

The First 1000 Days

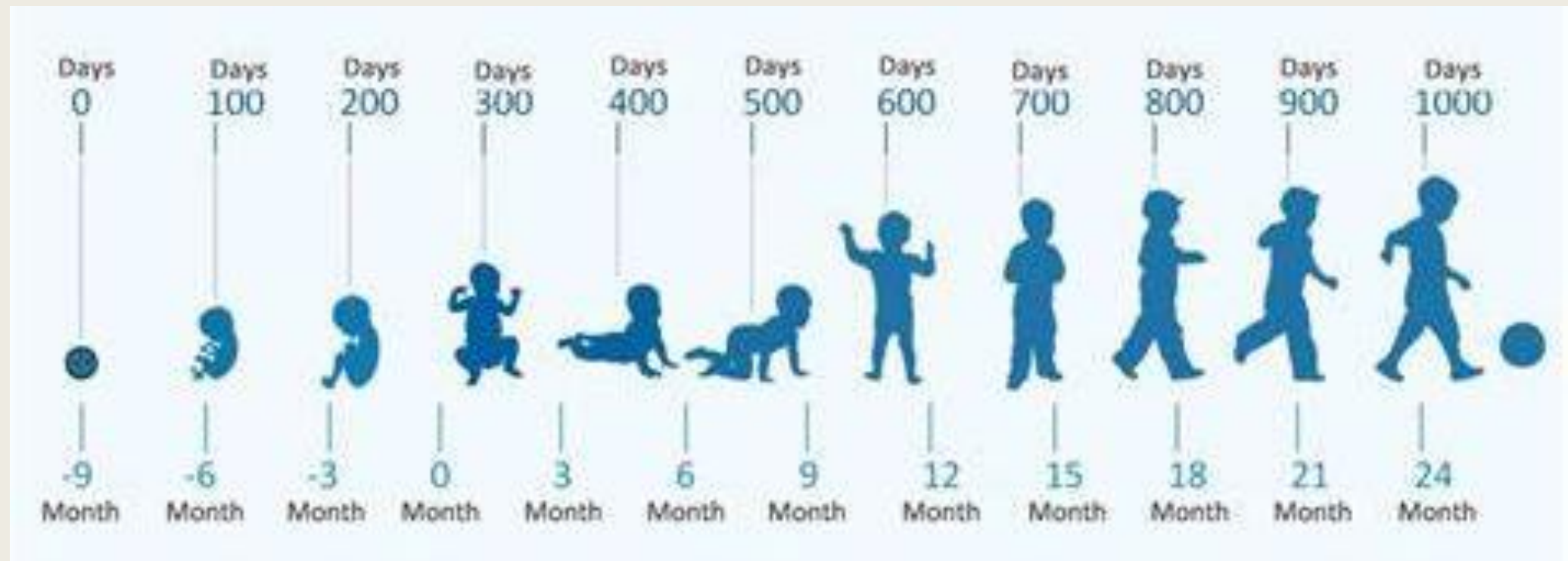
Early Years Development





What is the first 1000 days?

