities to listen to us, so that we can have a say in shaping policies and services that affect us.
- **Me and my grown-ups need** communities to recognise how important but challenging this time can be, every kindness helps us on our journey.
- **Me and my grown-ups need** communities to play their part in keeping me safe, protected and nurtured as I grow.
- **Me and my grown-ups need** communities to provide clear and up to date advice and information, so that we feel informed and supported.
- **Me and my grown-ups need** communities to have welcoming places or activities we can get to easily that are safe, clean and fun for me to play.

This Pledge has been developed by the Children's Rights in Early Years Network (CREYN) and coordinated by Swansea University and Children in Wales.

(Children in Wales, 2023)

First Friends CIW Good Practice Case Study



Scan QR code to read this Case study

First Friends is a registered Flying Start setting that recently received a Care Inspectorate Wales commendation for its work in promoting children's emotional wellbeing and secure attachments.
Following training in trauma and attachment informed practice, practitioners place strong emphasis on consistent, trusting relationships between staff, children and families, recognising these professional relationships as central to effective emotional support.
Practitioners respond sensitively to children's cues, validating emotions and supporting them to manage strong feelings safely.
By working in partnership with parents and maintaining continuity across the team, staff encourage exploration while remaining available for reassurance, creating a secure environment where challenge is supported through shared, relational practice.
(Care Inspectorate Wales , 2026).

(Care Inspectorate Wales, n.d.)

Effective Environments

This video from a childcare setting awarded Excellent by Care Inspectorate Wales illustrates how these principles can be woven into the environment, creating spaces that invite exploration, nurture curiosity, and foster a sense of belonging for every child who attends.



(James, 2020)

An effective environment is central to high quality early years practice. It shapes how children think, interact and learn every day (CFNMS, 2024).

Purposeful design turns spaces into a dynamic partners in learning, sparking curiosity, sustaining inquiry and enabling children to make sense of the world through first hand exploration.

When spaces are thoughtfully planned with varied lighting, clear organisation and carefully selected, high quality materials they signal respect for competence, invite exploration and collaboration, and raise the level of engagement (Hellyn and Bennett, 2021).

Displays, artefacts and documentation make learning visible and progressive, valuing process over product and helping adults plan precise next steps (Bradbury, 2022).

Shared, well resourced areas foster co construction of knowledge, negotiation and problem-solving; through hands on, sustained exploration children revisit ideas, test theories and deepen understanding (Malaguzzi, 1998).

A well designed environment drives better outcomes confidence, belonging, language, thinking and self-regulation because it listens, responds and evolves alongside children (CFNMS, 2024).

What Are The Challenges Impacting The Sector - Recruitment and Retention

What challenges and barriers are affecting progress in recruitment and retention?

The childcare sector in Wales, alongside the wider UK, continues to face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining early years practitioners. These pressures affect settings of all types and sizes, contributing to workforce instability and making it harder to meet growing demand for high quality provisions (NDNA, 2024).

Recruitment and retention are shaped by a range of systemic and practical factors, including low pay, the perceived status of the profession, high workloads and the added challenges of rural delivery (Department for Education, 2023).

Together, these issues undermine workforce stability and the sustainability of provision across Wales.

- Low Pay, Status, and Working Conditions
- Chronic Recruitment and Retention Gaps
- Burnout and Career Insecurity
- Uneven Recruitment Across Regions
- (Social Mobility Commission, 2020)

