



The first 1000 days

Digital Scrap Book

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What is the first 1000 days?

The first 1,000 days of a baby's life, spanning from conception to their second birthday, are a pivotal period for growth and development. During this time, the foundation for their physical health, brain development, and emotional well-being is laid. What happens in these early years has a lasting impact on their future, influencing everything from cognitive abilities and social skills to long-term health outcomes. This critical window offers a unique opportunity to provide the care, nutrition, and stimulation needed to set the child on a positive start for life.

A Parliament report shows that Longfield *et al.* (2019) supports this by saying the first 1,000 days, from conception to age 2, is a crucial phase of development. During this time of heightened vulnerability, the groundwork for a child's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural development is established, setting the course for their future. Also, in a report Barnardo's (2019) highlighted that when a baby's development falls behind the typical milestones in the first year, they are significantly more likely to fall further behind in later years rather than catching up with peers who had a stronger start.

Unicef (2015) state that there are three stages to the first 1000 days, it begins at conception. The first stage is pregnancy, this is the first 275 days where it begins in the womb until birth, the next stage is infancy this is the stage from the birth of the baby until 6 months, or 180 days. The final stage of the first 1000 days is called the toddler stage this runs for 550 days; it starts from the age of 7 months to 24 months.



Why is the first 1000 days important?



According to Lawler (2023) During the first 1,000 days, a child's brain undergoes rapid development, with 80% of its capacity and structure forming during this period. This time is crucial for the development of auditory and visual sensory systems, learning abilities, memory functions, and information processing systems.

The brain develops through a scaffolding process, where systems build upon and rely on each other. Any disruption or slow growth can interfere with this developmental sequence, leading to significant consequences.

Due to the brain's high plasticity during this period, it is highly susceptible to both positive and negative influences. Without proper care and nutrition, a child's brain can suffer from irreversible and long-lasting effects.

Lawler (2023) also states proper nutrition for both mother and child is essential for optimal brain development. This includes adequate daily caloric intake and critical nutrients like protein, iron, and vitamins.

Calories fuel the growing brain, while key nutrients support neurodevelopment processes. Nutrient deficiencies during early development can have immediate and long-term consequences for a child's neural systems and functions.

In a document from the Department of Health and Social Care (2021) Leadsome states Two is too late! Society spends billions addressing issues like lack of school readiness, poor mental health, criminal behaviour and many more. However, the foundation for lifelong emotional and physical health is established from conception to the age of two a critical period that often lacks the attention it deserves. Focusing on prevention during these first 1,001 days is not only more compassionate but also far more cost-effective than treating problems later. With a strong, supportive policy framework for this vital phase, we can transform society and save taxpayers billions.



What is exceptional care and why is it important?

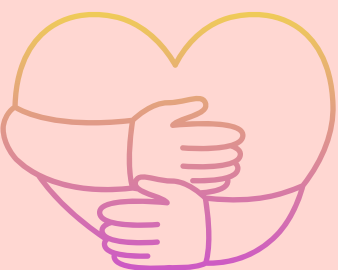


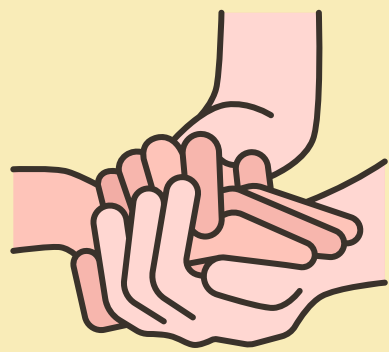
Exceptional care refers to the highest standard of care provided to individuals, ensuring their physical, emotional, and psychological needs are met with compassion, respect, and professionalism. It involves going above and beyond the basic requirements to deliver personalized, individual care that promotes well-being and enhances the overall quality of life.

