



Exceptional Care in the First 1000 days

Welcome! This digital scrapbook will demonstrate what exceptional care could look like in an infant's first 1000 days and why it is important to promote exceptional care.

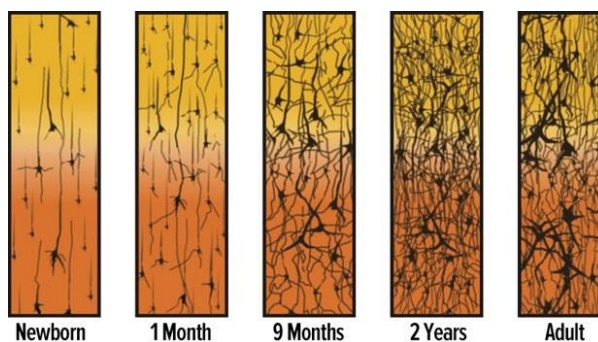
According to Karakochuk *et al* (2018) the nutritional status of a woman before conceiving can have an impact on the woman's chance of pregnancy as there are specific micronutrients that encourage implantation and can have effects of the foetal growth and development. Women are advised to take a folic acid supplement to help reduce risk of neural tube defects.



The next 700 days window starts when the infant is born until the infant reaches the age of two. Save the children (2016) also explain that the first 1000 days is where an infant's brain shows a remarkable capacity to absorb information and develops rapidly and will continue to expand due to experiences and the environment the infant is in. This is due to the connections between neurons

becoming stronger and multiplying with new connections forming which determines the outcome of the infants brain development.

Although Save the children (2016) state as the infant grows and becomes an adult, the brain is less inclined to process new information. This highlights the importance of why this time period is crucial to enhance the infant's development, by allowing the infant to explore the world around them which will support communication skills, behaviour skills and connections with others.



The Enabling Environment



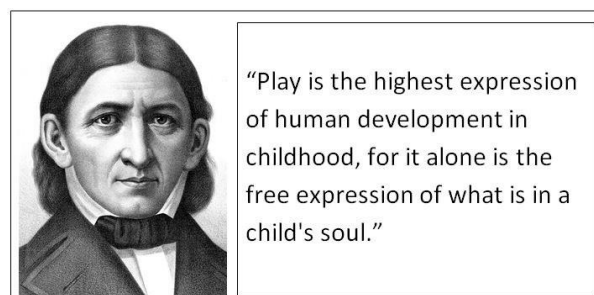
Practitioner's need to have the skills and knowledge to regulate behaviour surrounded by encouragement and support as it creates a positive approach to learning. The practitioner should use moments that occur from natural curiosity as a chance to engage in play and create a teachable moment. The new curriculum for Wales indicates settings should observe and follow the interests of the child, and to encourage the child to take calculated risks and have the confidence to challenge themselves (Welsh Government 2022).

O'Donnell, M (2013) suggested individuals who support and care for children can boost development by providing an enabling environment that can encourage curiosity by ensuring the children are surrounded with varied areas and space to further the learning process.

O'Donnell, M (2013) explains Montessori theory believed the most important period in life is during the infancy years as this is the most rapid period of development. Montessori stressed that not only the infants physical needs should be met, the psychic needs is just as important and needs to be met immediately from birth. The theory suggests from birth the infant's personality needs to be created as this will support the infants mental life. Montessori suggests new-borns have an unconscious absorbent mind which is constantly observing the environment. The Montessori theory also stated the infant can use the surroundings and environment to develop sensory functions by using their own hands to explore.



Early education (no date) explains Frobel theory of play has changed the way the world looks at the way children play. Frobel believed children should be allowed to have personal space to be able to have the freedom to build or independently play. Frobel suggests it is critical that the practitioner creates warm engaging environments indoor and outdoor where the children can freely explore as the environment and atmosphere practitioners create are just as important as what the children learn.