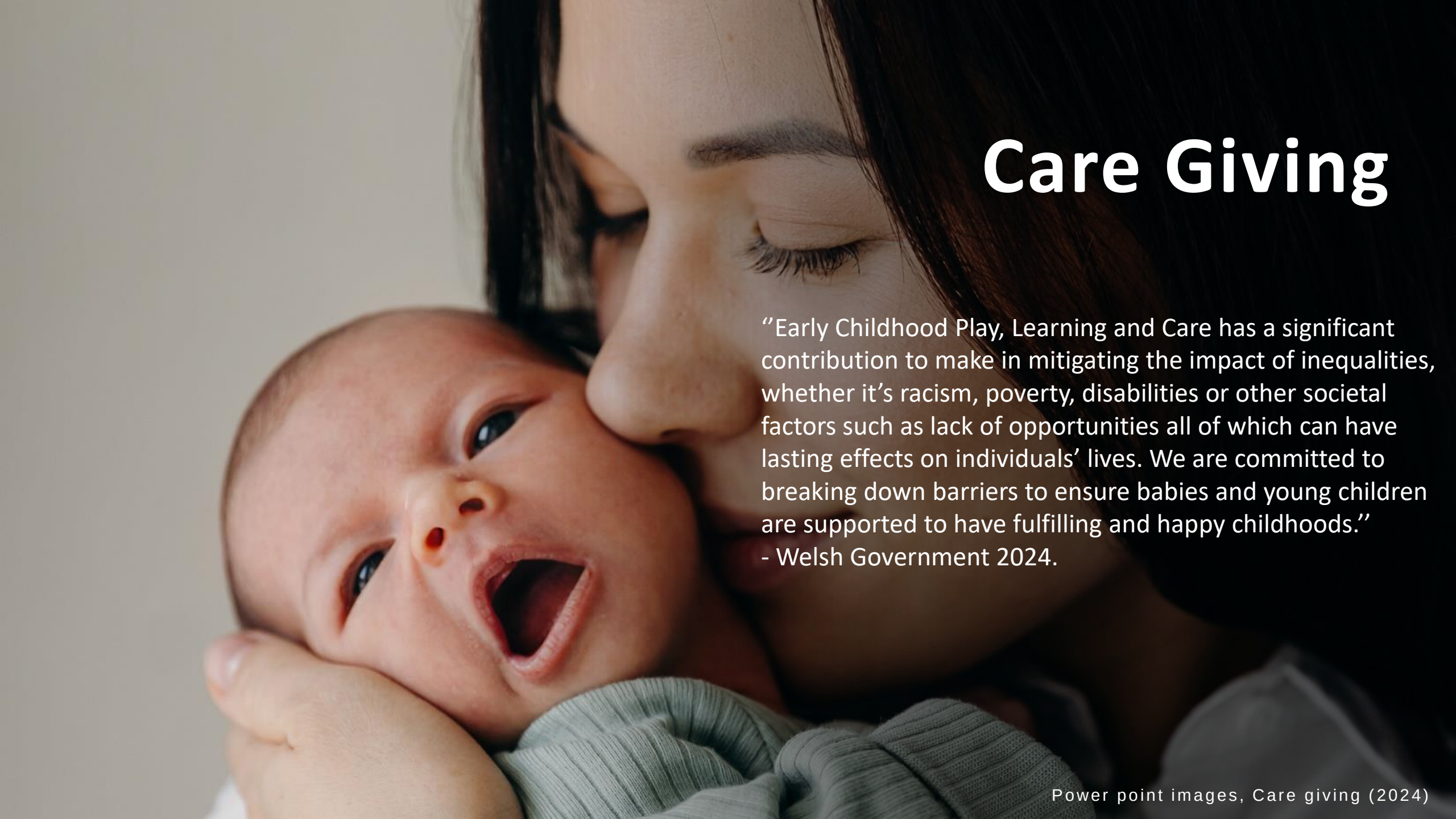
The first one thousand days of human life development start from conception through to toddler age, two years. According to Dr Chehab (2021) this is the most critical time for a child's growth and development. During this time rapid physical changes occur including organ development, height, weight gain, cognitive and psychomotor development. Cognitive and psychomotor development. This period includes learning auditory, sensory and memory cognition. Chehab emphasizes the importance of baby and infant nutrition ensuring that adequate nutrition is given to support a child's development. Chehab believes ensuring adequate nutrition should rely first on the promotion of exclusive breast feeding for the first six months which will aid to protect babies and infants from any health conditions or diseases that could arise. The biology of the first 1,000 days, (2020) says that the first three hundred days (the time of an average female pregnancy, 280 days) a woman's nutritional status as she enters pregnancy (the periconceptional period) is an important focus and during this time any deficiency or defect could occur. It also says that by an average of 41% a supplement of folic acid can reduce the risk of neural tube defects and an iron supplementation in pregnancy significantly decreases maternal anemia, iron deficiency and LBW.



Bing images, The first 1000 days of development.

The first 1000 days.

In the first 1000 days early years practitioners support babies and infants by caring for them. They work in partnership with their parents, care givers and families to ensure exceptional care is given. Practitioners ensure an inclusive classroom environment where all children feel valued and supported.



Care Giving

“Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care has a significant contribution to make in mitigating the impact of inequalities, whether it’s racism, poverty, disabilities or other societal factors such as lack of opportunities all of which can have lasting effects on individuals’ lives. We are committed to breaking down barriers to ensure babies and young children are supported to have fulfilling and happy childhoods.”
- Welsh Government 2024.

Exceptional care and challenges.



To give exceptional care to babies and infants would include meeting all their required needs. These include their physical needs such as adequate nutrition and assisting with meals to movement and play as well as elimination and continence, social needs and emotional needs including love and professional love. Dr Jools believes that we should nurture, enable and value children respecting that each child is unique and should feel safe and secure which then will enable them to feel relaxed and happy to learn and play. In addition, she states that our child centred positive interactions should be the foundation of everything within the early years. Various challenges may arise to providing high quality care because of funding and shortages of staffing within the sector. A government early years Ofsted blog (2024) shares information regarding the high staff turn over which then leaves an impact on the children when receiving exceptional care due to the staff not knowing the children, leaving an impact on the quality of interaction if the staff member is new or training. Another challenge that causes barriers is effective communication including language differences, physical disabilities including a hearing impairment or blindness and emotional wellbeing including stress and anxiety or any other state which may affect clear communication. Throughout the early years settings Brodie (2025) says practitioners implement Pikler's approach. Designed as a framework of influence for practitioners facing modern challenges, high child-to-staff ratios, increasing paperwork demands and pressure for early academic achievement. Pikler's emphasis on respect and relationships within the early years maintains throughout her framework for creating caring and nurturing environments.