Exceptional care in early years requires considering many factors, such as safety and security, ensuring the child has good health and adequate nutrition, and providing plenty of opportunities to learn. When these aspects, along with others, are considered, they lay the foundation for supporting the child to thrive. According to Birth to 5 Matters (n.d.) being an early year's practitioner involves being part of a caring profession focused on nurturing and supporting babies and young children from birth to age five and beyond. This role requires feelings of concern, responsibility, and love for children, as well as engaging in nurturing behaviours such as being watchful, protective, and acting with care, affection, and respect for children's rights to ethical treatment. Birth to 5 Matters (n.d.) also states that care includes emotional aspects, relationships, and physical interactions. How practitioners touch and physically interact with children and how they organize to meet children's physical care needs are central to early years pedagogy. This applies not only to practitioners working with the youngest children but also to those working with older children, including those with special needs, ensuring that all physical interactions impart kindness and respect.

Marlen (2017) believes that The Pikler approach and the EYFS share many principles, such as the importance of attachment, the key person approach, and physical development. However, while the EYFS offers a framework with guidelines and suggestions for improvement, the Pikler approach provides a reliable method for delivering consistent, high-quality care for children up to three years old in various early years settings.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the importance of social interactions and the environment in cognitive development. In a video explaining the theory PHILO-notes (2021) said that Vygotsky believed that children learn through their interactions with more knowledgeable others and their surroundings.





What is exceptional care and why is it important?



Exceptional care is also providing an enabling environment and inclusive practise.

Welsh Government (2024) claims the environment we create both indoors and outdoors is crucial for children's authentic experiences. We should continuously monitor and adapt the environment to ensure its effectiveness. It's important to consider both physical spaces and the emotional climate. These environments should provide varied experiences that allow children to express themselves physically, creatively, and imaginatively, and to safely follow their interests, independently or with others. The environment should be welcoming, promote a strong Welsh ethos, celebrate diversity, and demonstrate inclusivity. It should be communication-rich, focusing on promoting and developing emerging communication skills. The environment should also be responsive to the range of emotions a young child can experience, offering time and protected quieter spaces for self-regulation, contemplation, and reflection to nurture well-being.

Gueterbock (n.d.) supports this by saying the Early Years Foundation Stage shares similar themes with Montessori.

The EYFS theme of 'A Unique Child' recognizes that every child is a competent learner from birth. It also prioritizes 'Enabling Environments' and emphasizes 'active learning' and 'learning through experience,' which align with Montessori practices.

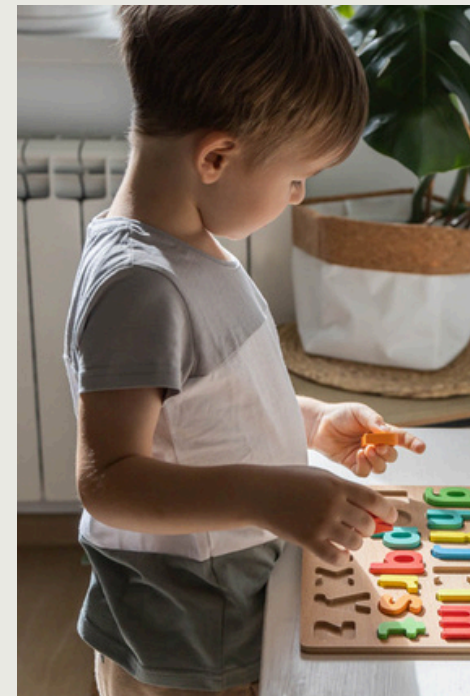
It is highly important that exceptional care is giving to a child to ensure they can develop and thrive and meet their full potential. Calderdale Council (2017) states that top global experts agree that the care provided during the initial 1000 days of a child's life has the most significant impact on their future. Ensuring every child receives the best start in life is essential for minimizing health disparities throughout their lifetime.

Links to further information

Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood

Dr. Emis Akbari - The Importance of High-Quality Care in the Early Years

https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/ords//nweb/COUNCIL.minutes_pkg.view_doc?p_Type=AR&p_ID=50004





What are the challenges in providing high quality care?