1 - Frobel

The new curriculum for Wales has similarities to both Montessori and Froebel theories as the Welsh Government (2022) state children being able to explore the environment is key for development, as it provides a sense of belonging and helps to understand the world. In early year settings, it is

important to make regular changes to indoor and outdoor settings to ensure the children are receiving authentic experiences and the areas and provisions should have constant reviews based on the effectiveness. The curriculum for Wales also states settings should create warm and exciting environments that children can be free to create and use imagination to allow children to experience a sense of awe and curiosity. Creating environments that ignite wonder and help motivate children to explore will help create problem solvers and critical thinkers. Having well planned areas can help scaffold development by using indoor and outdoor areas to provide opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills. In a child care setting there should be an area that a young child can use that offers a quieter activity or space to self-regulate which supports their well-being (Welsh Government pt B 2022).



2 - Montessori

An enabling environment provides an emotionally safe, rich and varied indoor and outdoor space that allows a child to express how they feel whilst learning and growing. The setting should provide both caring and knowledgeable practitioners and the space that offers learning opportunities and supports development. Does the room carry a “feel good” factor? Do the children, staff and parents feel positive? The answer to both questions should be yes. As the invisible measure of feelings and atmosphere in a room can help babies and children feel secure, happy and nurtured (Early years matters 2022). Recognising the power of strong parent- practitioner relationships can play a key role on how settled the children will (PACEY 2022).

The emotional environment for young babies is dependent on the adults support, therefore the practitioner needs to ensure the environment is calm and relaxing with opportunities for good quality play that is stimulating and supports holistic development (Brodie,K 2018).

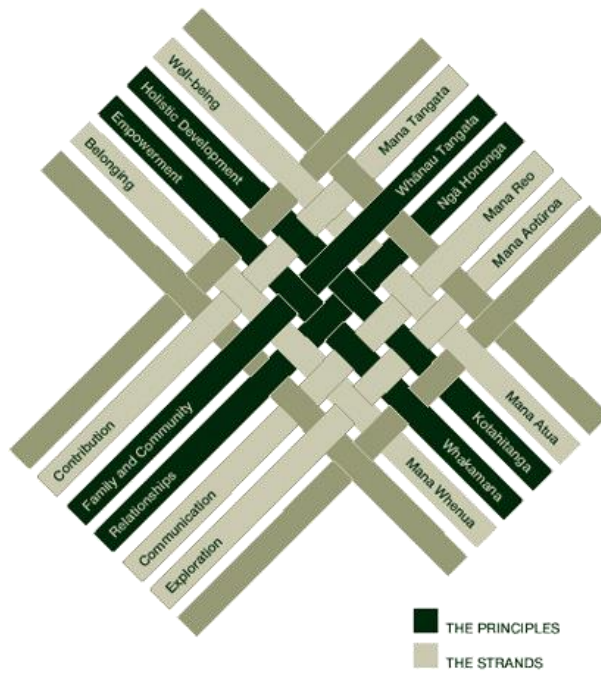
Holistic Development and Pedagogy care



According to Brodie (2018) the emotional environment for young babies is dependent on the adults support, therefore the practitioner needs to ensure the environment is calm and relaxing with opportunities for good quality play that is stimulating and supports holistic development.

Holistic child development is seeing the child as a whole even if splitting that whole into different areas to support all areas of learning, development and growth. The New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum 'Te Whariki' uses an image of a woven mat to demonstrate the different threads as separate areas that entwines with each other. The five areas of learning is where the focus is needed to support children in development to become confident learners.

The holistic approach from birth to the age of three is known as 'pedagogy of care' and is the most appropriate approach as care and learning are inseparable. Brodie (2018) also explains whilst working with babies the practitioner needs to be there not only physically but also emotionally. To be able to offer exceptional care practitioners will need to be able to identify what each cue means for that individual. The practitioner needs to form a close bond, by talking, eye gazing, cuddles and attention, which will help to become closely attuned to the babies.



The Outdoor Space



Providing babies and young children with the opportunity to have free flow access to explore the outdoors in the setting is key to encourage development in all areas. When a young child is outside surrounded by the natural world and all different types of weather, a child's senses are stimulated.

Listening to the sound of tweeting birds, car horns beeping, touching the long blades of grass, gazing at the flowers or watching the wind blowing the leaves on the tall trees, help young children to understand the world around them. It can provide real hands on experiences such as digging soil using real trowels and planting seeds. It is important to remember that some children may not have access to a garden at home or may not have chance to explore the outdoors therefore miss these opportunities.

