



Exceptional Care (The First 1000 Days)

A child's development begins in the womb, the first 1000 days of a child's development is crucial for lifelong development and health. According to (Elevit 2022) "the baby develops from 1 cell to 500 trillion cells during the first 1000 days". Nutrition has a huge impact on the development on a child's first 1000 days, children need nutritious food when they are young and if they are deprived from this it could affect their development and can lead to a lower IQ (Guardian News 2017). The first stage of Maslow's pyramid is the Physiological needs, these needs are vital for survival such as food and water. Maslow believed without obtaining the lower level needs you could not focus on higher up the pyramid (West.M 2022). To be able to give exceptional care to children in their first 1000 days practitioners and carers of the children must follow guidance from Maslow's Pyramid to make sure the correct needs are being hit to encourage the child's development correctly and safely.

Nelson Mandela quoted "Ahakae he iti – He iti pouamu" which means "Although it is small it is precious" (Tedx Talks 2016).

Exceptional care starts from day 1 of a child's life. Early years practitioners play a great part in creating an inclusive and diverse environment for children to feel valued and included for them to learn to their full potential (Trying Together 2022). Exceptional care is provided with a team approach and working with teachers, specialists, parents, and caregivers encourages the children to learn in different ways but always making them feel included.

Working together as a team allows us to promote exceptional care and will only give the best opportunities possible for the children.

Current challenges



According to the Welsh Curriculum (2022) Early years practitioners have the role of setting up safe environments to enable children to express their feelings and behaviours in positive ways. Making strong connections with children in their first 1000 days helps encourage the child's sense of belonging. Children at such a young age engage through consistency and will cooperate to kindness and compassion. As enabling adults, we must make effective cross-curricular connections to provide a balanced curriculum, making sure we plan and make regular adaptations to meet the needs of the children. (Welsh curriculum 2022).

Children will learn through us as practitioners including their choices and listening to their interests. The Welsh curriculum 2022 states "children should have a variety of opportunities to experiment with a range of mark-making instruments and materials". Due to current situations and funding this could be a challenge as resources and materials might not be currently available which may affect the children in developing an awareness of their bodies such as balance, core strength, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills.

According to research "The numbers of Welsh speakers has fallen in the past decade, with fewer children speaking the language". (BBC News 2022).

However (Welsh Curriculum 2022) states "Children should be having the experiences to reflect and value bilingualisms and diversity of culture and languages in Wales". This shows that children are not currently experiencing the Welsh language and culture that should be offered for them to develop and broaden their knowledge of the richness and diversity of Wales.

Digital media is a great way for children to challenge themselves physically and gives the children opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills. However, institute of Welsh Affairs (2019) states "There is not enough money going into our education system in Wales and not enough of it is finding its way to our schools". With this impact on school fundings children are less able to practice and be taught the key skills they need to develop. Not only is the funding from schools and nurseries a challenge when trying to learn through digital media but also the environment the child is being brought up in at their home environment, not all families have a wealthy background and are able to provide technology for their children to learn their fine motor skills.

Every child deserves exceptional care and as Practitioners we battle many challenges to give this. As practitioners it is our role to implement the EYFS and monitor the children's progress within a setting. Working alongside the EYFS helps practitioners to observe, assess and plan for learning of the children to encourage and support their learning. (earlyyearsprofessionals 2015). Without Early years practitioners updating their knowledge and following guidance from courses and education we would not be able to provide the exceptional care every child needs.

Beneficial Activities.



Children learn through having fun. From the first day a child is born they use their sense to discover the world around them (actionforchildren 2022). In early years we use a large amount of sensory as this stimulates a child's senses such as touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell.

David Kolb (1939) states experimental learning is "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". (Cherry, K 2022).

Kolb's theory believes experimental learning benefits children exploring their strengths when experiencing new things. However according to (Cherry,K 2022) some people argued that Kolb's theory does not look at learning that occurs in larger social groups.

All children learn differently, and some strategies may not work some for children as well as they do another.

Mud kitchen

Children enjoy getting dirty in play. Mud kitchens are perfect for learning through play, they encourage children to use the surrounding elements in nature to play. Alternatively in dry weather children could use leaves, herbs, sand and virtually anything a child can find. A mud kitchen allows children to explore in a somewhat controlled environment and allows curiosity, it can also encourage children to learn about textures and how materials can be mixed as well as teaching them about measurements and quantities. (B,Joyce N.D)



Music Play

Children learn many skills through music, including numeracy, literacy, and emotional skills. Music can inspire creativity in children, according to (early childhood education care 2020) “music is one of the few activities that uses both sides of the brain (logical and creative)”. The more connections children have in their brains the quicker they will be able to process and work things out. Children enjoy music as it is another fun way for their brains to expand and open more to learning. (early childhood education care 2020).