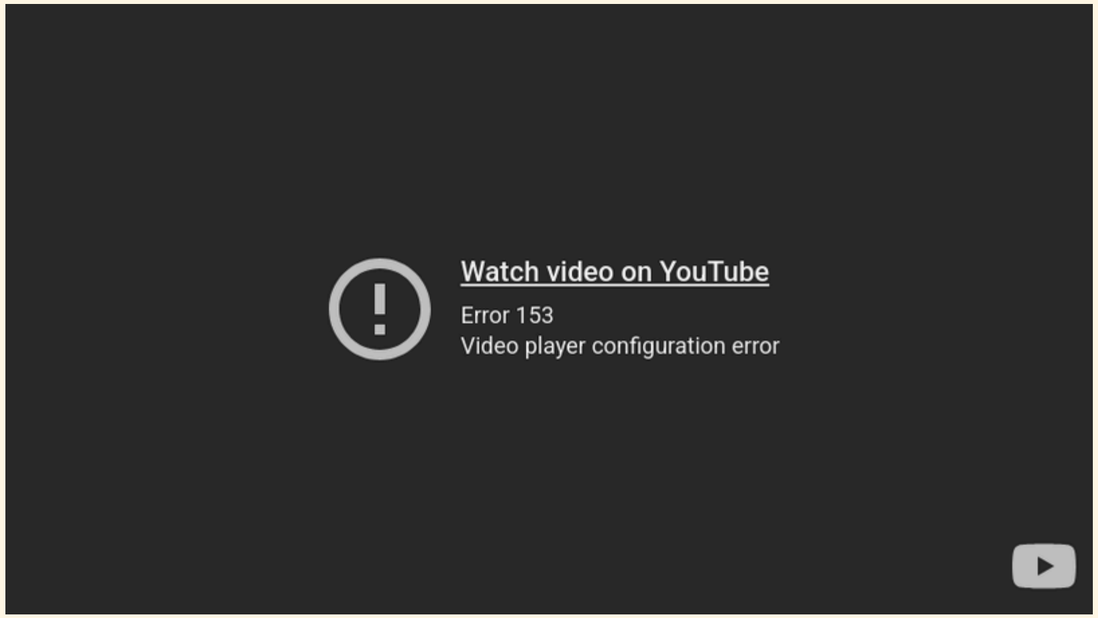
57% of nursery and pre-school staff and 38% of childminders were considering leaving the sector.
An estimated 50,000 additional staff were required both in 2024 and 2025 just to maintain provision and deliver expanded entitlements.
Only 17% of settings said they could increase spaces due to staffing shortages.
(Early Years Alliance, 2024).

- Level 3 childcare qualifications dropped 28% since 2018/19.
- 19,200 childcare roles remained unfilled in 2024.

(YMCA England & Wales, 2025).

(Canva generated image, 2026)

What Are The Challenges Impacting The Sector - Recruitment and Retention



(Department for Education, n.d.)

This video was created as part of a national recruitment campaign to address growing workforce shortages in the early years and childcare sector. Its purpose is to raise the profile of early years roles, challenge misconceptions about the profession, and encourage more people to consider a career in childcare by highlighting the value, impact, and social importance of the work.

What Can Help Address These Challenges

- Align compensation with comparable roles and elevate societal recognition of early years work.
- Offer clear career pathways by introducing structured progression, qualifications pathways, and CPD to retain committed staff.
- Enhance flexibility and wellbeing by Promoting part time contracts, flexible hours, and mental health support (Senedd Research, 2024).
- Strengthen recruitment campaigns by boosting visibility and engagement (Welsh Government, 2024).
- Leverage insights from workforce mapping to direct funding, training, and campaigns to the areas most in need (NDNA, 2025).

What Are The Challenges Impacting The Sector - Funding

Mapping the childcare and play workforce in Wales (Welsh Government, 2024)

The Early Years Workforce in England (NFER, 2025)

Review of Childcare Services in Northern Ireland (Department of Education (NI), 2023)

Financial Sustainability Health Check of the Childcare Sector in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2023)

Despite significant policy expansion, there is widespread recognition across all UK Nations that government funded childcare hours do not adequately reflect the true cost of delivery. Feedback from the sector, Parliamentary briefings and independent analysis consistently indicate that funding rates have failed to keep pace with rising operating costs including staffing, premises, utilities, and regulatory requirements leaving childcare providers struggling to remain sustainable

(Nation.Cymru, 2025)(Education Policy Institute ,2020).

These pressures undermine the financial sustainability of settings, contribute to the decline of childminders, and reduce parental access, especially for low income families and children with additional needs. This has a considerable impact on workforce participation and child poverty goals (Welsh Government, 2024).

Despite recent uplifts and targeted relief from the Welsh Government, evidence from providers in Wales and sector organisations suggests that the existing funding model remains fundamentally unsustainable, requiring reform of funding rates and commissioning practices to ensure long term viability of the sector (NDNA Cymru, 2024).

NDNA Cymru reports that 97% of Welsh providers say the current Childcare Offer rate does not cover delivery costs, with an average shortfall of £1.91 per child per hour (NDNA Cymru, 2024).

The Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee found that funding rates have not kept pace with rising costs, threatening sector sustainability (Senedd Research, 2024).

