

A photograph of a baby with light brown hair and blue eyes, crawling on a light-colored carpet. The baby is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt. In the foreground, there are many colorful wooden blocks (green, blue, yellow, orange, red, pink, and natural wood) scattered on the carpet. Some blocks have letters and numbers on them. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is centered over the baby's chest, containing the text "The first 1000 days".

The first 1000 days

What is the first 1000 days?

The first 1000 days is the period of rapid development from the moment of conception up to age 2 (house of Commons 2019). It is the process that will shape a child's life, a critical window of development that lays the foundation for future health, well-being, and potential. This includes prenatal, infancy, and toddlerhood, during which the foundations for physical growth, cognitive development, emotional well-being, and social skills are established. This period is crucial for laying down neural connections in the brain, shaping lifelong health behaviors, and establishing the basis for future learning and development (1000 day 2023). During this time optimal care and nurturing is needed to build a positive experience in their first 1000 days to ensure healthy growth and development. In the first two years of a child's life, the child will become adventurous and begin to discover their senses, and abilities which will allow them to start communicating with the world in different ways (lighting up your brains 2016). The brain begins to develop in the womb and is estimated that a fully grown adult brain has 86 billion neurons, however, the majority are formed whilst in the womb (uwtsd 2023). As the child's brain begins to develop, connections between neurons become stronger as the child encounters more experiences. Sustaining optimal growth and development during pregnancy and infancy requires adequate nutrition, with nursing offering vital nutrients and support. Early events during this period influence attachment styles and emotional growth, which in turn affects relationships and mental health in the future. Furthermore, the first 1000 days present a window of opportunity for early intervention, enabling the detection and treatment of health problems and developmental deficiencies before they worsen. Understanding the significance of the first 1000 days emphasises how crucial it is to give early childhood development top priority in order to guarantee every child a healthy start in life (NIH 2022).



Why is the 1000 days important?

Children can be highly affected by parental substance use during the first 1000 days, this can effect their safety, holistic development, and attachment to their mother/ caregiver (BASW2019).

An example of factors that can effect children are:

- Smoking
- Poor mental health
- Poor nutrition
- Abuse
- Poverty

It is a necessity for children to be provided the correct nutrition in order for them to be healthy, grow and to form the brain properly. Thousand days (no date) suggests that children that do not receive the right nutrition will have damaging effects on their brain growth which will lead to struggles later in life such as school, and to get a good job in the future. It is clear that the thousand days (no date) emphasises the fact that children need the correct the first 1000 days is the most crucial part of life due to the extensive amount of growth and devcelopment a child will undergo which is why it is so important that child are presented with the correct care.

The first 1000 days is the period of time where baby's brains begin to develop neuron connections which are also naturally formed in the womb. Ted (2018) shows us that we need to focus on the child developing holistically and to ensure that practioners assess the child's overall development. The early stages of a child's life is signifcant for the child to understand and develop cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially.

Having closeness with family members will encourage awareness and understanding of the people around them. However, if a child does not have strong start to life this can affect the connections that will happen in their first 1000 days, ultimately decreasing the chances of having a fulfilling beginning which is vital to their growth, development and therefore opportunities in life (Ted2018). Providing the child exceptional care will develop positive relationships with between the child and mother/guardian, for example, singing, reading talking and playing with the child (Ted2018).



NO SMOKING

What is exceptional care?

The First 1000 days is known for being a critical period in a child's life and children also form of attachment with their caregiver/parents (American Academy of paediatrics No date). Bowlby theory supports this as he believes children need to form an attachment with their caregiver/parents in order to fill their holistic needs and the best chance of survival (Cherry 2023). Maslow also agrees with Bowlby that a child's needs are critical and if these needs are filled the child will have the best possible outcome (Cherry 2022). Maslow's theory was based on the hierarchy of needs and how it supports children from being protected from neglect. Another factor is the hierarchy of needs allows the child to grow to be a positive individual. Maslow believed that in order for children to survive they needed their basic needs met.

Cherry (2022) states that Maslow believed in order for children to survive they needed food, water, and children to feel a form of safety. Schwarzenberg (NO date), believed that if children had these needs met, they would feel a sense of belonging and security. According to Cherry (2024), Children should also feel respected and valued in the first 1000 days no matter their religion, beliefs, or race as this will allow children to feel safe and valued from an early age. This supports a child to feel a sense of belonging, but it also supports children's self-esteem which allows children to feel confident Cherry (2024). Maslow also believed that children should be allowed to explore the world around them, and parents/caregiver and teacher should also praise these talents and a child's capability Schwarzenberg (NO date).



(Sources: Cherry, K. 2022)

Why is exceptional care important?