Sensory room \ Quiet room

Some children may need that ‘quiet time’ when situations get too much to cope with. Having that sensory room with lights and soft music it gives them time to calm their sensory systems and take control of their emotions (Sequeira, A. 2018). Having that safe calming environment for the children allows them to self-regulate emotions and sensory systems which is a huge part in their learning.



All these examples of activities used in early years are driven by active learning and critical thinking. Lyndsey Hellyn and Stephanie Bennet (2017) founded the 'Curiosity Approach' which targeted children to think more, do more and investigate more. (Hawthorne, H 2021). (Bennett 2017) argues that "the more a toy does, the less opportunity a child has to think and communicate". (Hawthorne, H 2021)

Likewise, to the curiosity approach, The EYFS (2021) Agrees that "children learn and develop well in enabling environments". Children become independent thinkers when playing actively and critically thinking. All these activities allow the children to become more curious and explore what is going on around them. (Hawthorne, H 2021).

The curiosity approach allows children to learn independently, Similarly Emmi Pikler's approach states "children should be given uninterrupted play time". Pikler believes children should have opportunities to explore, play and entertain themselves without adult interactions. This results in children playing and thinking for themselves and learning skills such as building trust, self-esteem, and confidence. (Care for kids 2020).

Respectful Care / meaningful Care



Even young children deserve the right of love, trust, and respect. As early years practitioners it is our role to make sure all children get respect with every interaction (Educated Nannies 2019).

The UNCRC is put in place for us as practitioners to support children's right and ensure they are respected. As the UNCRC states in article 24 "every child has the right to the best possible health" (.

Our role is to ensure all children are getting the best quality of healthcare possible. This could be as simple as clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment.

Children's brains develop from age-appropriate nurturing opportunities. All experiences we give to the children should be purposeful and meaningful to them.

David Ausubel developed the meaningful learning theory. Ausubel's work was influenced by Jean Piaget and states "a cognitive bridge is created between new ideas that interact with old and previous ones, provided that they're specifically relevant". (Matilde 2022). Similarly, Jean Piaget suggests "A child's cognitive development is not just about acquiring knowledge, the child has to develop or construct a mental model of the world". (McLeod,2022).

In the first 1000 days of a child meaningful learning opportunities include eating, nappy changing, sleeping and many more basic needs. As a practitioner being involved in a routine such as nappy changing allows you to grow a sense of trust. According to (careforkids 2021) "early brain development is directly influenced by babies' day-to-day interactions with their caregivers". Having the calm and mindful approach to a child during these meaningful learning opportunities lets the child know about his or her bodily functions and the relationship between the carer and the child. (Careforkids 2021).

Sleeping is essential in the development of young children mentally and physically. As practitioners we can be involved in this stage of a child life as we are able to pay close attention to the child's sleep hygiene, age-appropriate routines and if the child has a sleep disorder. Sleep can also be improved by giving the child regular exercise but not too much. Practitioners and caregivers should be able to recognize the level of hyper that shows when a child is too tired and then be able to deal with this in the correct way by calming the child down or letting them have a sleep. (Pacheco,2023).

Stimulating Environments



As early years practitioners we try and encourage independence during challenging opportunities for children to experience success along the learning journey. Stimulating environments are a safe place for babies to explore objects and have freedom to move.

Children develop more when being hands on, stimulating environments are perfect for this as the child gets to be involved and explore the things around them. A Theorist that agrees with this

method of learning is Montessori (1907). Maria Montessori (1907) approach emphasises on the learning through experience, if children learn through experience, they will then be able to act Boldy and think critically. (Mrsstillwater, 2021).

Likewise, Friedrich Froebel (1782) also saw the importance of play in a child development. Froebel believed “play is the principle mean of learning in early childhood” (Froebel Trust N.D).

Stimulating environments cover the holistic needs of every child, it focuses on all aspects of the child’s learning and growth. Making sure we support a child holistic development creates a sense of the child’s wellbeing. Children get to experience both inside and outside areas whilst also having the opportunities to learn, take risks and develop socially.

