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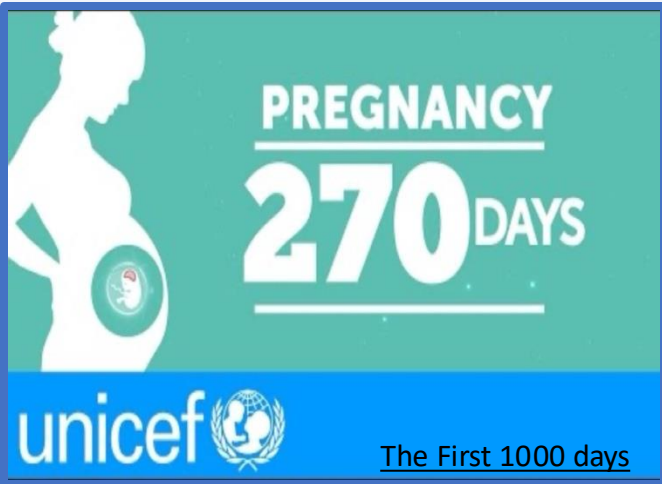
I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.

Introduction.

What is the first 1000 days?

According to Karaochuk *et al.* (2018) The first 1000 days starts from conception to a child's second birthday.

It is a critical period for the foundations of a child's health and development. The ability of a child to develop, learn and thrive is impacted by how well or how poorly mothers and children are fed and cared for during this period.

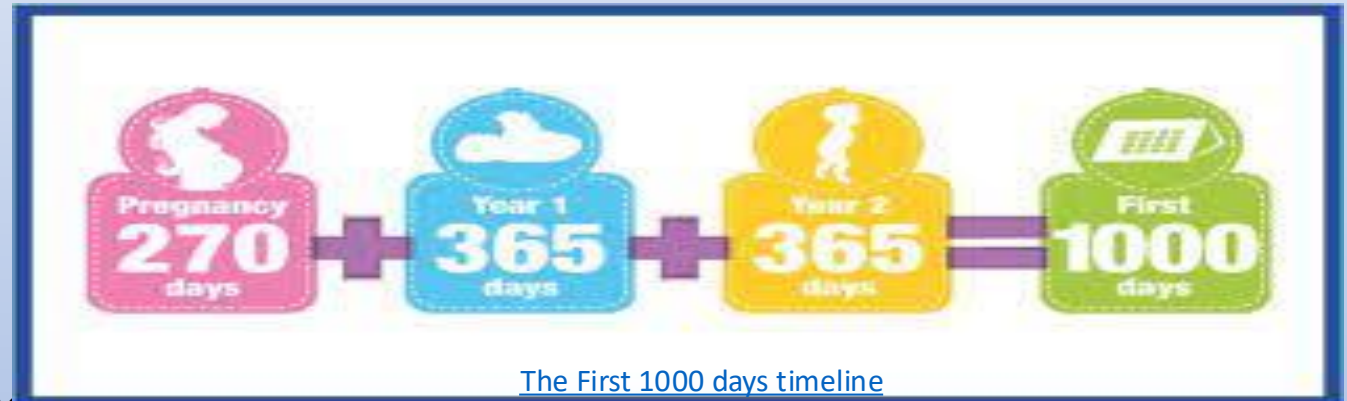


Pregnancy.

A pregnancy usually lasts 270 days or 9 months. It has three trimesters: First trimester, Second trimester and Third trimester.

The first trimester is the period from conception to 13 weeks and 6 days. During this time, it is important for the mother and father to have active roles. Although the mother to be will be developing and growing another human, the father's role involves implementing a healthy lifestyle and appropriate behaviours, sharing anxieties and emotions with the mother to be.

The mother to be will undergo tests during the pregnancy and will receive advice to take supplements to assist the foetal's development e.g. folic acid to prevent neural tube defects, such as spina bifida.



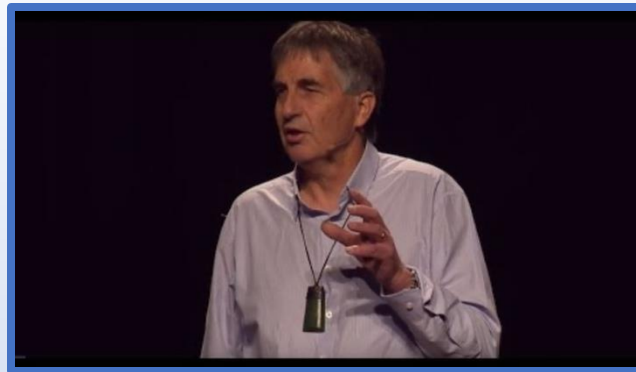
[The First 1000 days timeline](#)

During the second and third trimesters, fetal development is completed. The importance is for the mother to be to develop and grow. It is important to maintain an adequate intake of macronutrients to promote smooth growth and development for the fetus.

