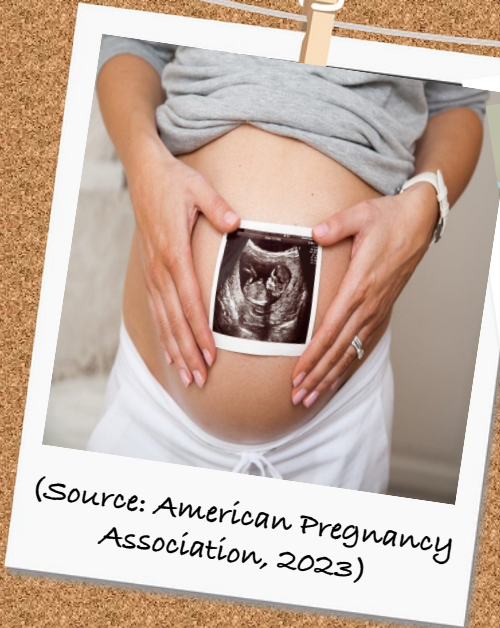
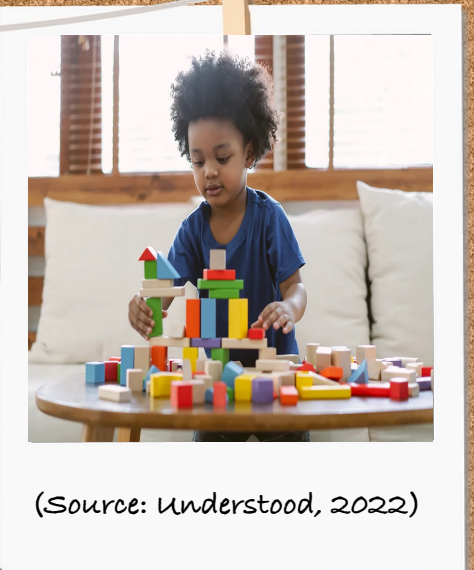




(Source: American Pregnancy Association, 2023)



(Source: What to Expect, 2019)



(Source: Understood, 2022)

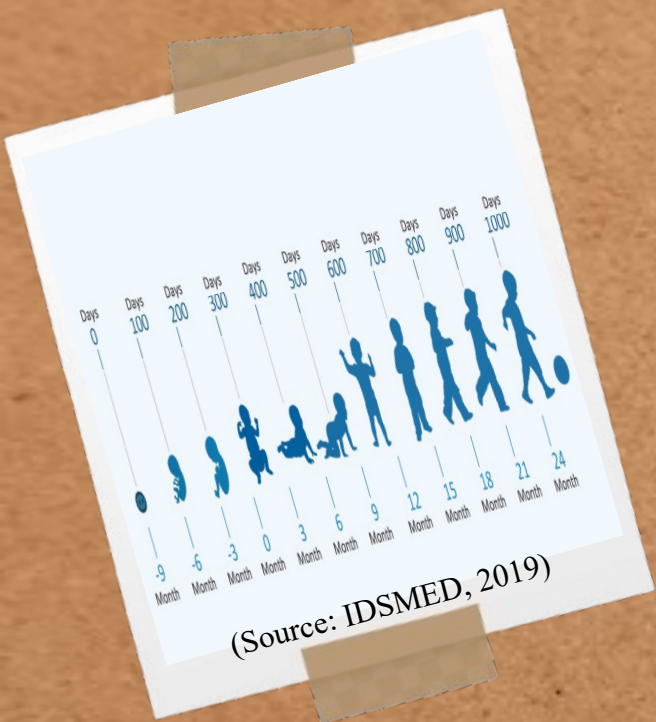
The First 1,000 Days Scrapbook

The First 1,000 Days

Both House of Commons (2019) and (1)PregnancyBirth&Baby (2024) confirm that *The First 1,000 Days* is the period that a child is first conceived to the age of two.