Pikler is also another theorist who believed that the first 1000 days were beneficial for a child's life and development not only this, but Pikler believed that when a child is in education or care their needs should be seen as important (Asim Ari 2022). Another factor to note practitioners should also promote exceptional care in their daily routine. According to Asim Ari (2022), Pikler also theory also emphasizes the importance of the well-being and nutrition of children and how practitioners can support the child. Pikler also agreed with Maslow that children should be allowed to explore and to be encouraged to explore the world around through imaginative play and free play them as this will result to independence (Asim Ari 2022).

According to Institute (2019), Pikler emphasises the importance of the positive relationship between the caregiver/parent and child and how the caregiver/parent can make these milestone are an important and respectful moment for child's first 1000 days. An example of this is caring activity such as bath time, ensuring that giving a child your full attention during this moment is an important stage in a child's first 1000 day (Institute 2019). Not only this but ensure that a child behaviour may be different every day and being gentle and clam with the child allows caregiver/parents and practitioners allows them to build trust which benefits a child's first 1000 days (Institute (2019). Marlen (No Date) states that parents/caregiver should be a leader and role model during bath time, and they should adapt and guide to the child and how the child reacts, which will support the child first 1000 days. Marlen (No Date), that during these activities personal care was one of the main factors that achieved build a positive relationship with a parent/caregiver and practitioners. These activity also allows children to build self-control and self-image as this has deep influence on child's first 1000 days Marlen (No Date).

[Beca Hiscocks \(2305222\):](#)
[Adopt An Animal With](#)
[WWF \(youtube.com\)](#)

Pikler also emphasises the importance of these 8 principles:

- Motor development
- Free movement
- Uninterrupted play
- Caring moment with the child and build trust
- Slow down
- Undivided attention
- Respect
- With and not to

These principles also stated that Pikler states that children should have the freedom to move freely and it should be at the child paste (Sagastui 2020).

Picklers triangle

- To ensure children had an engaging experiences with caregiver/parents and practitioners Pikler also came up with the Pikler triangle which allowed children to develop at their own pace, explore their limit and boundaries (The modern mindful mom 2023). As result of this supports children gross motor skills, fine motor skills and physical develop this supports a child holistic development. Pikler triangle enables children to patriciate in free play which allows them to experience boundaries. The modern mindful mom (2023), that Pikler triangle can be introduced from around 6 months old, children will be able to use gross motor skills to pull themselves up and down by using the handle. On the other hand, the Pikler triangle could be used for children with additional learning needs for sensory development, such as hanging toys from the top for the child to observe (The modern mindful mom 2023). This can support a child's hand eye coordination and parents/caregiver and practitioners can observe the child during this period (The modern mindful mom 2023).



Professional partnership

There are 3 key principles to help teachers and child care practitioners understand the new curriculum in Wales on how they can assist children's personal learning (gov.wales2023). Gov.wales(2023) claim that the 3 different types of key principles are engaging adults, engaging experiences and effective environment. According to gov.wales (2023) the new curriculum does not just promote children's learning, but how they each learn and why they need to. Furthermore, the new curriculum in Wales is inclusive for all children in Wales and built around each individual child.

The Welsh new curriculum have four new purposes.

- To be ambitious learners
- Creativity
- To learn about wales and the world around them
- To be confident and healthy children

The curriculum supports children to develop into healthy growing adults therefore the curriculum aids children from ages 3-16. As practitioners we must consider many factors when working with children. Welsh government (2023) implies that we must ensure children purposeful and meaningful experiences. Factors that can make children feel equal and are specifically child centered would be:

- Belonging
- Communication
- Exploration
- Physical development
- Positive well-being

Engaging experiences promote independence and offer risks and challenges which are rooted in real life, authentic contexts to engage children in deep levels of involvement. These experiences should be centred around the unique child and develop them holistically making connections between learning and experiences. Practical experiences that encourage the child to use cognitive skills such as mathematics, problem solving and vocabulary when exploring an opportunity presented for them. As a practitioner we should not assess possible opportunities as a limitation, but as a monitored risk that children should experience and learn from. The experiences should make the child feel included and equal, for example learning about culture and languages from all across the world (government Wales 2023)

Professional partnership

Professional partnership Bronfenbrenner looks at the importance of exceptional care in the first 1000 days of a child's life. He focused on the importance of environmental structure and family structures and how both benefit a child's first 1000 day (Olivia 2023). Cherry (2023) also agrees with (Olivia 2023), that the environment that the child is in plays a crucial part in a child's development and that the people around a child can also impact a child's behavior and may cause developmental delays. Bronfenbrenner had 5 factors that contribute to what exceptional care looks like in child development; these are microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Olivia 2023). The microsystem looks at the importance of child's family and life structure and how this influences a child's development. According to Cherry (2023) the microsystem has the biggest influence on child development and has the most direct impact on the child's first 1000 days. Another factor is that this theory can also influence a child's development and behaviour in a positive and a negative way (Cherry 2023). In practice, to find the best way to support the child during a form of transition is to collaborate with parents to find the best way to support children during the first 1000 days, which is a critical period in their development (Healthy Children 2021). To use this in practice, children could use a security object to ensure the child feels safe and secure in the environment; this could be an emotional support blanket or teddy to support the child in the first 1000 days (Healthy Children 2021).