[Outdoor learning handbook](#)



Children have the space to move freely, run, climb and become little explorers. Practitioners are able to provide activities on a bigger scale with the extra room, and children are free to make more noise and get a little messier. Outside is the perfect place for fun painting activities or brushing up on culinary skills in the mud kitchen. What can the children independently create with loose parts? A boat? An animal?



Babies and young children learn through touch and the natural environment is the perfect place to explore textures such as dirt or stone. The outdoors can provide the same experiences for all ages, abilities and additional learning needs, even babies can enjoy the fresh air laying on a blanket and running their small fingers through the grass.



Some children may not have access to a garden at home or may not have chance to explore the outdoors so by providing an outdoor learning space play enhances development. There are many benefits for creating an outdoor space although before any activities take place the practitioner needs to make sure a risk assessment has been completed to ensure the safety of the children (PACEY B 2022).



ARTICLE 31-Rest, play, culture, arts

"Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities." (UNICEF, NO DATE)

According to the new curriculum for Wales it places great emphasis on the importance of how individuals connect with their 'cynefin'. Cynefin is a welsh term that translates to;

"The place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable." (Nation.Cymru 2020)





Activities



Water Play

Water play can bring fun to early literacy and numeracy activities and can also benefit a child's social, emotional and physical abilities. For example, a young child simply playing with water toys, pouring the water from one cup to another or controlling the direction of water that is squirting from a toy all helps to develop hand-eye coordination.

Water play is a great way to build up an infant's problem solving skills and understanding of why and how something's happen. Why does the boat float and the car sink? Soon the infant will realise heavier toys sink while lighter toys float. Activities using measuring jugs and counting how many cups of water will it hold. Using a wet paintbrush can be a creative way to introduce mark making or letter formations.



Children spend a long time when engaged in an activity exploring or playing which enhances concentration and ability to focus. Children can enjoy water play alone or with others. Playing together in a group encourages social, cooperative play, and also language skills. Activities involving the children to work together to fill a tray using the water pump encourages talking to each other to complete the mission! (Busy bees education 2020)



Loose parts plays

Fun fact: Children inevitably play with the empty box rather than the plastic toy that came inside. Loose part play introduces simple everyday objects such as feathers, boxes, beads, shells, string, or

pieces of wood to improve creativity and imaginative play. With an enabling environment full of interesting objects can ignite and boost curiosity in a child can support a child's development.



The benefits from loose part play can enhance cognitive skills, using hands to play and create will support coordination. Also it can develop critical thinking and problem solving skills by encouraging a child to use imagination and experiment when using open ended loose parts as there are no set ways to play with the items. (Only about children education, 2023)



Messy sensory play

Messy play involves children using all five senses to explore how items feel, is it rough or smooth. Has does the object smell? Or how does it taste? Is the texture of the food crunchie? What sound does it make or boost language skills by asking questions such as what does it look like? Messy play can aid a child's physical development such as fine and gross motor skills along with hand-eye coordination. It is another way to help children create and explore with others building social skills. The benefits of messy play over weigh the mess! (Twinkle, no date)





The Curiosity Approach



The Curiosity Approach is a combined method using beliefs from Montessori and Steiner's theories and involves using everyday items to evoke children's natural curiosity rather than shop bought toys. Play is the focus in this approach and believes the setting should have a tranquil feel by using neutral colours and have a homely feel (Day nurseries, 2023).





Treasure Baskets



Elinor Goldschmied ideas impacted the early years policy in the UK and internationally. Goldschmied created the idea of a 'treasure baskets' which is full of natural items such as household or recycled objects in a basket. As the infant uses hands, fingers and mouth to explore the more variety in materials and texture available will ignite interests and stimulation for brain development.

The activity ignites curiosity and enables the infant to explore independently at their own pace and naturally strengthens gross motor skills. At an early age the infant will start to make decisions by choosing what object to explore and how they will use it. Froebel's approach on play developed Goldschmied's ideas (Froebel Trust, 2022).





3 - Treasure baskets can be used for all children and all abilities. Check out this video for ideas!

