

AI Statement

I have used AI to support the creative element, creating images.

I used the following Microsoft Copilot prompts:

Neural synapse image creation

Ultrasound image generation

Pregnancy and first 1000 days visual

Child with fruit and supplements image creation

Declining funding graph image creation

Designing a cosy child's bedroom image

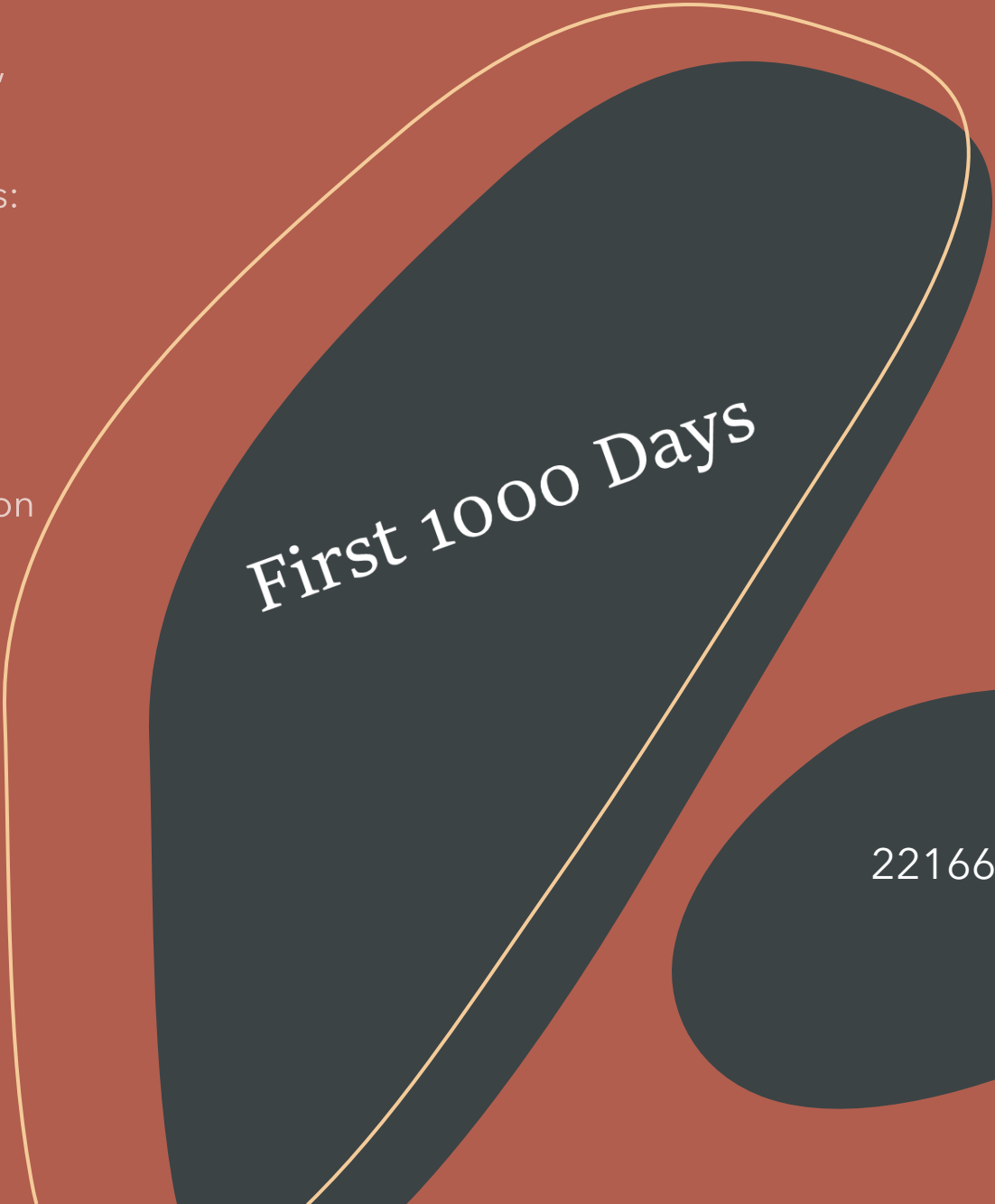
Design an image of a midwife and a baby

Designing a relaxing bath image

Emmi Pikler's 7 key principles image

Bowlby's key principles image

Bronfenbrenner's key principles image



First 1000 Days



2216691



[Pregnancy health | BabyCentre](#)

The first 1000 days

[Bing Videos](#)

STAGES OF PREGNANCY



1000 DAYS

From conception to 2 years of age, the first 1000 days are extremely important in a child's development. The building blocks of all development happen during this time.