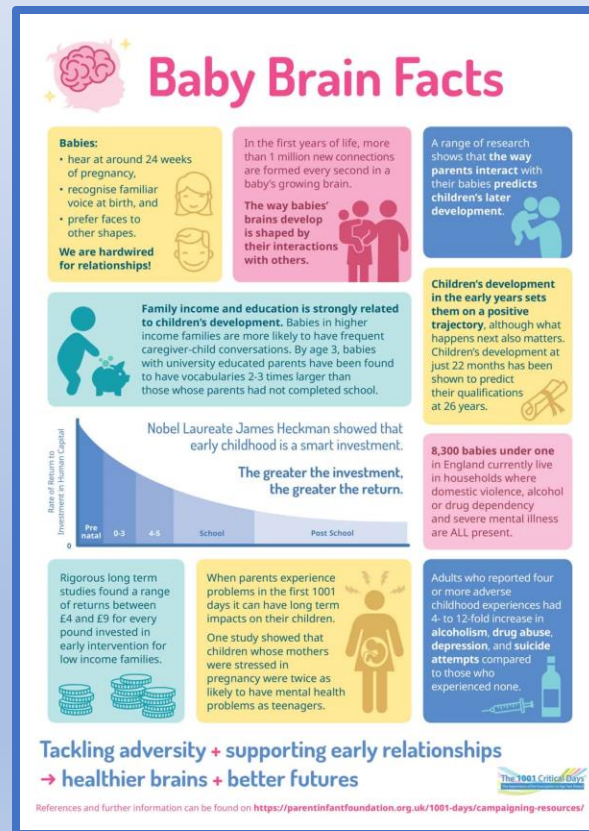
Further information on pregnancy and the first 1000 days can be found in the video 'The First 1000 days'.

During pregnancy the mother to be requires adequate prenatal care to ensure they receive care that supports neurological development and helps prevent complications such as low birth weight and developmental delays.

According to NHS Wales, (2023) Prenatal care is vitally important within the first 1000 days as it allows for detecting and managing potential health issues as well as supporting the baby's development and making sure that mum feels prepared. This prenatal care includes ultrasounds, regular medical checks and support for lifestyle, nutrition, emotional and mental health. In some areas in Wales childbirth classes are offered. (NHS Wales, 2023) Further information can be found on the link from Public Health Wales.

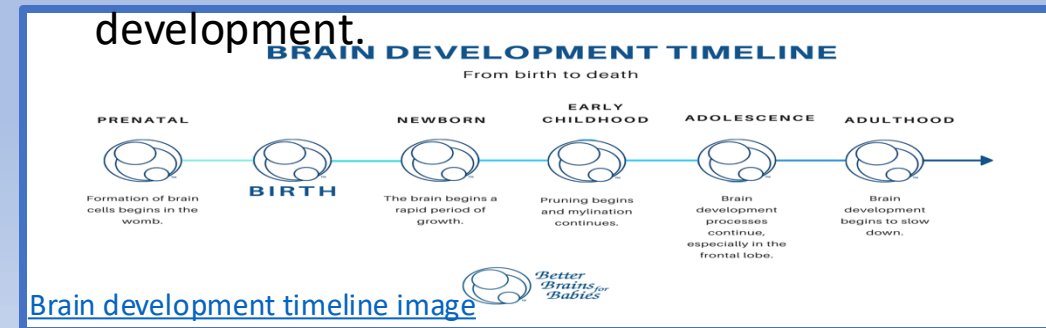


[How important is The First 1000 days?](#)