Respectful Care



The Welsh Government (2022) state that early years practitioner can have a positive impact of a young child's well-being as a result of being consistent, displaying compassion and kindness whilst caring for the child. By supporting the child's choices, this indicates that the child's voice has been listened too and respected.

John Bowlby (1969) claimed the relationship and bond between a mother and new-born is different to any other relationship formed to the new-born and believed the child's development would suffer if separated. Bowlby (1973) claimed as the child reaches the age of two, depending on how the child has been previously cared for, the child would be able to predict the reliability and caring abilities from a practitioner.





According to Pool (2017) most practitioners feel there is a grey area when it comes to the term 'Professional Love'. Pool (2017) interviewed different professionals who work within early years on how they feel about showing affection and love towards the children. Most practitioner's felt confused and worried about being accused for being inappropriate and explained there is no real guidance and understanding. With procedures in place to protect children such as, changing nappies in the view of others, it also protects the practitioners from false accusations. Although most practitioners feel there needs to be more guidelines to rule out any myths in response to cuddling a child. Pool (2017) stresses with the uncertainty on how to provide respectable care, affection and love that the children need to help create a bond, leaves the practitioner's unable to confidently make decisions or deliver a high stand of care.



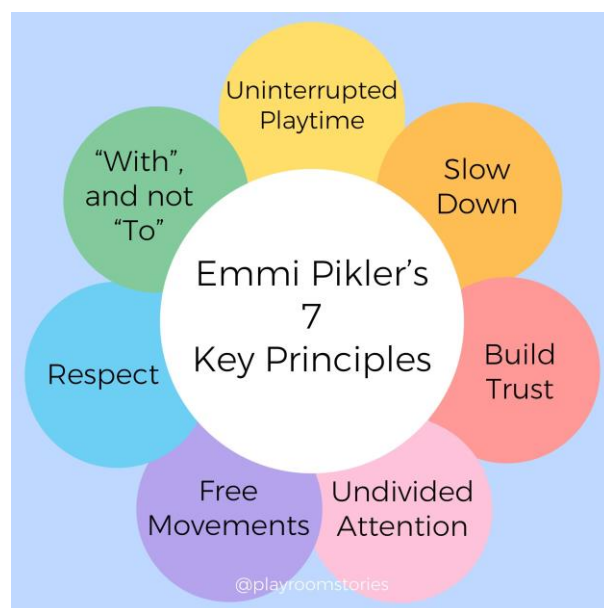
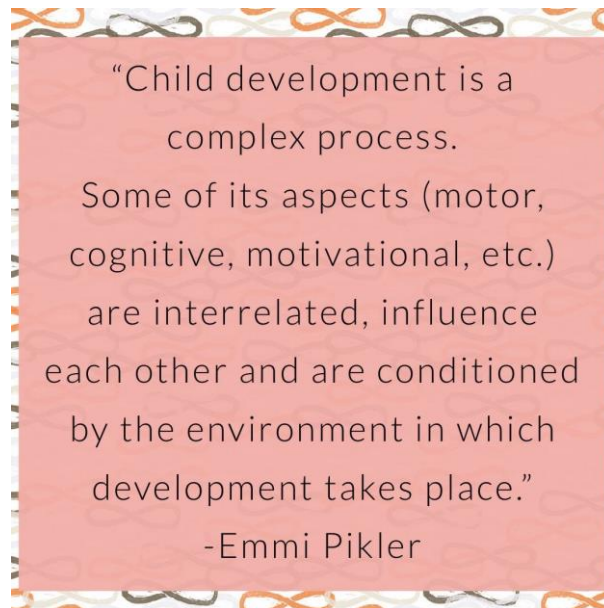
Pikler's Approach



Dr Emmi Pikler's approach suggests the practitioner should respect the child whilst carrying out activities of care with the child's cooperation rather than to the child. For example, whilst delicately changing a child's nappy the practitioner should show respect by inviting the child to take part and nothing should be carried out if the child declines.

Practitioner should use the one to one time to offer the child full attention and share enjoyment to create a trusting relationship and bond which will lead to a happy child who feels safe and eager to

explore and learn in the setting. Children learn through rich language exchanges and quality time spent together (Teach Early Years, no date).