What Can Help Address These Challenges

- Introduce cost reflective childcare funding rates in line with the true cost of delivery (Welsh Government, 2024).
- Implement inflation linked reviews of funded childcare rates
- Introduce cost reflective childcare funding rates in line with the true cost of delivery (Estyn,2024).
- Implement annual, inflation linked reviews of funded childcare (Senedd Research, 2024).
- Simplify and consolidate childcare funding streams, including Flying Start and the Childcare Offer (NDNA, 2024).
- Provide targeted sustainability funding for settings in areas of high deprivation and those supporting children with ALN (Estyn, 2024).
- Ensure full and sustainable funding for the expansion of Flying Start provision (Welsh Government, 2024).
- Invest in the early years workforce, including pay, training and career progression (Estyn,2024).
- Use childcare funding more strategically to support prevention and early intervention (NDNA,2024).

(Canva generated image, 2026)



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Meaningful Experiences

The Great Outdoors - Engaging Experiences In the Outdoor Environment

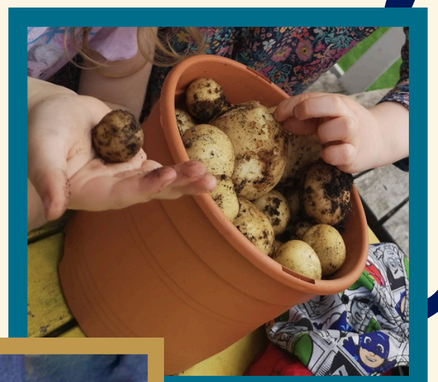
Outdoors should be seen as an extension of the baby room.
For under 2s, frequent, calm opportunities to spend time in nature offering short, repeated visits across all seasons offer rich sensory input, free movement and changing stimuli that support balance, coordination, attention and wellbeing (Forest school, 2011).
Taken inspiration from Denmark's Skovbornehave tradition, The CFNMS draws on the importance of daily immersion and child agency no matter the child's age (CFNMS, 2024).
A quality childcare provision who has a strong ethos that supports outdoor play takes inspiration from Norway's friluftsliv which is a slow, relational culture of being outside that nurtures belonging and care for the living world (Bakken, 2020).
Additionally, seen through a Froebelian lens, the outdoors is a "garden for children's real, first hand experiences with nature' (Froebel Trust, n.d).
It offers freedom with guidance; and knowledgeable adults who co regulate gentle "risk and challenge" appropriate for babies and toddlers.
In practice, we curate simple natural materials and varied terrains, stay close and responsive, and let learning unfold at the child's pace so curiosity becomes confidence and wellbeing in the earliest years.
This approach reflects Welsh guidance on making the outdoors a core part of everyday learning, not an add-on to be considered only at set routine times of the day (CFNMS, 2024).



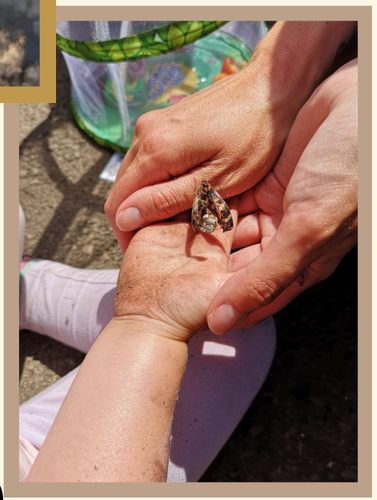
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The Great Outdoors -
Engaging Experiences In the Outdoor Environment

Outdoor Activity	What This Looks Like in Practice	Key Benefits for Babies & Under-2s
Daily micro-visits outdoors (all weathers)	Short, frequent outdoor time, wrapped, sheltered or barefoot as appropriate	Builds regulation, resilience and curiosity; supports circadian rhythms and wellbeing (Forest school, 2011).
Exploring uneven natural surfaces	Crawling or cruising on grass, gravel, mud, bark or leaves	Develops balance, proprioception, strength and spatial awareness (Froebel trust, n.d).
Natural loose parts play	Stones, pinecones, sticks, shells, leaves placed within reach	Encourages exploration, early problem-solving and autonomy (Froebel trust, n.d).
Weather experiences	Feeling rain, sunshine, wind; watching leaves move	Supports sensory integration and awareness of cause and effect (CFNMS,2024)
Nature listening walks	Sitting or being carried while noticing birds, wind, water	Enhances attention, early listening skills and emotional regulation (CFNMS,2024)
Outdoor treasure baskets	Natural objects for mouthing, holding, banging, smelling	Supports sensory exploration and early cognition (Froebel trust, n.d).
Sheltered outdoor calm spaces for rest and sleep	Blankets, dens or canopies outdoors	Promotes security, attachment and sustained engagement (Froebel trust, n.d).
Gardening with babies	Touching soil, watering, watching plants grow	Introduces living systems, patience and care (Froebel trust, n.d).