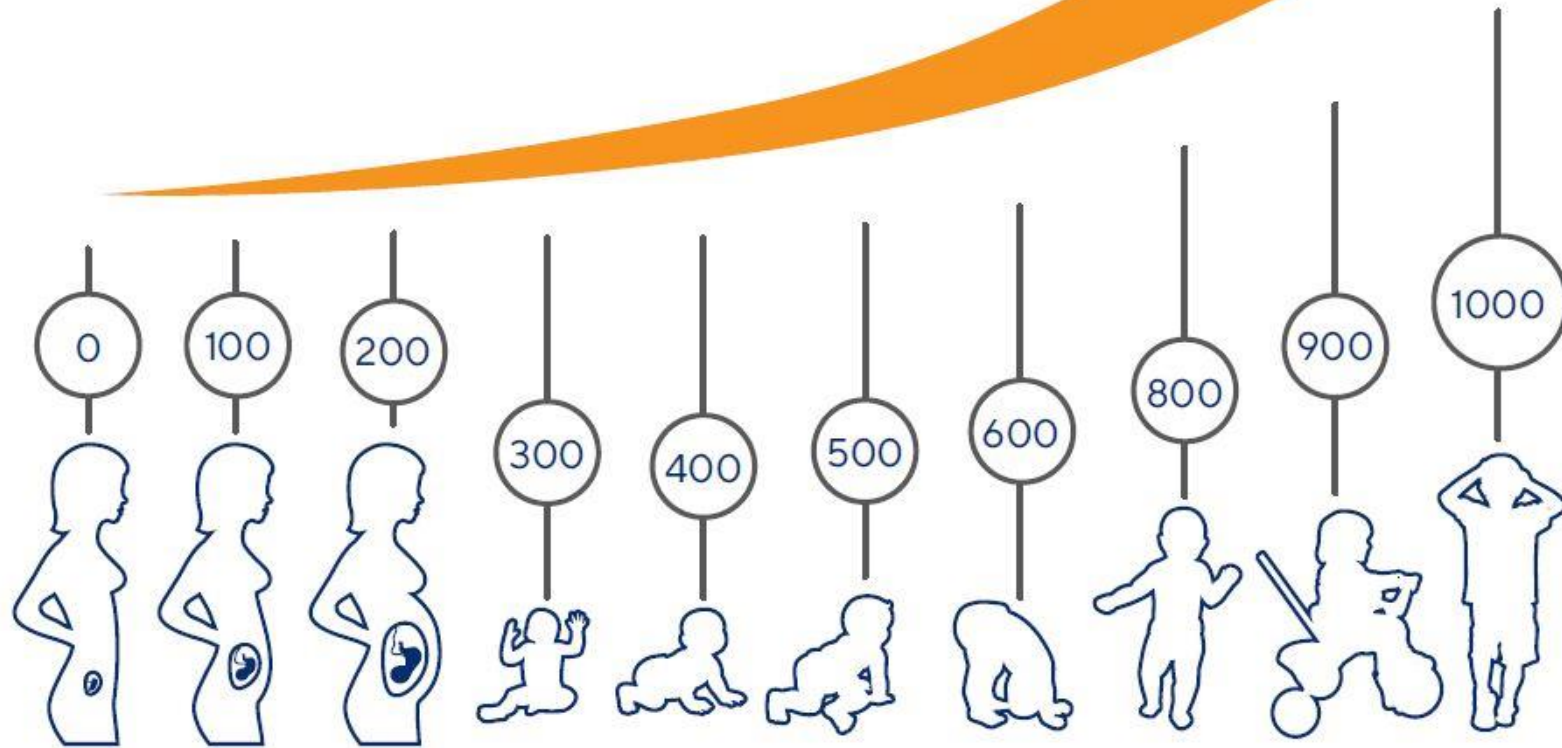


[Baby Brain image](#)

Watch the video 'How important is The First 1000 days?' for further information. A newborn baby has most of their brain cells they'll ever have. According to a survey they have a staggering 100 billion! (Stead, C 2024) However, they are still developing their brain cell connections, this is through their experiences of life. Neural pathways develop from every touch, rock or sounds. The more pathways' interactions in the first 1000 days, the better prepared a child will be to engage in learning opportunities. Through establishing strong foundations during infancy, it promotes social-emotional development, cultivates self regulation skills, supports mental health and physical well-being, which are all crucial to ensure lifelong success in all areas of development.



First 1000 Days



What is high quality care?

What is "High-Quality" Education?



Professional Development

What is exceptional care?

'The period from pregnancy to age three is when children are most susceptible to environmental influences. Investing in this period is one of the most efficient and effective ways to help eliminate extreme poverty and inequality, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow.' (UNICEF, 2024)

Opportunities for learning:

- Use of effective body language
- Talking to, sing songs and communicate with the child
- Play, model play and imitate play with the child
- Read books, posters and magazines to encourage language skills
- Be inclusive to all children and provide an environment that is enabling by ensuring it is accessible to all children.

Being Responsive:

- Schön's reflection in action – observe and respond appropriately.
- Identify the child's needs and respond to build trust.
- Comfort the child if needed.
- Serve and Return - eye contact and reciprocal care.

Good health:

- Medicine - Being responsible for and managing accurately.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – ensuring basic needs are being met.
- Health services – accessing services that are available to use.
- Affection – ensuring appropriate responses
- Physical and Emotional health – monitoring and managing to ensure healthy Mother and Baby.

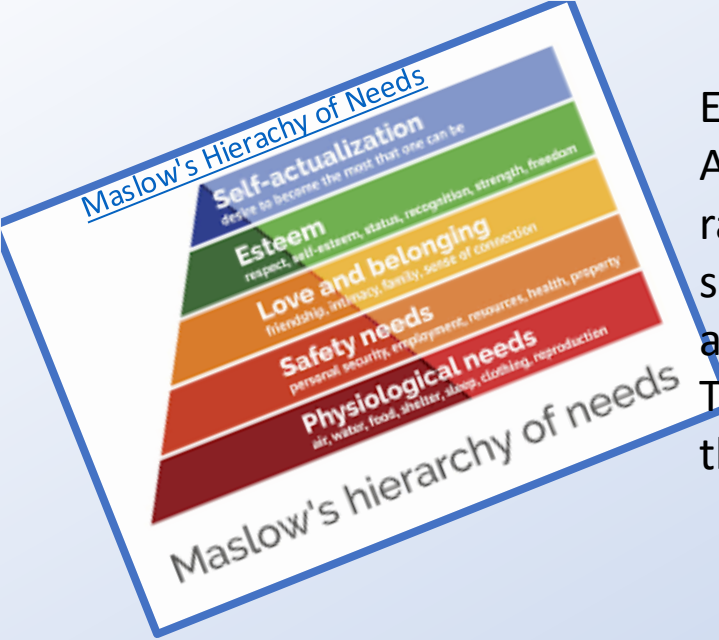
Understanding the concept of Caregiving

Adequate nutrition:

- Healthy diet provided for mother and baby
- Advice provided for breast feeding and vitamins required for mother and baby.

Safety and Security:

- Provide a safe and secure environment
- Complete a daily checklist to assess the risks within the environment.