This period is vital due to the significant change within a child’s life, as well as different challenges and needs that the child will develop as they grow. UNICEF (2024) agrees that during this vulnerable time, a child’s growth, health, imagination and development is constantly changing and forming new connections at a rapid pace of 700-1,000 per second which will never repeat within the child’s life after this point, because of this the child will experience different emotions, notice more things, as well as experience different sounds and textures that will allow them to grow as a child and widen their experiences, likes and dislikes at a young age. For example, the individual's brain, body, and immune system grows and develops more quickly and significantly during this time which can impact the child(ren) early on within the mother’s womb which is why a nutritional diet, stress levels and health is vital from the mother to provide strength and health to the child while in the womb. House of Commons (2019) states that they cannot stress enough how change and experiences that happen within the early years of a child’s life (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on health, life chances and wellbeing on the individual child. These aspects of change and experiences can be within a positive manner or at a disadvantage to the child depending on the situation of the family.

Expanding on the points above, High Speed Training (2021) says there are many challenges and developmental foundations that a child experiences at a young age, such as physical development, cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural development. These milestones within the first 1,000 days are crucial as they learn to move, see, hear, communicate, and interact this is the starting point of the brain learning to function early on that will continue to improve and grow within the child’s future and will expand all the way throughout their lives.



Exceptional Care



(Source: BookBun, 2019)

Providing exceptional care as a practitioner within the first 1,000 days is essential due to huge change in brain development as they start to progress within opportunities of learning. When children receive appropriate care, children become healthier, start to feel safe as well as happier within the environment. During this time, they can reach their full potential within development which will enable them to progress and reach their full capability in present activities or challenges and future experiences.

(2)PregnancyBirthBaby (2024) begins by saying exceptional care is ensuring that parents/carers and families are providing the best possible care that they possibly can for their child(ren). This care and affection starts within the womb and continues to grow and develop with the child itself. Within the womb it is vital for the mother to be providing and consuming the best nutrition, focusing on their health as well as the child's and thinking about their mental health in preparation of growing their family. During this time, it is important that the family provides a stable environment as well as a safe, clean, and comforting home environment for the child to live in after birth.

Public Health England (2016) agrees and continues by suggesting this is essential for children because as said previously a baby's brain development happens and grows the most significantly within the first 1,000 days. Due to this the child begins to widen their knowledge and understanding of what is happening in the world around them. Excellent care provided by parents is also essential as the parents are the biggest influence of a child's life, early learning, and future development. For example, reading to a baby early on in their life provides stimulations of language skills within their first 1,000 days. This assists improvement of developmental skills as the child develops imagination, vocabulary, and language skills. Providing these skills at such an early age enables development of cognitive skills- which are vital for developing and improving memory, reading skills and language development as they progress and challenge their speech and literacy skills in the near future.

Extraordinary care provided by practitioners is extremely effective right from the very first moment you meet an individual child. Exceptional care provided by practitioners is when a professional can show and give appropriate endearment, support, sustainability, and consistency as they begin to grow and develop new learning skills and techniques that will help children progress within their future. For example, communicating with others, supporting others effectively as well as learning to play and build upon teamwork with family and new friends within the setting.

Providing the highest quality of care towards children is presenting praise, appropriate affection such as smiling, appropriate hugging, and rewards for progress to embrace the protection and confidence. This will help to reassure children that they are doing well and are doing the right thing as they start nursery towards the end of the 1,000 days. Within early years there are many ways you can provide and display care to the children. For example, Birth To 5 Matters (2023) mentions that care can be physical support such as toileting, washing, feeding, playing, and learning., during this time is vital as a practitioner you give a sufficient time to able create situations that are a valuable skill, enjoyable.

Again, all skills during the care you show and provide will enable the child to develop further and be able to grasp the developmental area themselves to become more and more independent in the future, these skills will also enable the child(ren) to get to know their own bodies, learn life skills, and develop the knowledge of learning through play.

Providing care for children can also spark a good, trusting relationship with both parents and children as they can see the way you protect, act, and show affection to the children in your care.