The Director of public health (2011) states that the initial 1000 days, beginning just before conception and extending through pregnancy until a child reaches two years old, are crucial. Inequalities, particularly in the first 1000 days of life, result in poor health, social, educational and economic outcomes across the life course for parents and children, and trap many of the most disadvantaged people in a cycle of deprivation. There are many challenges that can have negative in providing high quality care that can have an impact on the first 1000 days.

Save the children fund (2024) states that poverty impacts children's and families' lives. Children in poverty are less likely to enjoy a good standard of living and tend to have poorer experiences and outcomes in areas such as material and emotional wellbeing, health, housing, and education. Poverty can also increase family stress. Families lack access to the essentials needed for a healthy and dignified life, which has an additional psychological impact on all family members.

Oppenheim (2023) states poverty is defined as lacking sufficient material resources, such as money, housing, or food, to meet the basic needs both material and social of today's society. They also support what save the children fund say by saying Poverty directly impacts young children's lives. Parents have less money to meet their children's material and social needs. The rising costs of essentials like food, warmth, lighting, housing, nappies, baby food, and clothing have put many families under significant pressure. A 2022 survey by Barnardo's found that 30% of parents reported their child's mental health had worsened in the previous four months, 16% said their child had to share a bed with them or a sibling, and 30% were worried about losing their home or becoming homeless.

According to Barnardo's (2022) As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, more children are at risk of falling into poverty or deeper poverty. Over one in four families in the UK now live in poverty, with millions at risk of hunger. Living in poverty can mean a child is in a cold home, going hungry, or lacking everyday essentials. Barnardo's (2022) also suggest that children in the most vulnerable situations are the most exposed to the cost-of-living crisis. Families with nothing left to cut back on are no longer choosing between heating or eating they can't afford either. Growing up in poverty can harm children's life chances, limiting their opportunities, hindering their education, and leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes.

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?



Owston et al. (2023) believes that some main workforce issues are low pay, tough working conditions, lack of professional development, unqualified staff, poor leadership, and low staff well-being. This resulting in many staff leaving therefore there is a high turnaround in staff.

Owston et al. (2023) claims that high staff turnover can hinder staff from getting to know the children well, making it difficult to identify their abilities and needs. This can affect the quality of interactions between staff and children. Poorly managed staff turnover can lead to less focus on children's learning and development, negatively impacting vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those affected by the pandemic.

There are many challenges today that can have an impact on a child in the first 1000 days and the level of care provided.

Below are some links to further reading and support:

[At what cost_impact of cost of living final report.pdf](#)

[Maintaining quality early years provision in the face of workforce challenges - Ofsted: early years](#)

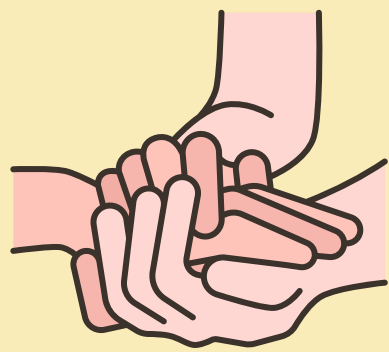
[New research highlights the worsening workforce crisis in the early years sector | early years alliance](#)

[Cost-of-living crisis: where to find support if you're struggling | Barnardo's](#)

[Why families in poverty need the Household Support Fund | Barnardo's](#)

[Parents Mental Health Support | Advice for Your Child | YoungMinds](#)





What is effective partnership?

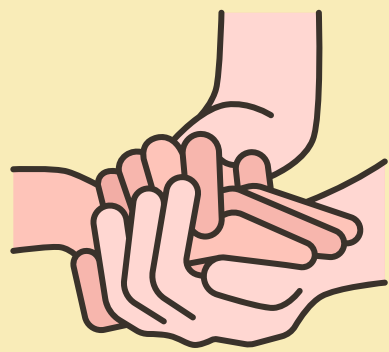


Care Learning (n.d.) believes that early year's practitioners play a vital role in a child's development. It is their role to ensure an environment is safe and stimulating to support the child to develop. Their role also includes, planning, observing, assessing and providing support for their emotional needs as well as self-esteem. By providing a positive environment practitioners promote a child's self-esteem, social skills and the foundations for lifelong learning.