Enabling environments

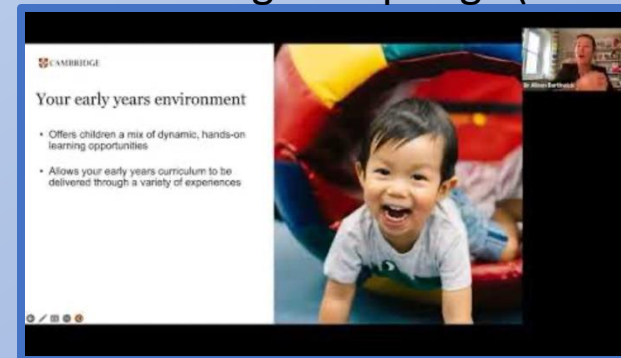
An enabling environment should be warm, welcoming and nurturing. It should offer a range of resources, which are familiar and that facilitates a sense of belonging. Activities should be offered indoor and outdoors with sufficient space for children to explore, move and collaborate and take measured risks. (Pre-School Learning Alliance, 2019).

The video 'What does a good Early Years environment look like?' explains in more detail the importance of an enabling environment for children and Early Years Practitioners.

According to Welsh Government, (2024) 'We know that children are influenced by their environment and the adults around them and that they learn from everything they see, hear and do. We have a responsibility to influence children's development positively through creating an accessible and inclusive environment in our setting, one that values and celebrates everyone.'

An environment that is enabling is important to ensure a child's needs are met in line with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. It should be hygienic, which is free from infection and disease, visually stimulating to develop cognitive function, open and safe for children to be able to crawl around, inclusive for all children and caregivers to access; including an area for breast feeding, safe to prevent injuries and reduce the risk of harm and have a quiet space to allow children to rest or sleep.

'Inclusion is defined to be the process of accepting all and includes dealing with differences through adapting.' (Knowles, 2018).



[What does a good Early Years environment look like?](#)

Professional partnerships.

Partnership working refers to a broad range of actions and can be described as people/organisations coming together to achieve a common purpose.

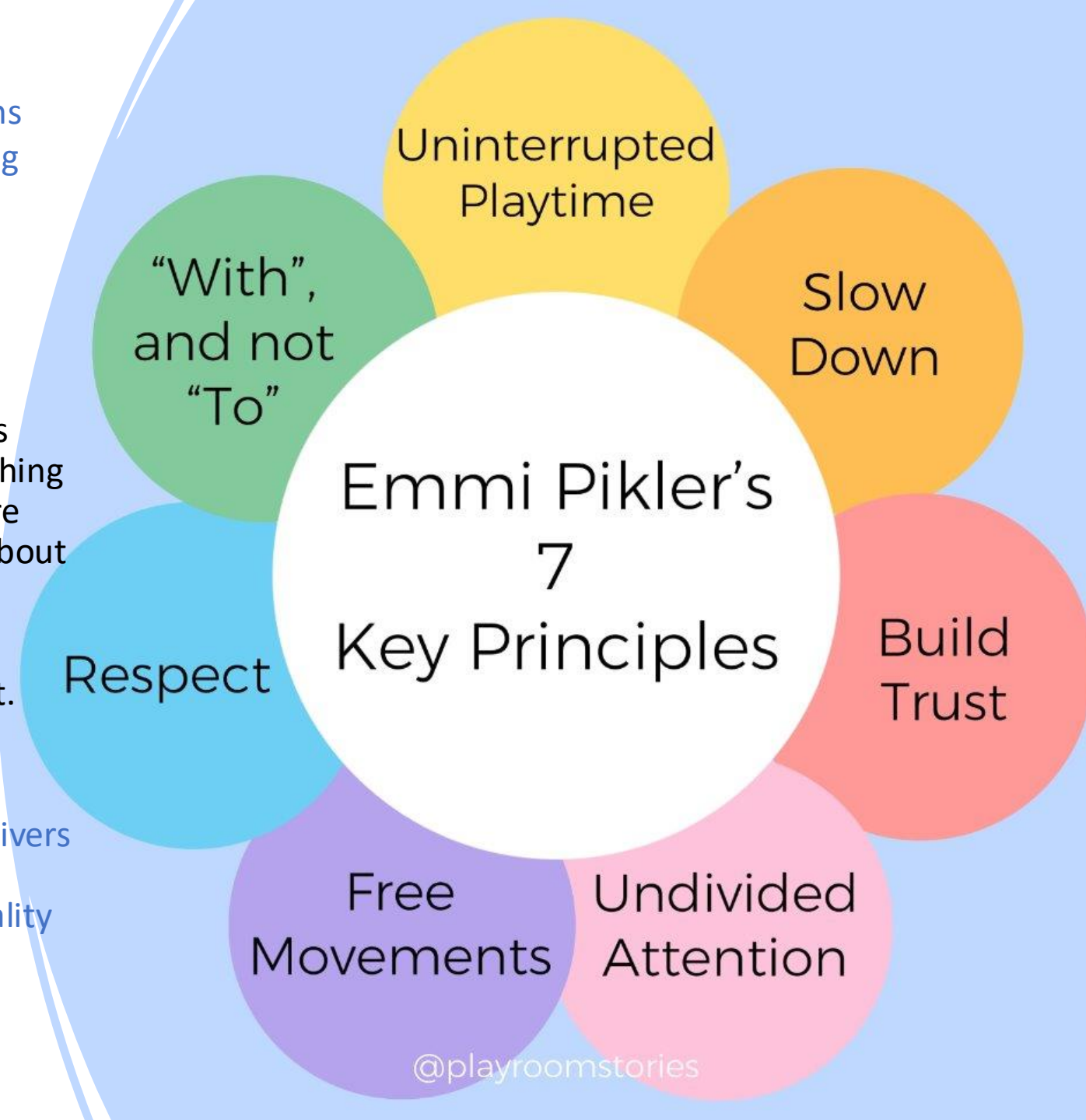
(Community Change, 2010)