Expanding on the information above, this time is a crucial time for children and their families, as practitioners can offer care and support to parents/ carers during times they need the most, whether it is to give advice, opinion, or a point in the right direction. Showing children that you are being supportive, caring, and friendly allows and prepares the families and children to feel comfortable and happy before starting part-time nursery or full-time school.

The Role of Professionals

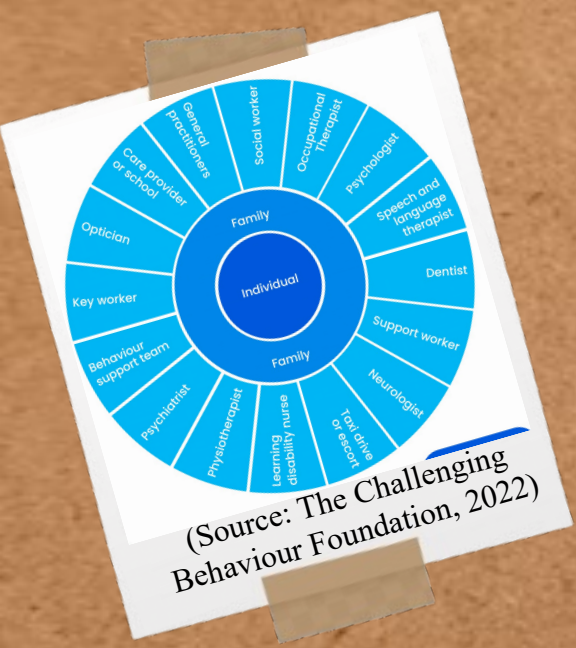
The role of an early years practitioner is to be an enabling adult within the setting. According to Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained (WG,2022) enabling adults are responsive and are able to create an environment that has a joyful approach to learning. They continue by saying enabling adults create emotionally safe environments, encourage and support children’s curiosity, making strong connections with families and support children to develop and grow as they evolve resilience, independence and confidence.

Providing support to children and families are vital within the first 1,000 days as a professional, as families often need support and advice during this time. Parents should feel comfortable and trustworthy of you to be able to ask for this support. Working in partnerships with parents/carers is essential during this first 1,000 days as parents can build trust and courage in you a professional. This partnership may begin with the child and family visiting the setting, this will help inform you how the child and family interact with each other and other children, you as a practitioner are able to interact and show the different resources you have as a setting to help the child feel comfortable. Your role as a practitioner is to share and communicate with families, this can be verbally, physically or electronically. Help for Early Years Providers (no date).

Early Years professionals should always be on hand to support children and families when they need. Being a professional in early years enables you to give advice, opinion and a point in the right direction. They can help parents apply for Early Help which is an outside partnership that will be able to help and support the family with any issues or concerns they have about their home life, such as funding money for food, bills or childcare. Pacey (2017) says that working effectively with other professionals as a practitioner, both within your setting, and externally is key in providing a good service to families and meeting the child(ren)’s needs. These professionals may include, social services, health visitors, family support workers and/or other settings. It is important you work with different partnerships as their expertise can help and support you as a practitioner in any decisions you make relating to a child and their learning.

According to The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (2022) there are many barriers while trying to obtain effective partnership working, however many can be overcome. When working with outside agencies it is always important that you are honest and open to all communication, you accept challenges with families as you become a team, you consider the families other commitments when arranging meetings, respect the individual's family whether they have different cultures, religion or backgrounds and you keep the communication channels open, even if you disagree with what is being said. In order to achieve the best possible outcome for the child in your care you need to build up good relationships with their families to ensure both parties want the same positive outcome and what is best for the child as well as having an empowering and positive relationships with all involved to work together to achieve the best outcome for the child(ren).