For a child to develop to their full potential, receiving exceptional care is paramount: multiple factors will be required including partnership working, stimulating environments, engaging and challenging activities, balanced and nutritious diet and established routines.

[The First 1000 Days programme](#)

A Public Health initiative for supporting parents with young families

It is a report describing how parents, communities, and the wider society can work collaboratively to give children in Wales the best start in life.

It highlights the pivotal role parents play in shaping their children's lives in the first 1000 days. It also considers how intervention to support parents to thrive in this role as parent / caregiver has the potential to break intergenerational cycles of detriment and support the wellbeing of future generations.

Without this support, relationships may break down, children will develop at a slower rate and outcomes significantly impacted. Public Health Wales (n.d)

[The First 1000 Days programme - Public Health Wales](#)

Establishing and accepting routines

Ready to Relate (an organisation established within the NHS) states that babies are extraordinary learners. They absorb far more information than adults. They pick up language, learn to walk, grasp, and manipulate objects. They are constantly discovering emotions, relationships, memory, cooperation, and culture. At the same time, they're developing a sense of self and beginning to understand and care about the thoughts and feelings of others. Every moment is a development of communication and meaning-making for them. Adults become more skilled at filtering out unnecessary information, so there is an ability to focus. Babies, however, need the opposite skill set. They stay open to the world so that they can take in everything they are exposed to.

Focus, however, is not an established skill in the early stages of development. Babies are easily distracted and drawn to anything new. The primary caregiver may notice how animated babies become around someone or something familiar: smiling, laughing, and lighting up. The opposite can be true around those who are less familiar. Some might suggest that this can feel like a display of rejection, as though the baby prefers others. This reaction simply reflects how beautifully their brain is designed to seek out newness, gathering new information, and connecting socially. This is how neuropathways develop, how babies learn to interact with the world around them and how they develop new skills needed for later life. Developing neuropathways involves creating new neural connections (also known as synapses) in the brain through various activities and practices. Science Direct (n.d).



*Early Childhood Science Explained: Our
Developing Brain*

Neural Pathways: Mapping Brain's Intricate
Communication Networks

In the earliest years of a child's life, routines serve as reliable anchors that offer structure, stability, and a sense of safety. From waking up in the morning, to the bedtime routine and winding down, these daily patterns play a crucial role in supporting healthy development. Exploring why routines matter reveals just how powerful a consistent schedule can be for children. Ready to Relate NHS (2026).



Bing Videos

Why Routines Matter for Children

Introducing routines early gives children a dependable framework that helps them feel secure. Predictable daily activities: from getting ready in the morning to settling down at night, support key areas of development. Recognizing the value of routines helps caregivers nurture a child's social, emotional, and academic growth. Without these routines, babies become untrusting in their caregivers, struggling with resilience and other skills required as they grow.

The Role of Routines in Social and Emotional Development

Studies highlight how strongly routines contribute to positive social and emotional development. Consistent daily patterns help children build self-regulation skills, which are essential for managing emotions and behaviour. With these skills, children are better equipped to handle everyday challenges with confidence and resilience. Ready to Relate NHS (2026).





Partnerships



Delivering exceptional care through collaborative working

Partnership working supports exceptional care as Pikler's (1940) theory suggests. David Olds (a professor of psychology at the University of Colorado, in the United States of America) established the early intervention programme which ensured visits by nursing professionals were made to low-income, first-time mothers during pregnancy and early stages of birth. Whilst establishing this research, it was apparent that there was a reduction of social problems, such as anti-social behaviour and lower rates of abuse towards the child, neglect and mental health. (Olds 1998) This 'Family Nurse Model' has been trialled in the United Kingdom.