As an Early Years Practitioner working in partnership with parents/carers allows for each individual's knowledge and understanding to be shared. Practitioners rely on information from parents/carers from care routines to food choices and a baby's soothing techniques. Effective communication is vital to ensure practitioners and parents/carers are well informed about the child in the practitioners' care.

Emmi Pikler emphasizes the importance of positive relationships, believing that children deserve respect. One of Pikler's key principles is to build trust;

'Build Trust, and your relationship, during the caring activity times: Pikler believed that parents and caregivers need to take time to make nappy changing, feeding, bathing and dressing, an unhurried and pleasant quality time – with the baby being an active partner.'

(Aspiring beginning, no date)



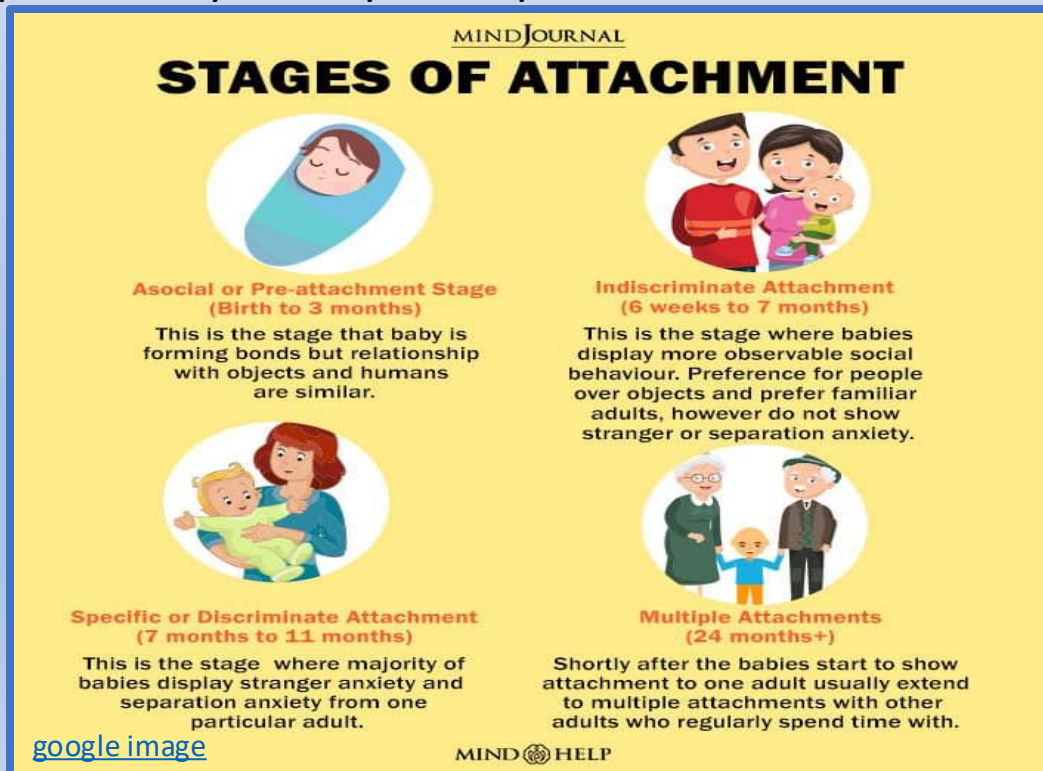
According to John Bowlby, (1997) 'attachment is a clinical term used to describe a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings.

A disruption or loss of a child's emotional bond can affect them emotionally and psychologically into adulthood and impact their future relationships.

Through Bowlby's experiments and investigations, he identified that children are able to form an attachment with more than one caregiver. The most powerful attachments were the ones with whom care was provided by in early infancy.



[Partnership working](#)