Professional love

Dr Jools Page studied the importance of professional love in her time working in a early years (Heale No Date). Dr Jools page described her time observing children in the setting and how professional love allows children to be able to build that trust (Heale No Date). Practitioners should ensure that they're love for children is professional but that they build a feeling of warmth and compassion for that child (Heale No Date). In an early years setting professional love is crucial when working in the early years setting and a child's first 1000 days (University of Sheffield 2015). According to University of Sheffield (2015), practitioners states that professional love should be giving the child one on one attention and time, being respectful and kind and most importantly being available and a positive role model towards the children in their first 1000 days (University of Sheffield 2015). A similar way of saying what professional love is building that form of attachment with children and build a close bond so that children can build that trust and reassurance with their caregiver/parents and practitioners.



Challenges

During a child's first 1000 days, there are many challenges children need to overcome. Children with additional learning needs have shown that Covid 19 has had a serious effect on their emotional and social development (Welsh government 2021). For the children with additional learning needs could possibly struggle and have a few step backs with their development and learning such as their speech and language progress. Furthermore, speech and language experts has also suggested that children that come from poverty, low-income or single parent households also have been picked up that they have had speech and language delays. During Corona Virus there was a lack of support services during this detrimental time leading children to fall back on their development, causing more delays for children with learning difficulties and children that do not (Welsh government2021). Although, this was a time for families to become close therefore children bonding and forming attachments with their families and caregivers during the times of lockdown.

Children have many barriers and complexities to figure out and work upon that may demotivating, however corona virus has been one of the highest recorded set backs for children. The children that faced corona virus did not receive the optimal support or assistance from health visitors and many other services due to lockdown, which has effected the children's development and overall circumstance on where they are at hitting the correct milestone (BBC news2021)



Activities

The Maria Montessori approach was an approach which focused on the importance of independence and observation (Daily Montessori 2021). Another factor is Montessori theory was not a traditional approach and that children should learn based on their own individual development (Ruhi 2023). Also, learning through a Montessori approach should be child centred as this allows children to be observed as an individual (Ruhi 2023). Montessori focused on the importance of independence and practitioners need to create this by giving children opportunities as this allows children to experience real life situations. An example of this is enabling the children to do a freely chosen activity and to explore challenges that they may encounter in the real world (Daily Montessori 2021). Montessori believed that if children could encounter these opportunities, then they could build on their resilience, self-esteem and self-confident. Montessori also believed in the importance of observation and how observing children through play and self-directed play gives practitioners an opportunity to be able observe the child's negative and positives. According to Daily Montessori (2021) This is a way for practitioners to know what needs are being met and what practitioners need to support children in the best way. Montessori also examined the importance of free-play, and each child should have around 3 hours of free play, different resources and to experiences learning with different age groups (Ruhi 2023). An example of a Montessori approach in the first 1000 days is where children can use age appropriate real life skills such as, teaching a child how to cut with a knife and fork. This will allow children to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination which will be beneficial for a child's holistic development and brain development (Ruhi 2023).

Messy play

Duffy (No date) states that, messy play play's a key role in children first 1000 days, as this allows children to learn and develop through real life experiences. Secondly play allows children to feel a sense that they can explore with their sense, feel, touch, hear, smell and taste through natural materials. Messy play allows children to not feel like they have to achieve an activity to a certain level that practitioners need them to achieve but to achieve what suits their own holistic development Duffy (No date). In messy play children can feel a desire to find out more when using messy play resources. According to (Gascoyne 2018), messy play may be a sensory form of activity which allows children to feel calm and relaxed and can help children feel safe and secure.





International approach

The Reggio Emilia approach was started by a person called Loris Malaguzzi who was from Italy. According to Berg (2024) state that this approach was based that child could learn through their own environment, this come of a sense of curiosity which is fundamental for child's first 1000 days. The Reggio Emilia approach on teaching was that children were known to be a third teacher during their own learning, this allows children from a young age to learn skills such as problem solving, teamwork and communication skills. In order for children to have these skills practitioners should ensure that this is provided for them (Berg 2024). The Welsh Curriculum and Reggio Emilia approach both look as a unique individual and their form of development as that individual child.

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