The Welsh Government set out new standards promoting the care new mothers should expect. This improved service supports pregnant mothers and their families with the outcomes and experiences during this time. This improved level of care actively involves mothers as they navigate their journey through childbirth, and beyond, supporting mothers with their preferences for example, selecting where they would like to give birth. Public Health Wales NHS (2025).

Bing Videos

Bing Videos

phw.nhs.wales/news/adopting-a-public-health-approach-to-supporting-parents-can-help-give-children-best-start-in-life/a-public-health-approach-to-supporting-parents/

NUTRITION

The Department of Health and Social Care (2025) advises that breastfed babies from birth to 1 year should receive a daily vitamin D supplement of 8.5 to 10 micrograms to ensure they get enough. Babies who drink infant formula do not need a vitamin D supplement if they consume more than 500ml (around a pint) of formula each day, as formula is already enriched with vitamin D and other nutrients. Children aged 1 to 4 years should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Vitamin A is also essential for babies and young children. It supports a healthy immune system, helps with vision in low light, and keeps skin healthy. Foods rich in vitamin A include dairy products, fortified spreads, carrots, sweet potatoes, swede, and mangoes. Along with dark green vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, and broccoli. Vitamin C plays an important role in a child's overall health and immune function. It also helps the body absorb iron. Foods rich in vitamin C include oranges, kiwi fruit, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes, and peppers. A balanced diet for young children is essential. Ensuring that babies and young children eat a varied diet is key to providing all the energy and nutrients they need for healthy growth and development.

Without a nutritionally balanced diet, growth will be slow and the impact on learning and development will be detrimental.



Key Principles of the Pikler Approach (1940)

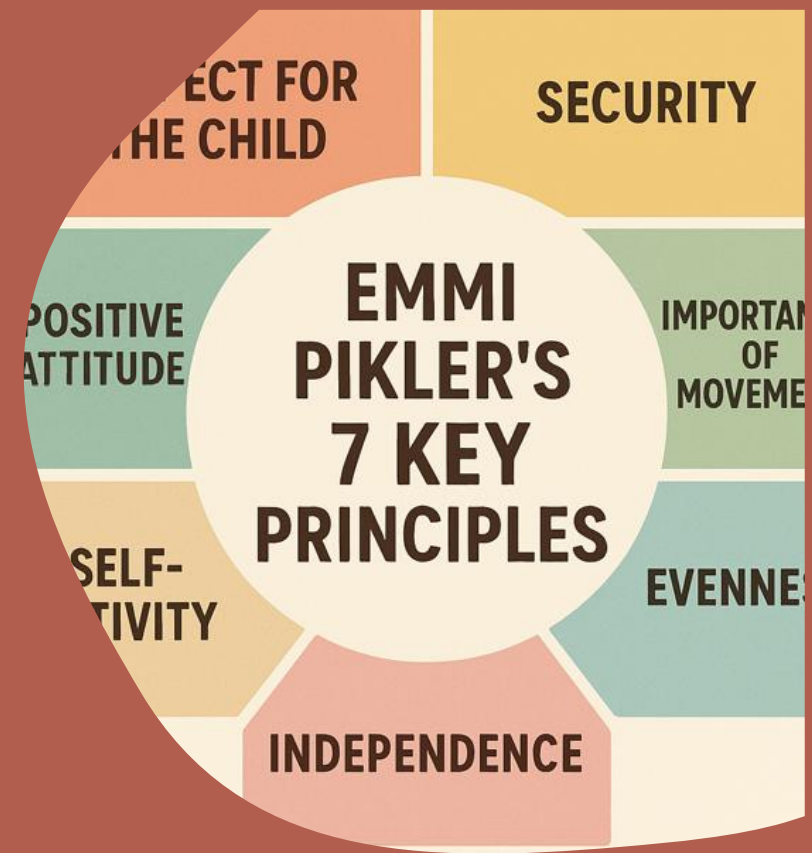
Respect for the Child: Pikler (1940) emphasized treating children as competent beings with their own likes, dislikes and abilities, fostering autonomy and self-confidence from an early age.

Freedom of Movement: The approach advocates for allowing children the freedom to move and explore within a safe space. This freedom is paramount for developing skills and their sense of independence. Pikler believed that children should not be constrained in their movements, as this can hinder their natural development.