(James, 2025)



Light play

Light, shadow and reflection offer babies and toddlers calm invitations to explore, supporting early brain organisation, visual development and sustained attention. During the first two years of life, when neural connections and sensory systems are developing rapidly, gentle, child led light play such as soft lamps, torches, mirrors, moving shadows and light boxes allows babies to practice focusing, tracking movement and coordinating their actions. These repeated experiences support depth perception, hand eye coordination and the early skills needed for self-regulation, as children learn to pause, attend and respond to sensory information (Royal College of Ophthalmologists, n.d).

Meaningful learning in light play emerges through repeated, open ended encounters that allow babies and toddlers time to observe, experiment and notice cause and effect. As light, shadows and reflections change, children begin to form early theories about pattern, movement, space and their own actions within the environment (Ministry of Education,2017).

In Reggio Emilia inspired practice, where the environment is understood as a ‘third teacher’, light is treated as a material for thinking rather than stimulation. Thoughtfully curated spaces using light, mirrors and transparent materials invite children to test ideas, express curiosity and communicate thinking, while supporting calm, sustained inquiry (Malaguzzi, Gandini & Edwards, 2013).

Through repeated encounters, children are given time to form understanding, while attuned adults offer presence and language rather than direction. In this way, light play reflects the Reggio belief that even the youngest children are capable, curious meaning makers, expressing understanding through a ‘hundred languages’ of movement, gaze and wonder (Vecchi, 2010).

(James, 2025)

Schematic Play

Schematic play describes the ways in which babies and young children explore and make sense of the world through repeating the same actions. These may include posting objects, carrying items, lining things up, or watching things move.

These repeated behaviours reflect purposeful thinking and developing understanding, rather than random play.

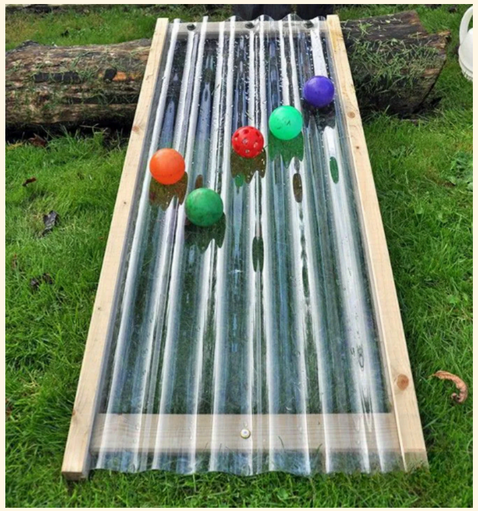
By recognising schematic play, practitioners can better identify children's interests and respond with learning experiences that are attuned, responsive and meaningful (Nutbrown, 2011).



(cosydirect, 2026)







Schema	What it looks like	Examples of activities (under 2s)
Trajectory	Interest in movement, direction and dropping	✓ Watching water pour from cups ✓ Rolling balls down a gentle slope ✓ Kicking leaves or soft toys
Transporting	Carrying objects from place to place	✓ Carrying toys in baskets ✓ Moving objects between containers ✓ Pushing a small trolley or box
Containment	Putting objects in and taking them out	✓ Posting shapes into boxes or tubes ✓ Filling and emptying baskets ✓ Putting soft toys into a box
Enveloping	Covering, wrapping or being covered	✓ Playing peekaboo with cloths ✓ Covering dolls or themselves with blankets ✓ Wrapping objects in fabric
Rotation	Interest in turning, twisting and spinning	✓ Turning wheels on push toys ✓ Spinning lids on containers ✓ Spinning balls on flat surfaces
Connecting	Joining or separating objects	✓ Simple pop-together toys ✓ Linking rings or chains ✓ Stacking and unstacking blocks
Positioning	Lining up or arranging objects	✓ Lining up cars or blocks ✓ Placing objects carefully on shelves ✓ Repeatedly placing toys in specific spots
Enclosure	Creating boundaries or enclosed spaces	✓ Playing inside cardboard boxes or dens ✓ Sitting among cushions ✓ Exploring tents or soft-play tunnels

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