Brodie (2018) believes that practitioners need to have two key skill sets: effective and sensitive communication with parents, and the ability to meet the care and educational needs of the children. The nature of the relationship between practitioners and parents varies depending on the type of care setting. Regardless of the duration of the relationship, it is crucial for practitioners to establish meaningful and genuine relationships with parents to facilitate the sharing of information. Practitioners must consider parents' expectations, culture, and home learning environment to provide appropriate care and education for the child. Here is a link to support this by showing what the role of an early years practitioner is:

[The role and responsibilities of Early Years Practitioner.](#)

Education at Manchester Met (2023) says early years practitioners should be passionate, flexible, approachable to everyone, work well with others. She claims early years is rewarding as practitioners look at a child's holistic development and see the development from when they start with you until they leave. Education at Manchester Met (2023) believe it is important that practitioners are aware of how children are feeling, able to support them to regulate, it is also important that practitioners can model and scaffold what they are doing to encourage children to become independent.



Why is effective partnership important?



Children's alliance (2023) says currently, family support in the UK is highly fragmented and often fails to reach those most in need. Therefore, it is essential to provide practical, non-judgemental advice, support, and guidance to parents during their child's early years. Families play a vital role in the early years of a child's life. With love, support, and guidance, parents and caregivers can help children develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Prioritizing children's wellbeing during this critical period lays a strong foundation for their future happiness, health, and success.

Department for Education (2024) state that research shows that involving parents and carers in their children's learning is the most important factor in enabling some children to do well regardless of background. Working in partnership with parents and carers is central to the early years. The relationship might begin with them visiting your setting. This will help inform you how to sensitively settle the child. Birth to 5 (n.d.) believes parents and carers play a crucial role in influencing children's outcomes. Research indicates that the quality of the home learning environment is the most significant predictor of children's future success, regardless of the quality of educational settings. Therefore, involving parents in their children's learning is key to helping children succeed despite any disadvantages. The greatest benefits are achieved when practitioners and families work together respectfully to support children's development both at home and in educational settings. This collaboration ensures a thorough understanding of a child's needs, leading to appropriate support and learning opportunities in both environments.

Activities



Pintrest (2025 a)



How wee learn (2018)



The imagination tree (2011)



Kinderly (2020)



Treasure baskets



Pintrest (2025b)



Bright horizons (2020)



Imagination tree (2013)

According to Manning-Morton (2024) Elinor Goldschmied was best known for developing the treasure baskets and heuristic play, which is linked to Froebel's theory of play. In a podcast Manning-Morting (2024) says that Goldschmied developed two types of play, the first one being the treasure basket. This is for sitting babies the idea is that the play is brought to the child.

The basket contains a variety of natural objects which encourages the baby to explore. It encourages hands on play, multi-sensory exploration and freedom with guidance. Hughes (ND) supports this by saying the Treasure Basket consists of around 80-100 natural, household, and recycled items placed in a sturdy round wicker basket, designed for infants aged 5-10 months.

At this stage, play involves sensory exploration through touch and taste, with a variety of materials enhancing an infant's interest and brain development. This type of play is independent, though a baby needs to be near a key attachment figure (such as a parent, grandparent, childminder, or nursery key person) to feel secure. The adult's role is to be responsive rather than directive, as babies can engage in this activity for up to an hour. Curiosity and concentration are fundamental to all learning and creativity, underscoring the significance of the Treasure Basket. Tavish (2023) supports that treasure basket are meaningful learning and supports development by stating that multi-sensory play is crucial as it engages all the senses, allowing babies to explore through looking, listening, smelling, touching, and tasting. This type of play also involves bodily movement, engaging the whole body in the learning process.

