



THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

INTRODUCTION



The purpose of this academic scrapbook focuses on what is referred as the most vital time of life for the infants, their first 1000 days. This academic scrapbook separates into five sections, with each describing the characteristics that influences the growth and development of the infants in their first 1000 days. This academic scrapbook firstly starts off with a brief overview explaining what the first 1000 days are and has a full explanation on why the first 1000 days are important for the infants. In the second section of this academic scrapbook, it includes an explanation on some of the challenges that early years practitioner's may encounter in their practice when caring for infants within an early year setting. Section three outlines why respectful care is fundamental for the infants in their first 1000 days, as well as explaining the importance of allowing infants to engage in meaningful learning in their first two years of life. When caring for infants within an early year setting, it is essential to ensure inclusivity is incorporated into practice. Therefore, in section four of this academic scrapbook, it includes a description of how to be inclusive and explains the importance of this for both the infants and their families. Lastly, section five focuses on why having a professional relationship with infants are important within the early year settings.

WHAT IS THE FIRST 1000 DAYS AND WHY IS THE FIRST 1000 DAYS IMPORTANT?



The first 1000 days is an exceptionally important stage of life for the infants and for their mothers. It is known to lay in the infants first two years of life, which is the period from conception to the age of 2 years. (Karakochuk, D.C. *et al.* 2018).

According to research, the growth and development of the infants within their first 2 years of life, are the predominant reasons to why their first 1000 days are known to be important. It is a known fact that in the period between conception to the infants second birthday, infants grow and develop in all areas of learning and development exceptionally fast. The HM Government (2022), believes that the infants upbringing in their first 1000 days of life, will have a huge impact towards their future outcomes. It will impact the infants socially, economically, environmentally, and biologically, which means it will have an influence towards their health, wellbeing, and their academic years when they are older.

The infants first 1000 days is an exceptionally important time of life for the development of their brain. In accordance with both Finnigan (2016) and the HM Government (2022), the structure of the infants brain starts to develop whilst in the womb and develops faster than any other time of their life. In the period of conception to the infants second birthday, the infants brain creates over 1 million neuronal nerve cells in seconds. (Play Matters, 2022). Pound (2006) points out that those neuronal cell connections that are being formed throughout the infants first 2 years of life are influenced by their senses. What infants experiences during their first 1000 days influenced by their senses, shapes the way infants become when they are older.

For the infants brain to develop and function successfully in their first 1000 days and provide a solid foundation to a healthy life and survival, Rupani (2020), maintains the fact that healthy nutrition plays a key role in the growth and development of an infant. It enables infants to function and develop as they should and encourages positive behaviours, allowing infants to thrive in their academic learning years and in their holistic growth.

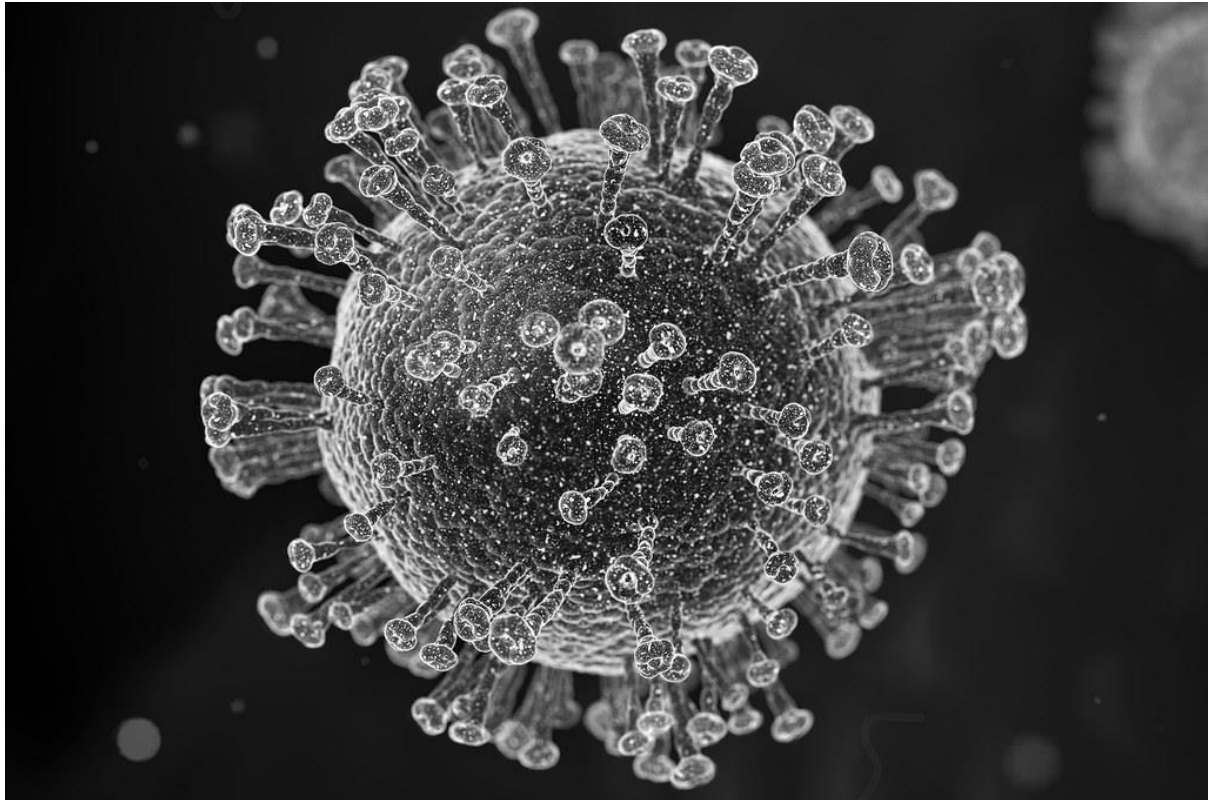
Research shows that infants in their first 1000 days are exposed to developing long term illnesses due to malnutrition, which can be influenced by many situations. For example, the environment the infants are surrounded in, their mothers background and their diets. Infants in the first 2 years of life with poor nutrition influenced by the factors above, is exposed to developing what is known as childhood obesity. (Woo Baidal, A.J. *et al.* 2016).