Pikler's approach also states when the child is playing give the child chance to problem solve, as intervening and removing the issue the child's opportunity to learn and explore has been taken away. Uninterrupted play encourages children to develop a variety of skills;

- locomotive skills
- coping skills
- positive attitudes
- problem solving skills

Pikler suggests caregivers should trust the child and allow the child to move freely and reach each motor development independently (The Education Hub, 2019).

Pikler created a climbing frame that is designed to allow young children to hold the frame to stand and eventually build the courage and ability to climb to the top of the triangle when they are ready (The Montessori Family, 2020).

For more information click here:

[The-Pikler-RIE-approach.pdf \(theeducationhub.org.nz\)](https://theeducationhub.org.nz/The-Pikler-RIE-approach.pdf)



Inclusivity



Every child is unique and has the right to be valued and respected with support given to ensure every child has the same opportunities to develop. Some children may have cultural beliefs, or needs that require additional support. The needs may be physical, special education needs, or those from socially excluded families, regardless of the matter, identifying the need early to ensure the correct help is important.

Practitioners need to know how and when to include specialists to help as it is a vital part of making a positive contribution and working together to ensure the needs of each child is fully met.

Encouraging children to recognise why they are different and unique and what characteristics they have to others will boost the feeling of belonging.



Everyone should promote equal opportunities and anti-discrimination so children and families feel valued and safe. By teaching children how to be kind and inclusive will help encourage social and emotional development skills (Early years matter, 2011).



Professional Relationships

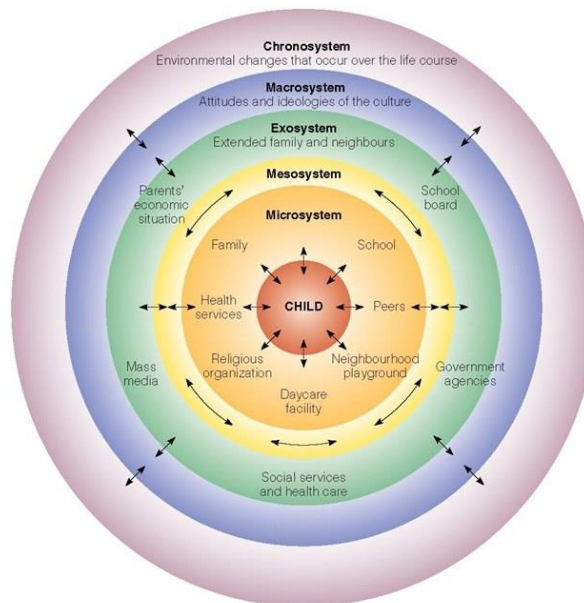


Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is a popular and accepted framework in early years for supporting child development, as it provides a holistic approach which advocates the interaction children have with family members and individuals in the community all impact the child's development (Hayes & O'Toole, 2017).

Mesosystems

Bronfenbrenner suggests when the teacher and parent work together the child will benefit from the good relationship and have a positive impact on the child's development compared to a negative relationship.

There are many external partnerships that all contribute to a child's development according to Bronfenbrenner. For example a health visitor or doctor who may come in contact with the child occasionally. Although these professions may not see the child daily there is a duty of care to support the well-being of the child. Does it really take a village to raise a child? (Guy-Evans, O 2020)



International Approaches



[Scotland The Reggio Approach. Scotland Curriculum](#)

[Te Whāriki – Education in New Zealand](#)

[The Early Years Framework - The Early Years Framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings \(wales\)](#)

[Reggio Emilia Approach. Wales.](#)