Responsive Caregiving: Caregiving routines (such as feeding, dressing, and changing) are seen as opportunities for meaningful interactions between caregivers and children. These moments should not be rushed and should be focused on building trust and connection.

Natural Development: Pikler's theory suggests that children develop best when they are allowed to progress at their own pace. Caregivers are encouraged to observe and support children's natural impulses rather than directing their actions.

Building Relationships: Establishing secure, trusting relationships between caregivers and children is fundamental. This relationship is built through consistent, respectful interactions that allow children to feel safe and valued. Pikler, E (1940).



Key Principles of the Bowlby Approach

Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) highlights the significance of early emotional bonds between children and their primary caregivers, which are crucial for emotional development and future relationships.

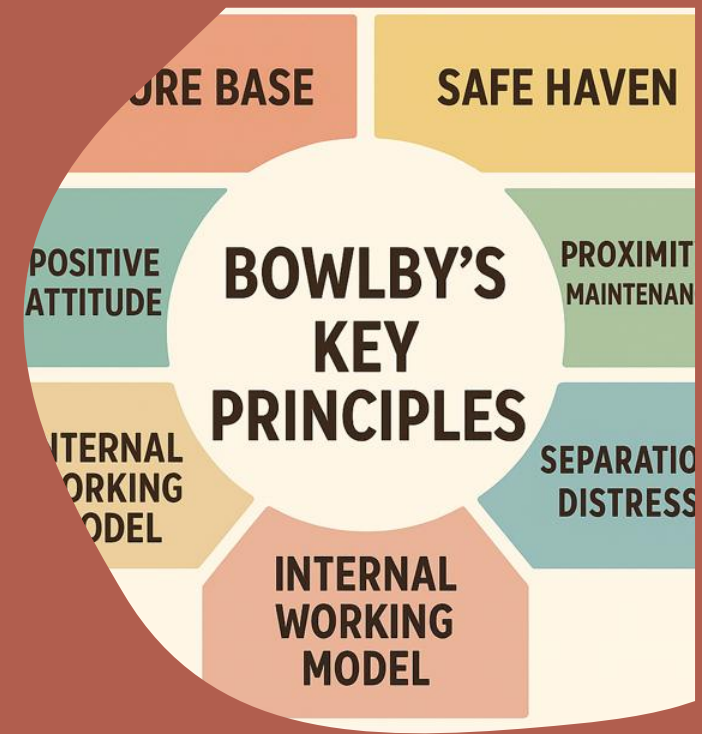
Innate Need for Attachment: Bowlby proposed that children are biologically programmed to form attachments as a survival mechanism. This innate drive ensures that infants remain close to their caregivers, who provide protection and support.

Monotropy: This concept suggests that a child forms a primary attachment to one main caregiver, typically the mother, which is more significant than any other attachments. This primary bond is crucial for the child's emotional security.

Critical Period: Bowlby identified a critical period for attachment formation, primarily within the first 2.5 years of life. Failure to establish a secure attachment during this time can lead to long-term emotional and social difficulties.

Internal Working Model: The early attachment experiences create a mental framework that influences how individuals perceive and interact in future relationships. This model shapes expectations about the availability and responsiveness of others.

Secure Base: Bowlby introduced the idea of a "secure base," where a caregiver provides a stable and safe environment from which a child can explore the world. A secure attachment fosters confidence and independence in children. Bowlby, J (1969).



Bowlby's Attachment Theory Explained

Key Principles of the Bronfenbrenner Approach

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of child development, known as the Ecological Systems Theory, views child development as a complex system influenced by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. It consists of five systems:

Microsystem: The immediate environment, including family, school, and peers.

Mesosystem: The interactions between different microsystems, such as the relationship between family and school.