Professional love in the early years settings is a concept introduced by Dr Page Jools.



Professional love.

Professional love is a term introduced by Dr Jools (2013). It involves practitioners being able to provide emotional support to children which enables them to feel secure, safe and valued. Practitioners may offer encouragement, comfort and positive reinforcement. Early years matters emphasise the importance of maintaining professional boundaries including the clear policies on physical contact and interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, professional love within the early years setting is about creating environments that support the children and complements the care children receive at home to enable helping them thrive developmentally and emotionally.



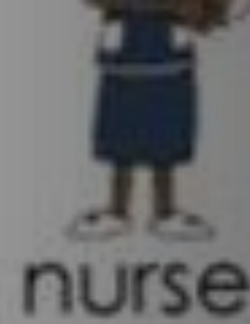
What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Challenge	Strategies to overcome
Literacy levels	May affect a practitioner's ability to read and understand written communications.
Communication barriers between practitioners and parents.	Use technology. Language translation apps.
Funding	Ensure continued professional development for practitioners including online recourses and theory.
Special Educational Need	Provide ongoing training. Person centred care planning. Adaptive learning materials.
Staffing problems/ratio	Work together to ensure high quality care for the children is prioritised.





doctor



nurse



speech therapist



social worker



Professional Partnership

Bing Images, Child multidisciplinary teams (2024)



occupational therapist



volunteer

The role of an early year's practitioner in supporting children and their families in the first 1000 days.

O'Brien (2017) emphasises that a key principle within the early years education and care is the expectation that educators will develop partnerships with parents. The professional and reciprocal relationships between parents, carers and multi agency workers are crucial and should be built on respect and open communication allowing them to build trust with one another. Practitioners supporting children and families within the first 1,000 days ensure a child's daily care and holistic development liaising with multi disciplinary teams as required to support the child's overall care. Parents and practitioners will be the closest foundational support for healthy development.



The importance of working in partnership during the first 1000 days.

NSPCC 2024 points out that through multi-agency working it is more effective for safeguarding and child protection (Sidebotham et al, 2016).

Mutual support	Provide practical and emotional support
Information sharing	Share children's needs and habits to give the professionals to then share advice and expertise.
Care planning	Person centred care to meet to the needs of the specific needs of the child.
Improved health and development	Regular health monitoring allowing early intervention for any issues that may arise. Support with physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.
Community support	Reduce isolation and help build a network of support.

Maternal factors and support strategies available

The Welsh government (2019) says that ideally parents should be offered a range of universal, preventative support, as well as more targeted support for those with children with known risk factors such as conduct disorder or parents with known risk factors such as mental health issues. Perinatal mental health problems can have long lasting effects on maternal health and child development so parents should be encouraged to talk to their midwife, health visitor or GP (Mind 2010; Welsh Government 2012). Practitioners wont always be aware of a parent's wellbeing ad overall health but with building strong collaborative relationships they will be able to work together to ensure the correct support is or can be put into place. The Welsh government (2019) states, “a range of provision for pregnant and new parents should be provided. This can include antenatal groups; supporting pregnant women to recognise the importance of breast feeding and early relationships to the health and well-being of their baby; postnatal support; identification and support for postnatal depression and the promotion of attachment and responsiveness”. Welsh Gov (2013) mention that before the birth of a child, the choices that parents make about nutrition and lifestyle can have an affect on their children’s health and development, these will be picked up prior to starting early years education and care. With this in mind the Welsh government (2013) published, A range of provision for pregnant and new parents should be provided. This can include antenatal groups for mothers and fathers; supporting pregnant women to recognise the importance of breast feeding and early relationships to the health and well-being of their baby⁸ ; postnatal support; identification and support for post-natal depression and the promotion of attachment and responsiveness

A group of six children are captured in mid-air, jumping joyfully in a park. The scene is set in autumn, with trees in the background having yellow and orange leaves. The ground is covered with fallen leaves. The children are wearing various casual clothing like sweaters, plaid shirts, and jeans. The overall atmosphere is warm and energetic, with soft sunlight filtering through the trees.

Activities that provide
meaningful learning

Activities to support a child in the first 1000 days.