According to the HM Government (2022), the first 1000 days of an infants life is an important period for prevention. When infants are provided with the healthy nutrients from their mother in their most important time of life their first 2 years through a healthy diet and in a positive environment, infants have a better start to life and have a better chance of survival in the future.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpyD19Sliaw>



CURRENT CHALLENGES OF CARING FOR AN INFANT WITHIN A SETTING



The first aspect to note is that when caring for infants within an early year setting, it is often known that it is inevitable for practitioner's to sometimes come across many challenges unexpectedly throughout their practice. Some of the difficult challenges that practitioner's may encounter when caring for infants within an early year setting, possibly include personal difficulties. Such as, a lack of motivation, not having enough knowledge and understanding on the early year's industry itself or having or developing illnesses that can affect the practitioners both physically and emotionally, affecting the way they effectively provide care for the infants in the early year's setting.

Practitioner's may also be faced with difficult challenges that involve the infants learning and development within their practice. For example, facing and dealing with behavioural problems that interfere with the infants learning as well as infants having a lack of opportunities that enable them to thrive both healthy and positively due to a worldwide health issue arising. Most recently, the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic have shown to become one of the most difficult challenges for the practitioner's when caring for the infants within an early year setting.

As well as explaining some of the other challenges that practitioners may experience when caring for infants within an early year setting, the focus of this section of the academic scrapbook mainly points out the concerns that has arisen from the Covid 19 pandemic, regarding the growth and development of infants.

In recent years, Covid 19 has suddenly become one of the most present difficult challenges that practitioners are currently facing within an early year's setting. Practitioners are finding that as well as the infants, themselves and the infants families have been negatively impacted by the pandemic in many areas of their development. This is because everything was on lockdown and made it hard for everyone to live a normal life that allows them to be mentally and physically healthy. According

to research, the Delphy study (2021) suggested that infants who were born during the time of the Covid 19 pandemic are most impacted and had a disadvantage start to life, they were not growing and developing as they should and not meeting their developmental milestones according to age because of not having the usual opportunities that normally allowed them to, post covid times. The Babies in lockdown survey report (2020), also suggested that infants that were born throughout the period of the pandemic are mostly likely to be affected long termly. The results of the survey have suggested that 34% of people that participated in the survey says that's their infants interactions with their primary care givers, their parents have changed. The parents that participated in the survey have said that their infants are becoming clingier than they have ever been post pandemic as infants senses their parents emotions, influencing it to reflect onto the infant emotional development. When infants that are born during the pandemic goes into an early year setting, with delays to their social interactions and emotional development because of the pandemic, it can be challenging for the practitioners because infants may become clingy onto them, making it hard to provide care for infants within the setting.

In accordance with the Delphy study (2021), the research study shows that the infants born before the Covid 19 pandemic has also been negatively impacted. It shows that the infants with additional learning needs are the ones who have severely been impacted in all areas of their learning and development. This is challenging for the practitioner's, as they are now having to go back and review their interventions that they already have for infants with additional learning needs and adjust the interventions to meet the needs of the infants.