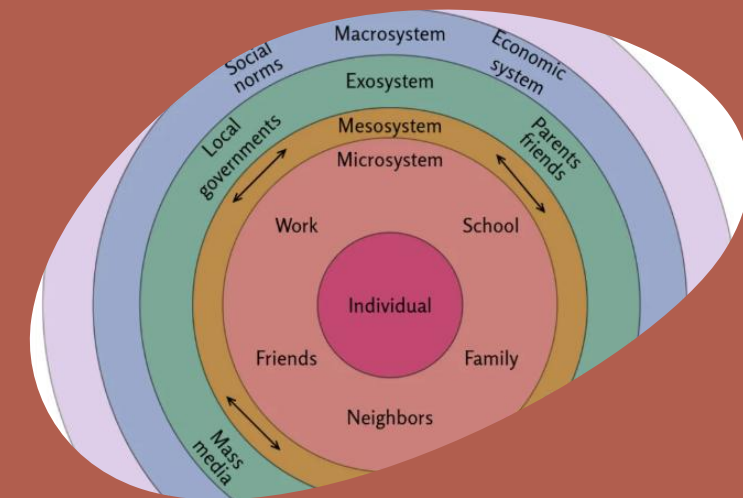
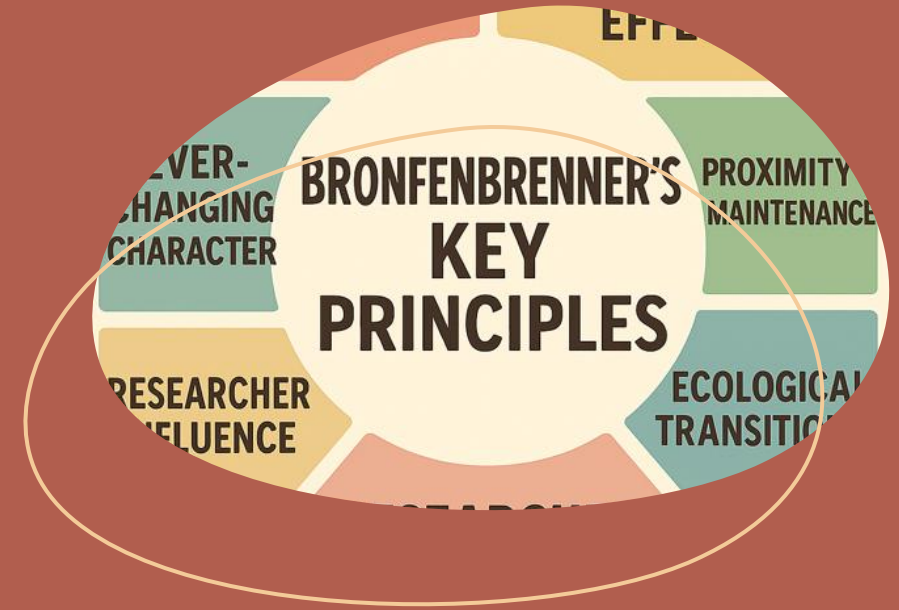
Exosystem: External environmental settings that indirectly affect the child, like parental workplaces.

Macrosystem: The broader cultural context, including societal values and laws.

Chronosystem: The dimension of time, reflecting changes and transitions in the child's life.

This theory emphasizes that children do not develop in isolation but are part of a complex network of relationships and environments that shape their growth and behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner, U (1979).



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems: 5 Forces Impacting Our Lives

As there appear to be parallels, it could be considered that Pikler's (1940) theory had some influence over the 'Person Centred' practice as widely used within the education system in Wales, specifically embedded within the ALN Act (2018) where this approach underpins the entire code supporting professional partnerships, as demonstrated by Pikler's theory.



Emotionally available adults who provide exceptional care, as reflected by Bowlby (1969), is an approach implemented when supporting pupils within the education setting, more often this approach is utilised when a child is suffering with historical trauma and requires additional support. TIS UK (Trauma Informed Schools UK 2010) promotes the implementation of supportive adults to work alongside individuals who require additional emotional support.

what is a trauma informed school or organisation?

When creating a tailor-made plan for children who struggle to follow a generalised system, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory appears to be the rationale behind this approach. Emphasizing the need for a tailored education and promoting a more personalized supportive model. Bronfenbrenner's theory has provided an understanding and is improving educational practices, ensuring that children receive support that aligns with their various backgrounds and levels of need.