The Welsh curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings agrees experiences should be hands-on, purposeful, and meaningful to the child. Stimulating environments are just the right resource you need to make sure this is happening for the children. Stimulating environments allow children to get involved and will be able to have that uninterrupted active learning they need.

Elinor Goldschmied’ (1989) ideas were shaped and developed from the Froebelian traditions ‘play as the highest form of learning in childhood’. Elinor created the ‘Treasure basket’ which is a collection of natural objects gathered in a basket for sensory experience. As practitioners we should allow children to explore without interrupting them and the treasure basket is a great way to do this as it is safe, natural and allows the children to concentrate and be curious, the adult role is to not be directive but to be responsive. (Froebel trust N.D)

Being Inclusive



Children have the right to feel included from day 1. Being included gives children the confidence to join in without fear of being ostracised. The EYFS framework states adults should “ensure that diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected and that no child or family is discriminated against”. (KIDS 2010).

One of the four guiding principles from the EYFS is 'The unique child'. Every child is capable of learning from day 1, who can be resilient and confident.

A great technique used in settings to create a sense of inclusion for children is 'pupils voice', the children participate in the decision-making process, this way children will be more likely to engage in activities if they have had a say in what they would like to learn about. According to (Twinkl N.D) the UNCRC "details the importance of listening to the opinions of the children particularly with relation to decisions that affect them".

Unfortunately, there may be some challenges in the way of inclusion in early years. As practitioners it is our role to show awareness and positive attitudes towards children with a disability or a child from a different cultural background. Sadly, due to the lack of awareness and sensitivity some children do experience discrimination.

Another challenge being faced currently is the lack of access to the mainstream. According to (Hoque,E 2023) "only 4 to 5% of children with special needs out of 30 million have access to education" This is because schools are not showing sensitivity or positive attitudes to cater for the needs of these children.

(Settlemire,2018) states "inclusion works best when introduced at a young age". Children will become more accepting and willing to explore new bonds with new people if inclusion is introduced early. Not only does inclusion help one child but it is also proven that inclusion has shown neuro-typical children who are exposed to children with special needs will grow up to be more compassionate adults. (settlemire, 2018).

Inclusion gives the sense of belonging and every parent wants that feeling for their child. Working closely with the parents and children to make sure their child's interests and education are at heart is a main role of a practitioner for the child and parent to feel included.

International approaches

In New Zealand the 'Te Whariki' is an inclusive curriculum for all children and like the curriculum for Wales agrees that children are all unique and are born with immense potential.

Both Curriculums mention how children are influenced by their environment and we as practitioners have a role of making sure children have an accessible and inclusive environment. Having the hands of, purposeful experiences and giving the children freedom to learn independently.

Te Whariki curriculum states "all children have the right to have their health and wellbeing promoted and to be protected from harm" . (Ministry of Education N.D)

Likewise, to the Welsh curriculum "we can have a positive impact on the children's well-being through consistent in our care and modelling compassion and kindness" (Education Wales N.D).

Both curriculums focus on what is best for the children and respect the children's choices. The children are the main focus in both curriculums and focus on meeting each child's needs.

Another similarity between both Curriculums is 'the five developmental pathways' and 'The Whariki' (woven mat). Both strategies support the overall development and progress of the children.

However, the wording is different, and they do have different principles but all child centred and focus on similar matter to support the children.



Professional Partnerships.

According to the EYFS framework parents, families and practitioners working together are included in a partnership. (Stars childcare 2023). The most important factor in a partnership in early years in Trust.

Not only do the children need to trust practitioners but the parents do to. Leaving your child is not an easy thing to do when they are young, it is our role as practitioners to work with the parents to prove the children are in a safe trusting environment.

A framework was provided by Bronfenbrenner where he believed children were at the centre and it is the connection around these children is what shapes a child's development and learning. So, the more people a child has around them the more support the child will be getting which will lead to a better development. (Longford 2017).

Communication is a great skill needed when building a professional relationship, sharing information with children and families allows them to feel valued and welcome. Encouraging the parents to share information back with practitioners is also an important part of partnership. The more communication going on between the partnership the less chance of miss communication. (Longford 2017)

Some challenges may occur in the process of building a professional relationship as there may be a difference of opinion between two people. Early years practitioners should be flexible and understanding and try to accommodate for the parents as best as we can, however this must be done with the child's interest put first. Practitioners must listen carefully and try their best to find a solution that is acceptable for everyone. (openlearning N.D)

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