As well as the Covid 19 pandemic being the most current challenges that practitioners are facing when caring for infants within an early year setting, practitioners can face other difficult challenges that lead from the pandemic. That other difficult challenge that can lead from the covid 19 pandemic that early years practitioners may encounter is experiencing a lack of motivation. When practitioners become less motivated when caring for infants within the early year setting, it negatively impacts their professional practice and the way they provide effective care for the infants. Which evidently impacts the learning and development of an infant. This is because the behaviour of the practitioner often reflects on the children and what they see, they will often pick up. (Early Years Career, 2015).

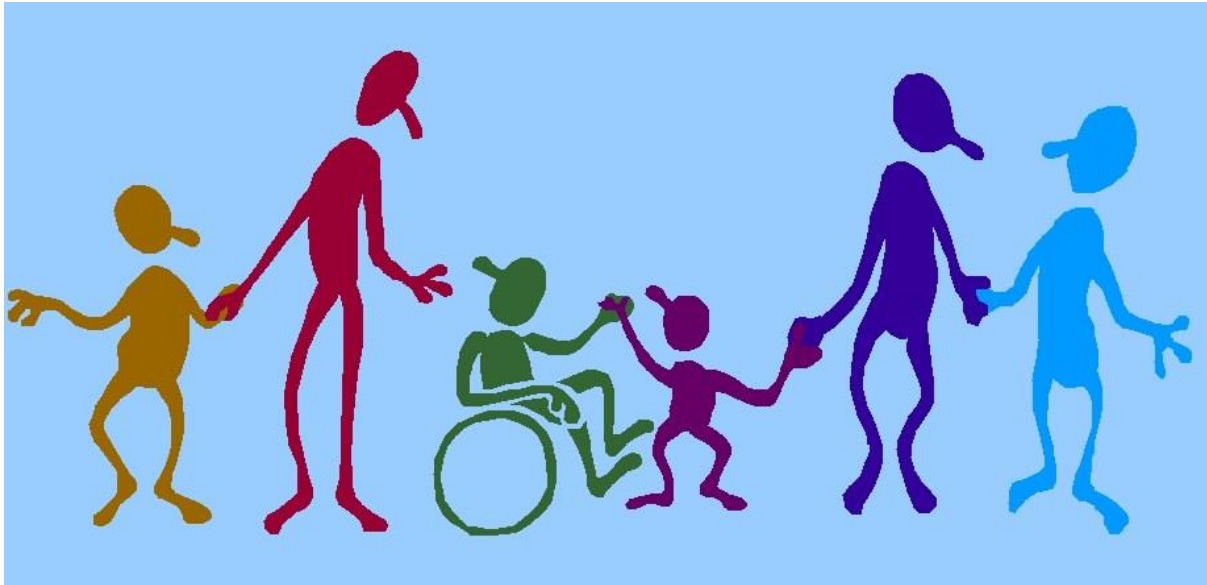
THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECTFUL CARE AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



In the early years, it is important that all practitioners have a clear understanding of the term respectful care and the importance of it for the infants in their first 1000 days of life. The term 'respectful care' is defined in many ways. However, in the early years it is about providing and effectively treating all infants with the greatest of respect and with dignity. (McIntyre, S. 2018). This is because throughout their first 1000 days of life, infants are known to be fragile little human beings that does not know how to protect themselves yet.

In the first 1000 days of an infant's life within an early year setting, practitioners undertake many tasks that involve the wellbeing of the infants. Those tasks may include, nappy changing, mealtimes and putting infants to bed for their nap time. According to Marlen (no date) the Emmi Pikler approach suggests that when undertaking those tasks listed above respectful care is required. The Pikler approach points out that when practitioners change the infants nappy, during that short time practitioners should be fully engaged in the activity respectfully. During the process of nappy changing, infants should have the opportunity to be involved in meaningful learning. practitioners should be calm when changing the infants nappy and should always involve the infants by explaining what is happening. By respectfully caring for infants during nappy time, practitioners can acknowledge how they can adapt to what the infants wants considering their safety. Infants may not want to lay down when having their nappy changed, they may want to stand up. During those times of day were infants are having their nappies changed, in mealtimes and nap time, the practitioners engagement with the infants in a respectful manner encourages secure attachment. Engaging in meaningful learning allows trust to be built between the infants and their key person enabling them to have a positive relationship.

HOW TO BE INCLUSIVE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FOR BOTH THE INFANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES



The definition of inclusive can be described in many ways. However, in the early years, being inclusive means respecting all practitioner's, infants, and their families regardless of their nationality, gender, abilities, or background. It is about providing a sense of belonging, which is extremely important for the infants especially within their first 1000 days as they are known to be in a vulnerable state in that stage of life. (Lee, 2021). Having a sense of belonging within the early years setting encouraged by the practitioners, influences infants to feel safe and secure when they are in a positive environment that enables them to grow and develop regardless of their background or abilities, age, and ethnicity.