Both Index Copernicus (2018) and Nursery World (2018) agree that there are often struggles and problems that families can come across while pregnant or just after birth and give suggestions and a point in the right direction for any worries or concerns about children, they suggest that there are many different maternal factors that may impact a child if the mother suffered from aspects of illness when pregnant. For example, under nutrition in pregnant women may result from low intake of dietary nutrients from either a limited supply of food or severe nausea- this is known as hyperemesis gravidarum. This can cause disturbance during pregnancy and may have a persistent effect on the child and can often be transmitted to the child after birth. If a child in your setting suffers from this then there are a few things you can do as a practitioner to encourage the child get through. For example, you can offer Early Help to the family who will be able to talk to you about different routines and food plans to help, practitioners can model healthy eating and express their pleasure in eating healthy food, and / or your setting could run a pantry for parents and families in need that can source all nutritious and healthy produce if they have money struggles. Convention on the Rights of the Child says every infant, child and young person has the right to good nutrition and health. World Health Organization (2024) says Undernutrition is estimated at 2.7 million child deaths annually, it is vital that professionals know the harm of this situation. It is essential that the mother begins breastfeeding on demand until the age of 2 or beyond. When in your care as a practitioner you should encourage the family to practice responsive feeding as well as good food handling.



Challenges



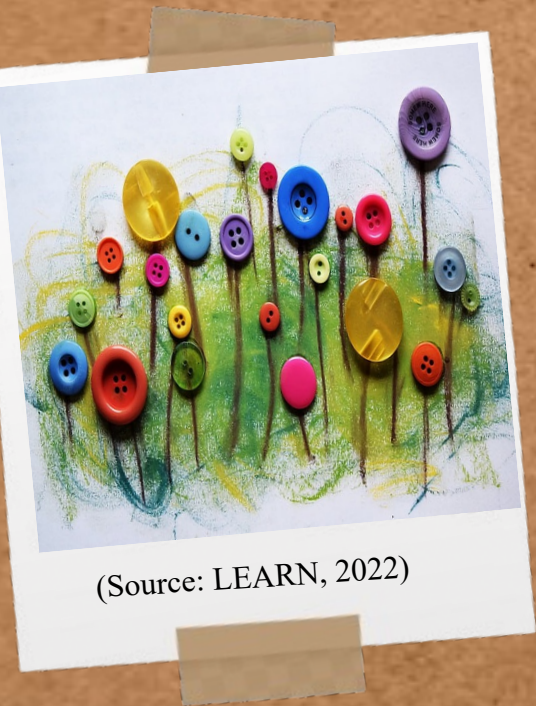
(Source: University of Bolton, 2023)

Teach Early Years (2024) suggests that the main challenges within an early years setting is lower rates of funding and staffing. Due to the lower budget provided by authorities means the less staff settings can employ and fewer things they are able to provide for the children to help them have an enjoyable time. Such as toys, care essentials and up to date resources. This often means settings need to build their environments up slowly by adding and providing what they can to meet every individual needs of the children by using the funding they have in a responsible way and on the relevant things for the children themselves. Because of this it can also be challenging to build an enabling environment for the children within your care. It is important that money is spent on importance of ensuring the environment is a rich varied space where risks are minimised, well managed and children are protected from harm. The enabling environment should be welcoming and nurturing that facilitates all sense of belonging and needs of the children, has a range of resources, has an adequate space for children to collaborate and provides a range of activities which serves purposes as children inspire imagination while exploring relationships, emotions and problem solving. The room should have various toys, books, and areas of development around. Early Years Alliance (2019).

Froebel’s Trust (2020) suggests that to embrace the enabling environment there are many different theories of what approach you could take to meet all individual needs. For example, Froebel’s theory on enabling environments is having a range of options and resources that help children for a particular purpose, providing opportunities to move freely inside and outside and help children do challenging things for themselves. Children should be engaging with nature through play by building dens, climbing trees and exploring the world around them, this helps with curiosity and enables children to learn in more ways than one with nature. Whereas Montessori’s Theory is known as a prepared environment as everything is a prepared and is ready for the children to play and learn. The classroom itself is neutral, open planned and has a distinct sense of order and harmony as things are placed in the ”right places” for the children to enjoy. Montessori’s enabling environments should include many opportunities for children to extend their learning and to discover things themselves. The enabling environment is child-centred and adults should only be there to supervise. These theories can be challenging due to the space of the setting practitioners are in as the outdoor environment may not be suitable for children under 2 or are unable to provide the relevant areas that will meet individual needs. Learning Journals (2024).