Challenges

Funding

The Early Intervention Foundation (2017), reported that Poverty and economic stress affect the quality of inter-parental relationships, and this in turn impacts on child outcomes. Long-term studies indicate that parents living in poverty or facing financial strain are more likely to experience conflict in their relationships, which can negatively influence children's development. Economic pressure can undermine parents' mental health, contributing to relationship difficulties and challenges in parenting. These challenges may involve reduced sensitivity, less time spent engaging with their child, and an increased likelihood of using harsher parenting approaches. Such patterns are associated with later problems for children and young people, including externalising behaviours (for example, antisocial behaviour), internalising difficulties (such as anxiety), academic struggles, physical health issues, and social or relationship problems. A number of protective factors can help families with low incomes remain resilient in the face of relationship and parenting pressures. These include strong maternal social support, effective coping skills, good communication and problem-solving abilities, and support from external support agencies such as midwives, NHS support, educational professionals, the wider community and neighbourhood.



Physical and mental health during and following pregnancy.

According to the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2021) mental health difficulties during the perinatal period are widespread, affecting up to 20% of women.

These conditions can include antenatal and postnatal depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and postpartum psychosis. The perinatal period spans from conception through to the child's second birthday. Younger mothers, particularly those aged 25 and under, face an increased risk of poor mental health that can continue for up to three years after giving birth. When left untreated, perinatal mental health problems significantly contribute to maternal illness and death, with nearly a quarter of maternal deaths occurring between six weeks and one year after pregnancy being linked to mental health causes. One in seven of these deaths are due to suicide. The impact extends far beyond the mother, influencing infant mental health, child and adolescent wellbeing, social care, adult mental health services, physical health, education, housing, welfare systems, and broader issues of social justice. It is reported that perinatal mental health problems cost the NHS and social services an estimated £8.1 billion for each year's cohort of births, with a substantial portion of this cost arising from negative effects on children. As highlighted in the Chief Medical Officer's Report, "just as the seeds of a long and healthy life are sown in childhood, so too are the origins of much mental illness." Ensuring that all women can access appropriate care during pregnancy and the first two years of their child's life is essential to reducing the long-term impact of maternal mental health difficulties on infants, adolescents, and adults.



Activities

Info for the foldable sensory table and recipe are in the description section. Subscribe for more!

Multisensory and stimulating environments

Brodie (2018) reports that it is imperative that young children (babies especially), have as much room as possible to move around and explore. Babies should be encouraged to move and stretch, this can be done by putting toys and items of interest, within eyesight, but just out of reach. This encourages moving and stretching to reach the item of interest. This also encourages good hand-eye coordination, self-awareness and determination. Promoting the independent movement of babies, in the way of bottom-shuffling and crawling, encourages independence.

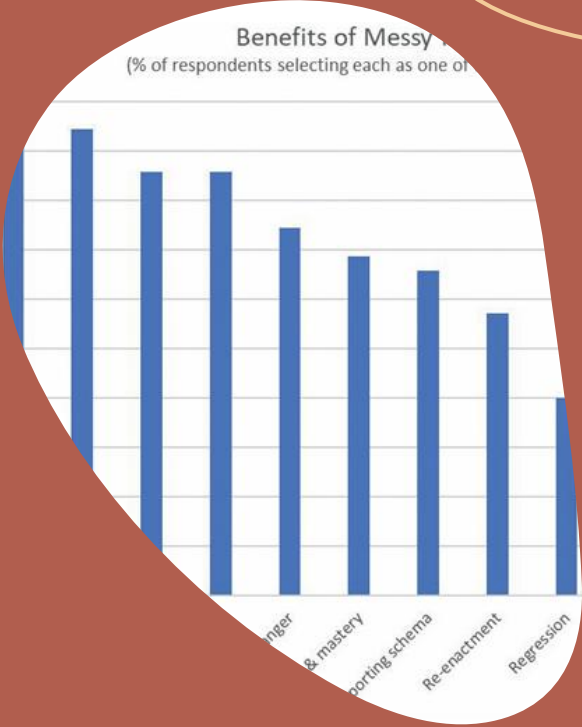
Small adaptations to the environment can actively encourage engagement. Crinkly paper on the floor, for example will create an alternative, playful experience for young children, thus, promoting engaging activities and supporting the development of independence. Activities which are interesting will result in active engagement. Adults planning for these activities should consider how to make them more motivating. However, consideration should be given to the cohort of those using the environment and adaptations should be made if the resources are no longer relevant or interesting. Babies can be encouraged to take calculated risks to explore environments for themselves and test their own limits (with support from adults). Brodie, K (2018).