In accordance with Thomas (2022), practitioners can implement inclusivity within their work setting to ensure infants develop a sense of belonging in many ways. Firstly, Thomas (2022) has suggested that practitioners can be inclusive through stimulating activities that meet the needs of every infant growth and development.

Ensuring that infants with any kind of additional learning/ physical needs and infants who are generally quite quiet that likes less energetic activities but still enjoy activities that stimulates all areas of their developmental milestones, practitioners can be inclusive by considering implementing simple activities. For example, treasure baskets. Which is basically just a basket that contains and involves a variety of items. The items that can go into a treasure basket mainly includes natural resources that are used in everyday life that are safe for the infants to play and explore with. Such as, different types of brushes, wooden materials like – a wooden spoon, wooden curtain rings etc, clothes materials and many more. (Early Impact, 2020). When having implemented treasure baskets within the setting, it enables practitioners to allow infants with additional needs or infants who are more introverted and likes playing by themselves or alongside other infants, still have an opportunity and have a chance to develop holistically. The Early Impact (2020) blog, maintains that fact that treasure baskets enables infants to engage in and activate their use of senses, enhancing their learning in all areas of development. It is an activity that encourages infants to explore and be and become imaginative.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moO6PBn-Wgl>

To provide an inclusive environment for the infants with additional needs or other infants through activities, the ILT Education (2022) blog have suggested that practitioners can implement song bags within their setting to promote inclusion. This activity involves a bag, which is filled with props that represents a song, chosen by the infants. For example, if the theme of the day/ week within the setting focuses on farms chosen by the infants, the song bag would contain toys. Such as a toy farmers truck, a variety of different farmyard animals and a toy farmer to constitute the 'old McDonald' song. This activity enhances inclusivity within the setting as every infant involved in the activity are able to have a chance to participate, by singing along to the song and having the opportunity of pick out their favourite toy within the bag. Throughout this activity, infants can engage socially with their peers as well as have the opportunity to develop their language skills.

Thomas (2022) also mentioned that practitioners can be inclusive by having a thorough consideration of the resources that they provide within their early year setting. if infants have additional needs that affect them physically, practitioners can be inclusive by adjusting the environment to fit the needs of the infants abilities. Practitioners can also be inclusive by considering the infants interests. This can be done by providing resources within the setting that are in relation to what the infants enjoy playing with. For example, toys or having soft toys that are like what they have at home. This enables infants to feel more comfortable as they have something that they are familiar with and recognise.

Encouraging a sense of belonging in an early year setting in the infants first 1000 days is extremely important for both the infants and their families for many reasons. Having that sense of belonging in the infants first 2 years of life is vital as it affects the infants mental wellbeing. (Early Years Careers, 2016). Experiencing positive attitudes within an early years environment in the infants first 1000 days reflected of the practitioners can encourage the behaviours of an infant in positive ways enabling them to thrive successfully in all areas of development, influenced by feeling valued and respected. In accordance with the Child and Youth Wellbeing (2020) blog, points out that providing a sense of belonging, respecting and valuing infants for who they are is important for the infants self-confidence and their self-esteem. The blog also points out that by promoting a sense of belonging for the infants, encourages the infants to not only accept themselves for who they are but encourages the infants to have respect and value others around. Providing a sense of belonging for the infants in their first 1000 days is important for the infants families as it encourages positive relationships between themselves and their families.



1 - treasure baskets

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



This last section of the academic scrapbook focuses on why having a professional relationship with infants are important in their first 1000 days.

In the early years, professional relationships are referred to as an emotional bond that practitioners build with both the infants and their families. Forming a close attachment with the infants within an early year setting professionally is vital in the infants first 1000 days as infants and their families are most vulnerable during that period. Professional relationships are essential because when infants are provided with lots of love, care, and security not just from their families but from practitioners to, they are able to thrive both healthy and successfully and develop in all areas of learning, influenced by a sense of belonging encouraged by the practitioners.

The formation of an effective professional relationship between the practitioners and the infants within the early year setting in the infants first 1000 days, have known to be created from a phrase known as 'professional love'. Heale (no date) points out that Dr Jools Page established the phrase 'professional love', which is described as having a close attachment, that practitioners form with the infants within an early year setting. It is to provide that similar love that infants get from their families when they are away from home. The love that the practitioners provide professionally is to ensure that infants feel safe and secure when they are away from their homes and their families, encouraging a sense of belonging. (Davis, E. 2021). "Professional love should be as close to parental love as possible" says, (Heale, no date). This evidently shows that Heale (no date) agrees with Davis (2021). Professional love can enhance infants to feel both content and confident within their early year setting as well be good for the development of the infants brain. It also enables infants to become stronger within themselves and encourage independence, influencing the way they deal with situations when they are away from their parents in the future.

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