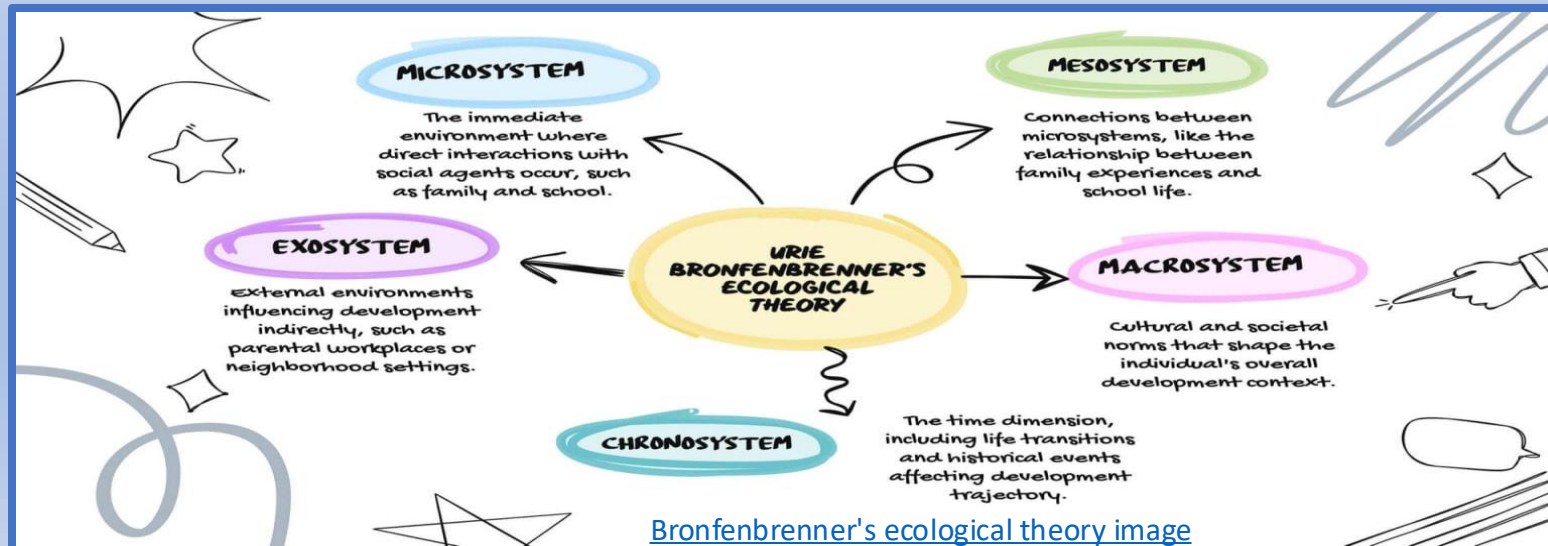
Howe, (2011) agreed with Bowlby's theory and the importance that parents/carers and practitioners should be attuned and responsive to a child's needs and provide appropriate care. This includes recognising hunger, illness or a need for closeness and affection.

There are occasions when a parent/carer develops their emotional bond before the baby is born. For a child their attachment is formed and developed over time. However, sometimes a parent/carer may have difficulty forming a bond, for example if they are experiencing mental health issues or do not have an effective support network.

From the image below, you can see that Urie Bronfenbrenner has a theory of ecological systems. This theory has significant implications for early years practice. It suggests creating supportive environments to foster positive relationships and a sense of belonging. Engage families as partnerships to strengthen home-school connections and ensure societal influences are developed and advocated for in policies that support children and their families.

‘Bronfenbrenner argued that the quality and stability of a child’s relationships, particularly within the microsystem, are essential for healthy development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).’ These relationships include:

- Parent-child relationships:** A relationship that is nurturing, responsive, and supportive. This type of parenting is crucial for a child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development.
- Teacher-child relationships:** A positive, caring relationships with practitioners. Where practitioners can foster a child’s learning, motivation, and well-being.
- Peer relationships:** Interactions with peers. Opportunities for that provide social learning, cooperation, and the development of social skills.



Challenges.

Within the First 1000 days and further into a human's life, there are many challenges people and childcare settings face. Some of which may have a solution but ultimately any challenge causes an impact. In recent years it has been highlighted that the cost-of-living crisis including poverty, COVID, limited funding to support children with ALN, recruitment and retention of staff, availability of sufficient staff training and a 'postcode lottery' of access to services within Wales have had an impact and caused challenges for parents/carers and childcare settings.

Working within the childcare sector in Wales funding is one of the main issues. The Welsh Government have begun to recognize the challenges and have been made aware of the impact this had had on families in Wales. Within the Senedd there have been discussions around the lack of funding. More information can be viewed here: [Welsh Government funding discussion](#).

[ITV Wales news report](#)



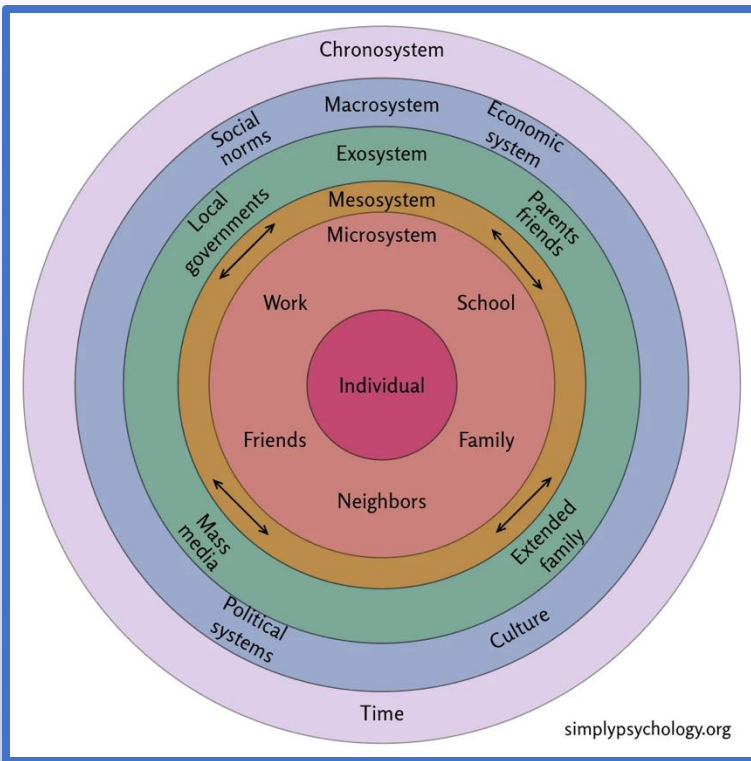
[Early Years Wales funding survey results](#) identify and offer a solution to funding issues within Wales.