Gascoyne (2018) reports that a child makes sense of the world through rich, multi-sensory, hands-on experiences, such as exploring small parts, outdoor experiences and messy play etc. Sensory receptors located in the sense organs (such as the skin) and specialised sensory cells, take in energy from these experiences and send that information to the Central Nervous System, which then produces a response or action.

Repeated stimulation of these receptors and neural pathways, whether through physical interaction or exposure to sensory-rich materials, increases their activation and lowers the threshold needed to trigger a response. This highlights the parent/caregiver's role in providing plentiful sensory and motor experiences. A child's past experiences and the emotions tied to them can significantly influence how sensitive or responsive their sensory systems become. Gascoyne, S (2018).

making a sensory activity for my toddler 
#sensoryactivities #toddleractivities #mumlife



Examples of resources

Examples of resources that stick to the skin	Dried lentils, rice, split peas, porridge, salt, etc. Leaves, seedpods, wood shavings and natural treasures. Sand, shredded paper scraps, maize packing peanuts, powder paint objects.
Examples of resources that don't stick to the skin	Playdough/Play-Doh, clay, kinetic sand, art snow and water beads (sometimes called Orbeez). Cooked spaghetti and tapioca. Messy Potatoes, soap and water. Shaving foam, gloop/oobleck, Gelli, slime, paints. Tinned tomatoes/beans/rice and yoghurt. Mud, wet sand.

Play example

Examples of sensory experiences which fascinate children	Child noticing the surprising feel and solid movement when they draw their finger through gloop.
Examples of sensory experiences which allow children to rest	Child fascinated by the transformation of water into fluffy Gelli.
The experience of taking a mini-holiday from daily concerns.	Child noticing tiny soap bubbles on their hand and watching these pop.
An experience which allows immersion.	Child dreamily scooping sand with their hands.
Examples of sensory experiences which allow children to explore	Child's immersion of their whole arms in a bucket of soapy water.
Examples of sensory experiences which allow children to regulate	Practitioner's immersion (up to their arms) in a feely bag of interesting objects!
Examples of sensory experiences which allow children to play	Child exploring what sinks and floats in a bucket of water.
Examples of sensory experiences which allow children to learn	Child exploring what happens when you mix powder paint onto a surface with a spoon.

Gascoyne (2018b) from Kaplan et al.

References:

- Baby Centre, *Pregnancy Health* (n.d) [Pregnancy health | BabyCentre](#) (Accessed 1. Dec 2025)
- Brodie, K (2018), *The Holistic Care and Development of Children from Birth to Three : An Essential Guide for Students and Practitioners*, Taylor & Francis Group, Oxford. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [15 January 2026].
- Centre for Early Childhood, (n.d), *Our Developing Brain*, [video] available at [Early Childhood Science Explained: Our Developing Brain](#) (Accessed 14.Jan 2026)
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2021), *Early years high impact area 2: Maternal mental health. Health visitors leading the Healthy Child Programme*, available at [Early years high impact area 2: Supporting maternal and family mental health - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed 14.Jan 2026)
- Childcare Network (2024), *The Importance of Routine for Children: Creating a Consistent Schedule*, available at [The Importance of Routine for Children: Creating a Consistent Schedule - Childcare Network](#) (Accessed 10.Jan 2026)
- Connected Parent (n.d), *Discover Why the First 1000 Days Matter More Than You Think!* [video], available at [Bing Videos](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)
- Developing as a person-centred organisation (n.d) : *A self-assessment tool and practical steps for progress*, available at [developing-as-a-person-centred-organisation.pdf](#) (Accessed 11.Jan 2026)
- Early Intervention Foundation (2017) *Interparental conflict and outcomes for children in the contexts of poverty and economic pressure*, available at [Interparental conflict and outcomes for children in the contexts of poverty and economic pressure | Early Intervention Foundation](#) (Accessed 14.Jan 2026)
- Gascoyne, S (2018 - 2019) *Messy play in the early years: supporting learning through material engagements* 1st edition Boca Raton, FL, Routledge
- Gerhardt, S. (2014) *Why Love Matters: How affection shapes a baby's brain*. Second edition. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.
- Gov.uk, Dept of Health and Social Care (2021), *The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days*, available at [The best start for life a vision for the 1 001 critical days.pdf](#) (Accessed 11.Jan 2026)
- Guardian News, The (2017) *The 1st 1000 days: Their impact on a Child's Future* [video], available at [what is the 1st1000 days for a child - Search](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)
- Neurolaunch (n.d), *Grey Matter Matters*, available at [Neural Pathways: Mapping Brain's Intricate Communication Networks](#) (Accessed 14.Jan 2026)
- Nutrition 2 nourish flourish (2025), *A Parents Guide to Essential Vitamins for Babies & Toddlers*, available at [A Parents Guide to Essential Vitamins for Babies & Toddlers](#) (Accessed 11.Jan 2026)
- NSPCC (2020), *Responsive relationships builds strong brains, Serve and return* [video] available at [Bing Videos](#) (Accessed 15.Jan 2026)
- Parents, *How to Establish a Routine With Your Baby*, [video] available at [Bing Videos](#) (Accessed 17.Jan 2026)
- Pikler Approach The, *Benefits and Principles of the Pikler Approach*, (n.d) [About – Pikler UK Association](#)
- Psychology Exposed (n.d), *Bowlby's Attachment Theory Explained* [video] available at [Bowlby's Attachment Theory Explained](#) (Accessed 10.Jan 2026)