During the first 1000 days Pikler's research points out that babies can achieve physical milestones when given the freedom to move. When supporting babies development with activities to reach these milestones Pikler suggests that a baby should be laying on their back to be able to explore their hands and feet. This will help them develop core strength. For example, A four month old baby laying on their back in a movement area or play mat, with objects placed beside them such as a small teddy will enable them to grasp and release whilst discovering their open and closing of their hand movements. Mills (2023) says that sensory play within the early years plays a vital role in their over all development including stimulating and enhancing cognitive development. Mills believes that through sensory play the children can explore, discover, and learn about the world around them using their senses, improving their ability to process and respond.



Touch

- Sand and water play.
- Playdough.

Smell

- Baking and cooking smells.

Hearing

- Play music and musical instruments/Singing and dancing
- Time outside: Nature sounds.

Taste

- Meal Times

Sight

- Use magnifying glass or binoculars.
- View books, magazines
- Spend time outside.

Activities to support a child in the first 1000 days.

According to the national literacy trust (2024) reading aloud is so simple and yet so powerful, creating imagination and building self esteem through vocabulary. Practitioners have set reading times as well as individual one to one reading. Birth to 5 matters says that through shared reading time children develop knowledge of the world around them. The skilled practitioner will use book sharing practice's to help create engagement, listening carefully to a child's response which could be verbal or non verbal.

Vygotsky (1967) believed that through play children were able to self regulate and use their imagination for example, if the children were at the park, one child may want to play on the slide and the other child may want to play with a stick. The child may use their imagination for the stick to be something else such as a fishing rod or a bat to play bat and ball, in accordance with Vygotsky's theory this would demonstrate his three components of what he believed to be real play. Dziurgot et al. (2010) said that through Vygotsky's effort a study was carried out whilst the children played freely and they found that some children required adult guidance and support during peer interaction, play and creativity.



Activities to support a child in the first 1000 days.



Bing images, Water fishing games for children

Draper, E. et al. (2024) believes it is important to identify culturally relevant activities that are stimulating for children and provide a safe place to promote fine and gross motor skills. An activity as simple as water fishing not only influences a child's fine gross motor skills but hand eye co-ordination too (Yadav, 2024). Another activity that supports children within the first 1000 days is music. According to the early years network, music has a profound impact on a child's brain development although Sharda, M. et al (2018) said that through studies there was no neuroscientific evidence to support this however, music based activities were used as for social difficulties in ASD and it was found that sensorimotor integration through sound and auditory motor entrainment of neural networks through synchronization leading to modulation of atypical sensory processing, which Sharda, M et al (2018) believed may improve social communication.



Bing images, Music in early education



International Approaches

International Approaches

Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia approach reflects within his approach taking into consideration the work and opinions of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner and other researchers. Arseven (2013) says the Reggio Emilia approach supports that the child have an image of a being that has rights instead of a being with needs.

The four principles of the Reggio Emilia approach are,

- **Child's sense of self-worth and agency:** It nurtures children's multiple capabilities.
- **Child as a driver of learning:** Children explore, wonder, question, and communicate.
- **"Hundred languages":** Children express themselves through various symbolic languages.
- **Unique and individual expression:** Every child is unique and will express themselves differently.



[Mainstream Schools vs Forest Schools: Navigating the Path to Holistic Education. | by Nazmija Hamza | Medium](#)

Edwards and Gandini (2018) said that the population of Reggio Emilia, Italy, had fought strongly to come together after the second world war to seek new ways of learning, education and play for children. According to Ceppi and Zini (1998) within the Reggio Emilia approach the environment is considered to be “a third teacher”. Härkönen (2012) says that through studies providing education out in nature has been inspirational and an important element to use as a learning environment for children. Froebel says that practitioners should carefully plan outdoor activities and implement interactions for the children using the outside world. This can be done through planting with flowers, seeds and compost or use of loose materials incorporating loose parts play to build and experiment. For example a practitioner could take the children out into the woodland area and build various items with branched leaves, sticks, rocks and stones. In 1914 Rachel and Margaret Mc millian opened an open air nursery school in London to give children the access and benefits out the outdoors instead of being secluded to the classroom. Within Härkönen (2012) research she found that the open air school had given the children an abundance of natural material providing lots of opportunity for outdoor education influencing Rudolph Steiner in 1919 to develop the Waldorf approach in which outdoor play periods were also included in the day. Hamza (2023) says that mainstream schools follow a structured curriculum and academic framework where children are taught in the classroom with set schedules set by education authorities. She goes on to say that critics of mainstream schools argue that the classroom limits individuality and creativity for a child’s holistic development.

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