Within early year settings it is likely that you come across children who have English as an additional language. During this time, it is important for you and the child to build a structured relationship where the child and family feel comfortable within your care. This can be challenging if you do not speak the first language that they do. However, there are many ways to communicate with the child, for example, visual timetables, you as the practitioner learning key phrases in their home language and many apps that can translate and communicate for you in their home language while you learn about the child and their family. This app could be ’SayHi Translate’ or ’Talk & Translate Translator’. During this time, it is important for the child and family to feel welcome by all at the setting. Cumbria County Council, (no date).

Activities



(Source: LEARN, 2022)

Loose Parts are captivating, open-ended while promoting active learning, deepening critical thinking, creativity, and divergent thinking. Within an early year setting loose parts are objects and materials that children can move, control, manipulate, and change as they play. Children can carry, redesign, take apart and rebuild in a variety of ways. The items and materials come with no specific direction or set way and can be used in different ways including altogether, combined with other materials or alone, For example, an acorn. An acorn can be used for anything, such as a painting tool, role play - an ingredient for a potion/soup or as a character of a story. Other items that can be included are often natural materials, such as sticks, shells, wooden shapes, pallets, crates or can be buttons, pegs, and fabrics. In result of this, loose parts enable children to interact with other children and adults, explore their imagination, and encourage cooperation with others. All these skills are vital as all skills mentioned are highly valued in adult lives. For example, interacting with children and adults enable to build healthy relationships, build the knowledge of trust, and encourages them to communicate with new individuals they meet as they start school, move classes, or meet new members of staff. Loose Parts: inspiring play in young children, (2015).

Within early years there are many benefits about the activities providing a meaningful lesson to the children within your setting. Some of these benefits may include social skills, motor, and physical development as well as confidence, creativity, and brain development. Due to knowing that within the first 1,000 days a child's development drastically changes and develops at a rapid pace, it is important to include some challenges within activities given to help widen the child's brain itself. Activities within early years can be learning through play as well as small but effective activities going on during periods of the day. Early Start (2024) says that daily activities are vital for children within early years settings as activities can support a healthy growth of knowledge and development. Physical activity is a must early on in a child's life for it to become a daily routine within the child's day. During these activities the child(ren) will develop increased muscle and bone structure, maintaining a healthy weight and helping the child to sleep during the nights.

However, Montessori's holistic approach within early years activities aims to develop children's emotional, physical, social, and cognitive abilities through inspect the world around them as they use their imagination. Montessori believed that this approach would allow children make their own choices, learn, and develop at their own pace as well as building confidence, independence, and self-esteem to build a foundation for lifelong learning. The enabling environment would be age appropriate, prepared and well facilitated with activities, toys, language and math activities and resources which would be available to the children, to choose what they would like to do rather than having a set timetable for each day.

Montessori's approach was if a child started playing with blocks, once they had finished, they would put them back where they belong. Within an early years setting it is important to meet the basic needs of individual children and is important the learning environment is fit for purpose. Such as, practitioners should focus on a safe and nurturing environment, building trust, developing a child's confidence in their own emerging abilities, building on language and coordination skills, and giving children the opportunity to be independent. (1)Berg, V. (2024).

In comparison, Reggio Emilia's approach to early years puts the children in control which helps curiosity with power and potential within themselves. Reggio Emilia's theory is seeing children as intelligent individuals who should be given opportunity to reach their potential themselves and not to be seen as having needs that need to be filled. Learning environments should be driven by children who takes an active role in co-constructing their own knowledge and direction of the curriculum. It is believed that this encourages self-expression, communication, and teamwork thinking. During this, teachers observe children and work closely with parents to help them understand how each child learns, from this information teachers then plan and adapt learning activities and resources based on what the children's interests are. These environments should be unique and not the same as another. Children are also seen as a 'third teacher' as they have so much input in the learning environment. From this information within Reggio Emilia's environment, it is key that teachers and parents build a strong relationship between each other. (2)Berg, V. (2024)

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