Public Health Wales (2023), *First 1000 Days A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents*, available at phw.nhs.wales/news/adopting-a-public-health-approach-to-supporting-parents-can-help-give-children-best-start-in-life/a-public-health-approach-to-supporting-parents/ (Accessed 14. Jan 2026)

Public Health Wales (n.d), *The First 1000 Days programme: A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents*, [video] available at [The First 1000 Days programme - Public Health Wales](#) (Accessed 5. Jan 2026)

Ready to Relate (2026), *The brain - What does this mean for your baby*. Bradford District Care, available at [The brain - What does this mean for your baby - Ready to Relate](#) (Accessed 11. Jan 2026)

Science Direct, *Neural Pathway* (n.d) available at [Neural Pathway - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics](#) (Accessed 17. Jan 2026)

Simply Psychology, *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory* available at [Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)

Simply Psychology, *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory* [image] available at [Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)

Simply Psychology, *John Bowlby's Attachment Theory* available at [John Bowlby's Attachment Theory](#) (Accessed 5. Jan 2026)

Sprouts (n.d), *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems: 5 Forces Impacting Our Lives*, [video] available at [Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems: 5 Forces Impacting Our Lives - YouTube](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)

Trauma Informed Schools & Communities UK (n.d), *What is a Trauma and Mental Health Informed School or Organisation?* Available at [what is a trauma informed school or organisation?](#) (Accessed 11. Jan 2026)

UNICEF. (2021) *The Baby Friendly Initiative*, available at [The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative](#) (Accessed 14. Jan 2026)

Welsh Government (2025), *New standards to improve maternity and neonatal care in Wales*, available at [New standards to improve maternity and neonatal care in Wales | GOV.WALES](#) (Accessed 11. Jan 2026)

Welsh Government (2021), *Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act*, available at [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act | GOV.WALES](#) (Accessed 11. Jan 2026)

Wonder Sprouts (n.d), *Pikler-Lóczy Approach: Emmi Pikler's Principles for Infant Care & Development* [video] available at [Pikler-Lóczy Approach: Emmi Pikler's Principles for Infant Care & Development](#) (Accessed 10. Jan 2026)

@7daysofshorts (n.d), [video] available at <https://youtube.com/shorts/5ce4EXaG5jk?si=BzZUWRV38MUoCPgK> (Accessed 17. Jan 2026)

@Hannah305 (n.d), *making a sensory activity for my toddler* 🧸 #sensoryactivities #toddleractivities #mumlife [video] available at [making a sensory activity for my toddler 🧸 #sensoryactivities #toddleractivities #mumlife](#) (Accessed 17. Jan 2026)