The challenges have caused such an impact that ITV Wales News programme have included a section on these challenges within their news report. The video is opposite.

In January 2024, there was a petition open on Wales' Senedd website with regards to funding.

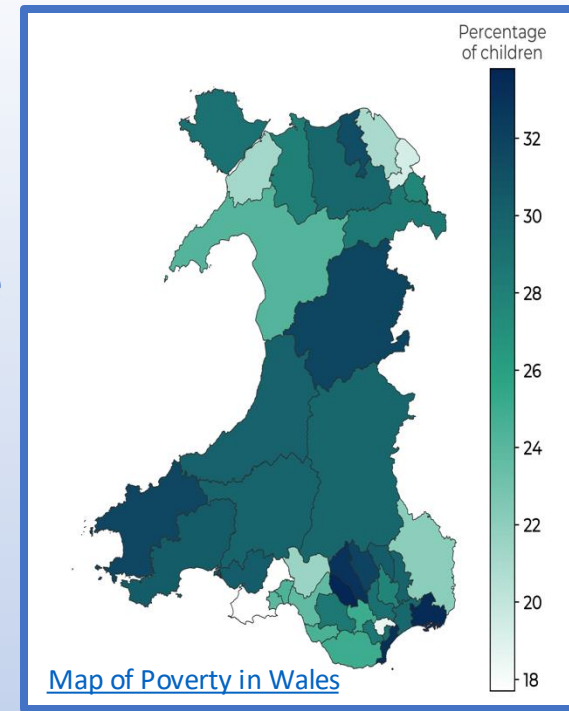
'The UK Government have announced that from April 2024 all working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare. However, this benefit will not apply to all working families in Wales, as the equivalent "flying start" program will not expand to all areas. This leaves Welsh families thousands of pounds worse off than English counterparts, despite claims from the first minister that the Welsh offer is "better" as its 48 weeks instead of 38 for 3 and 4 year olds.'

[Senedd website](#)



Children who grow up in poverty experience many disadvantages. Poverty impacts a parent's ability to provide goods and activities that could inhibit a child's learning.

'Poorer children systematically do worse on both cognitive and behavioural outcomes at both age three and age five.' (Field, 2010: 38) This results in children from poorer backgrounds being less ready for school and less ready to access resources invested in the universal education system. Similarly, Hobcraft and Kiernan (2010: 25) researched and found that children at the age of five in poor households exhibit what could be regarded as 'cognitive delay'. (Brodie, 2018)



Urie Bronfenbrenner's emphasises the interconnectedness of the ecological systems and its implications for addressing contemporary challenges. These challenges in education can be seen as the impact of poverty and inequality on children's learning and well-being. Swick and Williams (2006), recognised that the broader societal and political factors shape children developmental. They also recognise that educators can advocate for policies and practices to support the needs of children and families.



In Wales, Public Health Wales have developed a document [The First 1000 days. A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parenting](#) which explains the development of local and national policy to provide opportunities to give children the best possible start in life. However, there are implications for policy and practice and according to Public Health Wales reducing inequalities has been a 'longstanding policy objective' in Wales for years. The video opposite summarises the approach by Public Health Wales.

Activities.

According to PLASP, (2024) Children learn best when they are deeply engaged in what they are doing or experiencing. Stimulating activities and interactions ensure development in different areas. Experiences actively involve participants and activities and interactions stimulate multiple senses. There are many activities for children to engage in. Sensory play to stimulate senses, treasure baskets to encourage exploration, singing to boost language skills, tummy time to strengthen muscles, and storytelling to enhance early literacy and bonding skills.

What are treasure baskets?

Treasure Baskets are made from a sturdy wicker basket to a spare cardboard box! It is filled with a variety of tactile objects for babies and children to explore.

The Treasure Basket concept was inspired by Elinor Goldschmied. It is a simple yet profound idea, opposing the trend to give commercial plastic toys to babies by providing them instead with a richer authentic sensory experience.

Natural objects and authentic items possess a wide variety of sensory properties and should be included in a treasure basket. As a baby notices a seashell or lemon, then picks it up to explore with gums and tongue, they simultaneously catches the texture, colour, scent and flavour. Many everyday household objects also offer a variety of sensory experiences and can be popped into the Treasure Basket as well. As a baby shakes a bunch of keys or bangs a metal whisk, they notice the sounds the object has produced as well as the sensations in their arm and hand. These actions strengthen cognitive development and motor control.