Links for further information on treasure basket:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypd4pobRvM>

<https://earlyimpactlearning.com/treasure-basket-ideas-the-complete-guide>

https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Early%20years/Maintaining%20and%20Improving%20Quality/Treasure_baskets%20-%20toolkit.pdf

Storytime



Small talk (ND) suggest that story time is crucial for both caring for and educating with young children. It enhances various developmental areas. Engaging storytelling not only improves a child's language skills but also boosts cognitive functions, such as understanding cause and effect, and moral and ethical behaviours. They also suggest that reading a storybook together offers a wonderful chance to build a warm, positive, and secure relationship between the practitioner and the child. This links in with bowlbys attachment theory, as Iriss (ND) suggest having at least one secure attachment relationship is closely linked to positive self-esteem and confidence. A child who feels love and acceptance through attuned, reciprocal interactions with their caregiver learns to accept themselves and build positive self-esteem.

How can storytime be enhanced? Small talk (ND) says when using a book for storytelling, the story itself is just one aspect to consider. Engaging illustrations and word patterns, such as rhymes, can encourage children to discuss what they see and think, helping them understand language patterns. Storytelling should extend beyond 'story time' and be integrated into daily activities. Childcare practitioners should incorporate as many physical actions as possible during storytelling. By making story time dynamic, a child's imagination and cognitive functions can be stimulated and developed, along with providing physical benefits. Play Wales' Physical Literacy program is a valuable resource that offers the tools and skills needed for fully inclusive physical storytelling. Family hubs (n.d.) believes that Story time is a key activity for children that aims to spark their imagination, and plays an important role in boosting their language and literacy skills, and develop their emotional intelligence and promotes brain development.

Links for more ideas and information on Storytime:

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

International approaches

Hargraves (2020) says that Te Whāriki, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, envisions children as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit. It emphasizes the importance of respectful, responsive, and reciprocal relationships for wellbeing, learning, and development. It recognizes and affirms children's cultural and language backgrounds, empowering them to develop positive learner identities. In the curriculum there are 4 principles: Empowerment, holistic development, family and community and relationships. There also are 5 development strands which contains learning outcomes: Well-being, Belonging, Contribution, communication and exploration. These are like the learning pathways that are in the Welsh curriculum for funded non-maintained settings.

Here is the link for both curriculum for you to have a look.

[ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf](#)
[A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#)

As you can see in this video [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) Maslow's theory is linked to both curriculums.

Sprouts (2017) claims there are 5 stages to the hierarchy of needs, physiological needs, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. The strands in the New Zealand curriculum are wellbeing, like physiological needs where you need food, shelter etc to ensure you are well. The second strand belonging the need to feel safe and loved to build well being and relationships, which will then help to build self esteem which will allow you to communicate and explore, without Maslow's needs being met it could stop progression to the next strand.



bostonreggionetwork (2019)



Myece (2017)

International approaches



Play Scotland (2016)

Like both other curriculum the Reggio Emilia approach is child centred linking to Bronfenbrenner's theory where the child is at the centre. Learning Teaching Scotland (2016) states that the Reggio Approach includes several key factors: viewing children as capable and competent, emphasizing the importance of arts in early childhood education, planning and designing learning experiences, fostering strong connections between the school and the community, creating a supportive and stimulating learning environment, and encouraging teachers to continuously learn and grow. These factors are interconnected and collectively contribute to the holistic development of children.

The Reggio Emilia approach aligns closely with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). According to Santín et al. (2017) The Reggio Emilia approach is a philosophical framework that emphasizes listening to and respecting children, recognizing their potential to influence everyday practices, ideas, and projects. This approach supports the UNCRC's commitment to children's rights, including the right to express their views freely (Article 12), the right to education that develops their personality, talents, and abilities (Article 29), and the right to participate in cultural and artistic activities (Article 31).

Here is the link to support this and for more information on The rights of the child:

[UNCRC_summary-1.pdf](#)

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AI Statement

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.