Forestry Schools



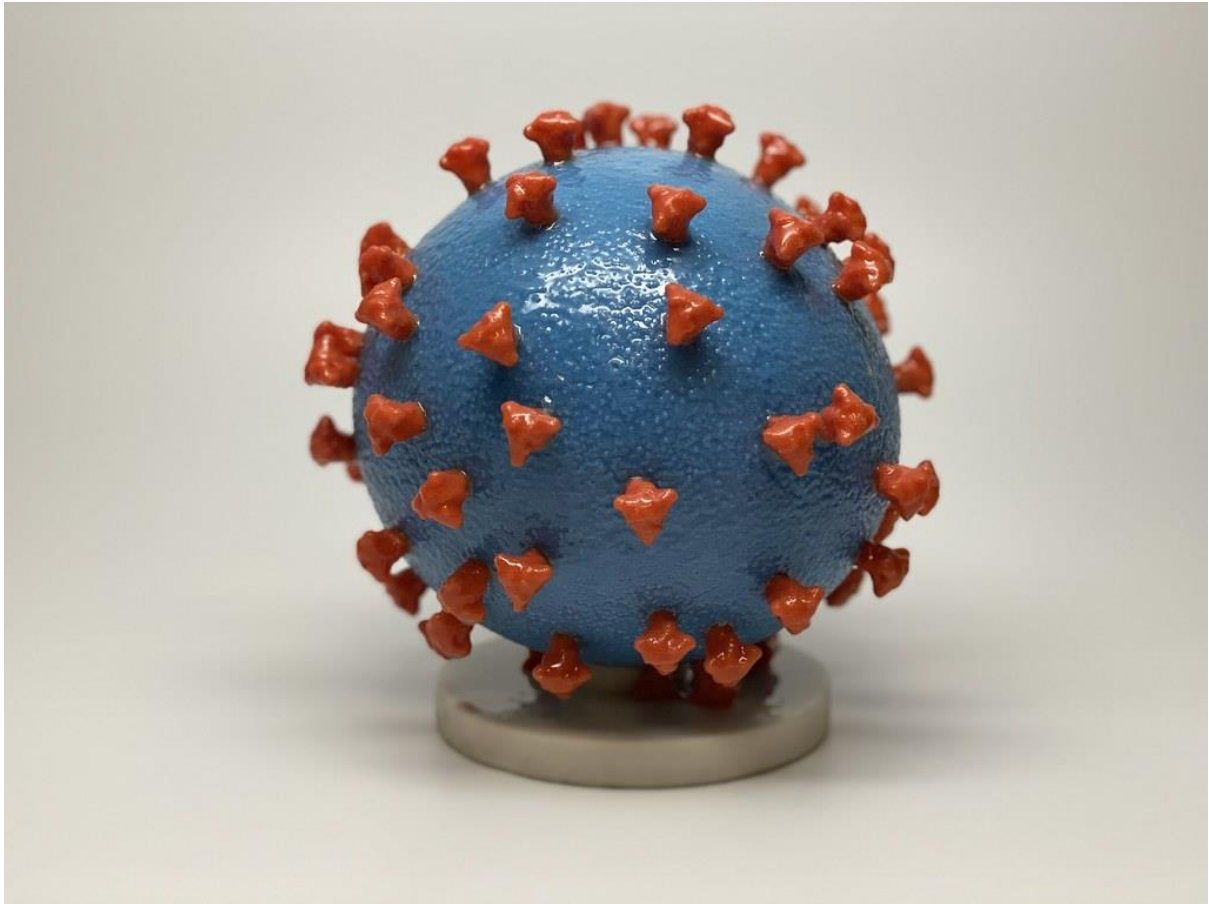
Forest schools began in Scandinavia and the ethos has been shared by thousands around the world as it is a child-centred learning process and boost opportunities for holistic development. It is a long term program that offer hands on experience exploring the natural space and supports play and risk taking that supports problem solving and building self-belief.



It helps children to develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually whilst being in a safe and nurturing environment. Therefore enables children to become healthier, resilient, creative and independent (Forest School Association,2022).



Challenges



According to the UK government (2022) the pandemic has continued to affect children's development due to the isolations and restrictions. Early years inspectors suggests there is still ongoing implications and many childcare providers have noticed a raise in referrals for external help to tackle speech and language delays. Although the list for specialist help is longer than usual due to the volume of children needing help. Practitioners are encouraged to create an environment rich with language.

Small children's physical development also had a negative impact and providers are advised to allow extra time on physical development to help develop gross motor skills.

Due to the restrictions and long isolation periods, children struggled to develop social and emotional development, therefore struggle leaving primary carer or play with others. To compensate, practitioners are advised to focus on helping children to express feelings and encourage socialising (UK Gov,2022).

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