‘A growing body of research suggests that students learn more deeply and perform better on complex tasks if they have the opportunity to engage in more ‘authentic’ learning activities. (Barrell and Darling-Hammond, 2008)



[What are Treasure Basket?](#)



[Podcast excerpt about Elinor Goldschmied and Treasure Baskets](#)

Elinor Goldschmied's concept of the Treasure Basket was her most important contribution to parents/ carers and practitioners understanding of early child development. In her opinion Treasure Baskets 'offer young babies a rich variety of material within reach - from which they can choose what to explore in their own way and at their own pace.'
(Froebel.org.uk)

When selecting activities such as a Treasure Basket, it can be an inclusive activity for all children to enjoy. Guide Dogs association for the Blind have a section on their website which offers the option of providing a Treasure Basket to visually impaired children and adults. [Visual impaired](#)



[baby-treasure-basket-12-months](#)



[Natural Treasure Basket](#)

There are many websites and videos that parents/ carers and practitioners can use to develop Treasure Baskets. [BBC Tiny Happy People](#) have a variety of Treasure Basket opportunities and other enriching play activities available on their website.



[Treasure Basket play](#)

The video opposite explains the benefits of Treasure Baskets and the variety of authentic objects that will enhance a child's learning and development. Further activities to enhance a child's learning can be found on the link below, [Activities for Babies and Children.](#)

Te Whāriki Curriculum

Principles

EMPOWERMENT | WHAKAMANA

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT | KOTAHITANGA

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY | WHĀNAU TANGATA

RELATIONSHIPS | NGĀ HONONGA

Strands

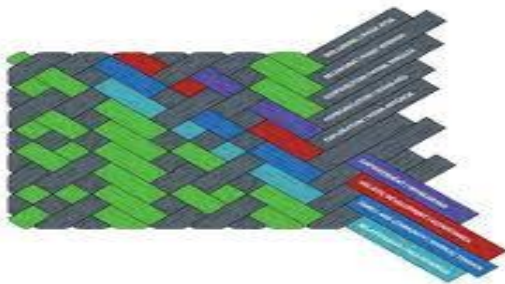
WELLBEING | MANA ATUA

BELONGING | MANA WHENUA

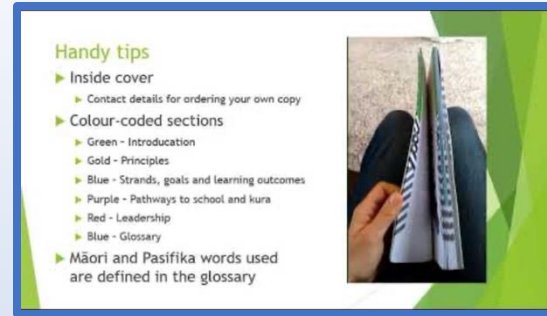
CONTRIBUTION | MANA TANGATA

COMMUNICATION | MANA REO

EXPLORATION | MANA AOTŪROA



[Curriculum image](#)

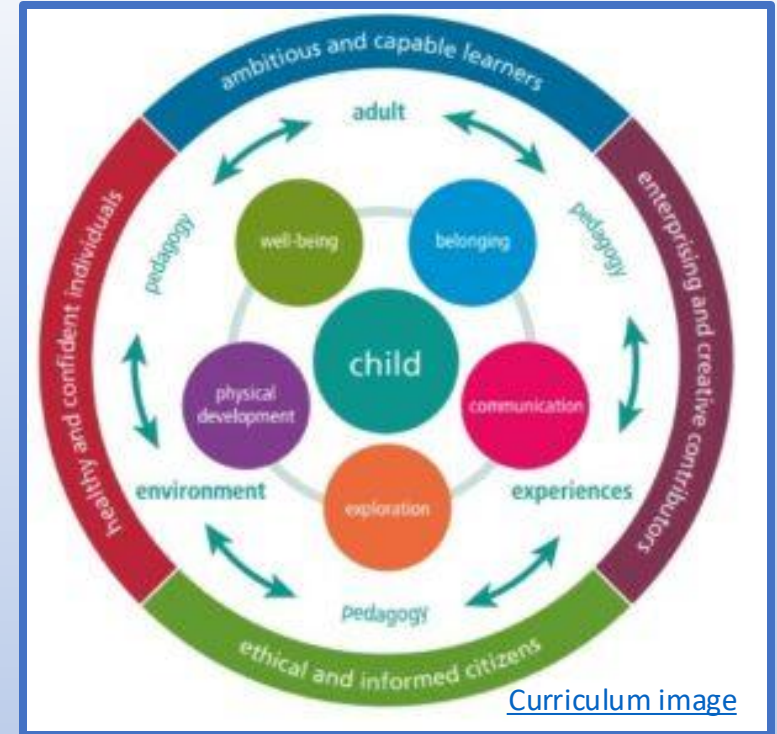


[Te Whāriki](#)



[Welsh Curriculum](#)

Wales Non-Maintained Curriculum



[Curriculum image](#)

When looking at international approaches there are similarities between the curriculum in Wales and the curriculum in New Zealand (Te Whāriki). From watching each video relating to the curriculum of each country and looking at the table of Principles and Strands for Te Whāriki and the pathways of the Non-Maintained Curriculum in Wales there are many words that are repeated. Holistic development, communication, belonging and well being to name a few are key contributors to both curriculums.

The cover represents part of the underside of a whāriki or woven mat. The green symbolises new life, growth and potential and references harakeke and pandanus, which are used throughout Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa as materials for weaving.

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