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FIRST

1



PREGNANCY
270 DAYS



YEAR 1
365 DAYS



YEAR 2
365 DAYS

DAYS

(South Dakota Department of Health, 2024)

The First 1000 days

Introduction and why it is important.

The First 1000 days of a child from conception to 24 months is so paramount to the development and well-being of the child. This scrap book can be used to guide and understand the holistic nature of the first thousand days.

Karakochuk et al (2018) explores the importance of the first thousand days and looks closely at the first three hundred days. Looking at the first moments of conception which would typically takes us to the first 280 days of a mother's pregnancy. Many factors play a key role in the growth of the baby. One key factor being what the mother consumes and eats during the duration of the pregnancy. The nutritional element determines the growth of the foetus and health of the baby, all the way to birth. During the development of the foetus, consideration on what the mother is eating. To much or to little of something can cause health and developmental difficulties for the unborn child and can also have a detriment to the mother. This is why it is so important to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to have the knowledge to make changes and adaptations. This is to ensure a healthy birth and great start to life.

During the first day of birth and beyond is a moment of great change and risk. Due to any and numerous factors, babies are very vulnerable to illness, health complications and instability in the environment. Karakochuk et al (2018) supports the idea of breastfeeding not being as of paramount importance as older research as shown and that data showed that there is negligible difference to the babies' health and well-being. Cultural differences also need to be noted as some cultures don't breastfeed at all.

The First 1000 days

Introduction and why it is important.

Continuing to look at the importance of the first thousand days. Other organisations look at the importance of breastfeeding and encourage it, The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2016) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2016) support this worldwide and they argue that children who are not breastfed, are more at risk of infant mortality due to malnutrition. This is an example of the many factors in our world that have an impact on any child's development and health.

Individuals such as Karakochuk et al (2018) have their own conclusion on the importance on the first thousand days. Importance on this window of growth cannot be understated as the brain's neuroplasticity is at its peak development and that nutritional deficiencies and poor access to food can have devastating results for children. By ensuring that organisations and governments around the world are meeting their obligations to meet the nutritional needs of all children and women. This is when we can see the decline of the mortality of children around the world. Once these fundamental needs have been met, we can see children thrive and develop in competent and well-rounded individual who can meet their full potential. Though those who read this or other sources of research and information need to remember that development and growth do not stop at a thousand days but goes beyond and affects us for rest of our lives.

unicef 
for every child

(UNICEF, 2026)



World Health
Organization

(WHO, 2026)

The First 1000 days

*The First 1,000 Days of Life
(UNICEF Philippines, 2015)*



Link to video

The First 1000 days

What is exceptional care and why is this important?

When looking at the first thousand days of a child. Parents, guardians and professional practitioners need to consider what exceptional care means and its importance in any child's life.

Mothers need to ensure they are looking after themselves to ensure the health and well-being of their child's health and future development. The BASW (2019) outlines many factors and the importance of ensuring that parents are taking care and avoiding certain situations that can jeopardise the health of mother and child. Substance abuse is one such factor that can impede a healthy brain and physical development of a child. Other factors as well need to be remembered and considered as, these being poor nutrition, compromised mental health, abusive homelife and unsanitary living situations.

Exceptional care is undertaken by many individuals in different fields and environments. The parent is at the heart and the first port of call to ensure that their child is on the path of stability and self-actualisation. Other professionals play a role as well in the care. The BASW (2019) explores the importance of social workers in helping and supporting families and their children. They provide important early interventions. Social workers have key skills that are ideal for many situations. Skills such as observational, analytic, communication and the ability to build trust and understanding with a child's caregivers.

The BASW (2019) supports the importance of not just mother involvement but fathers as well, as they too play a key role in the impact on the mother's health, the stability of the environment and a holistic and healthy outcome for the child.

The First 1000 days

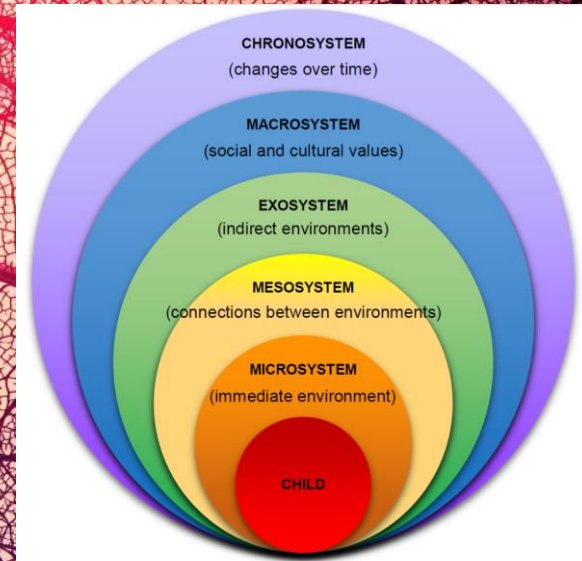
What is exceptional care and why is this important?

There are many theorists that play a paramount role in laying the foundation and understanding. One such key individual would be Bronfenbrenner (The Education People, 2021) who was born in 1917. he would eventually find himself in the United States. Where would study and work at various universities such as Cornell and Michigan. He conducted much research that acknowledged the importance of the different factors and influences that can impact a child's development. He not only looked at the individual level of impact, but the wider surrounding factors, such as relationships and development. So, he develops the Ecological System Theory.

The first level to look at would be the microsystem and as it names suggests is the small and immediate environment to the child. This would mean the child's relationships to its family, parents, siblings, care settings. The healthier the environment the better, which as a great impact on the child. Following this we arrive at the Mesosystem, which looks at the microsystem of the child. For example, if a child was separated from their siblings and don't have regular contact then this will hinder a child's development.

The next two level to look at is the Excosystem and the Macrosystem. These both tend to refer to influences and environments that child would rarely interact or see or even be tangible. This could be a parent going to hospital and the child not being able to attend. Or influences from the government of another country or a distant war on another continent.

The final system is Chronosystem that would look at events and changes over a period. So, moving to another area would disrupts support system and stability and have a knock-on effect on a child's development later in life.

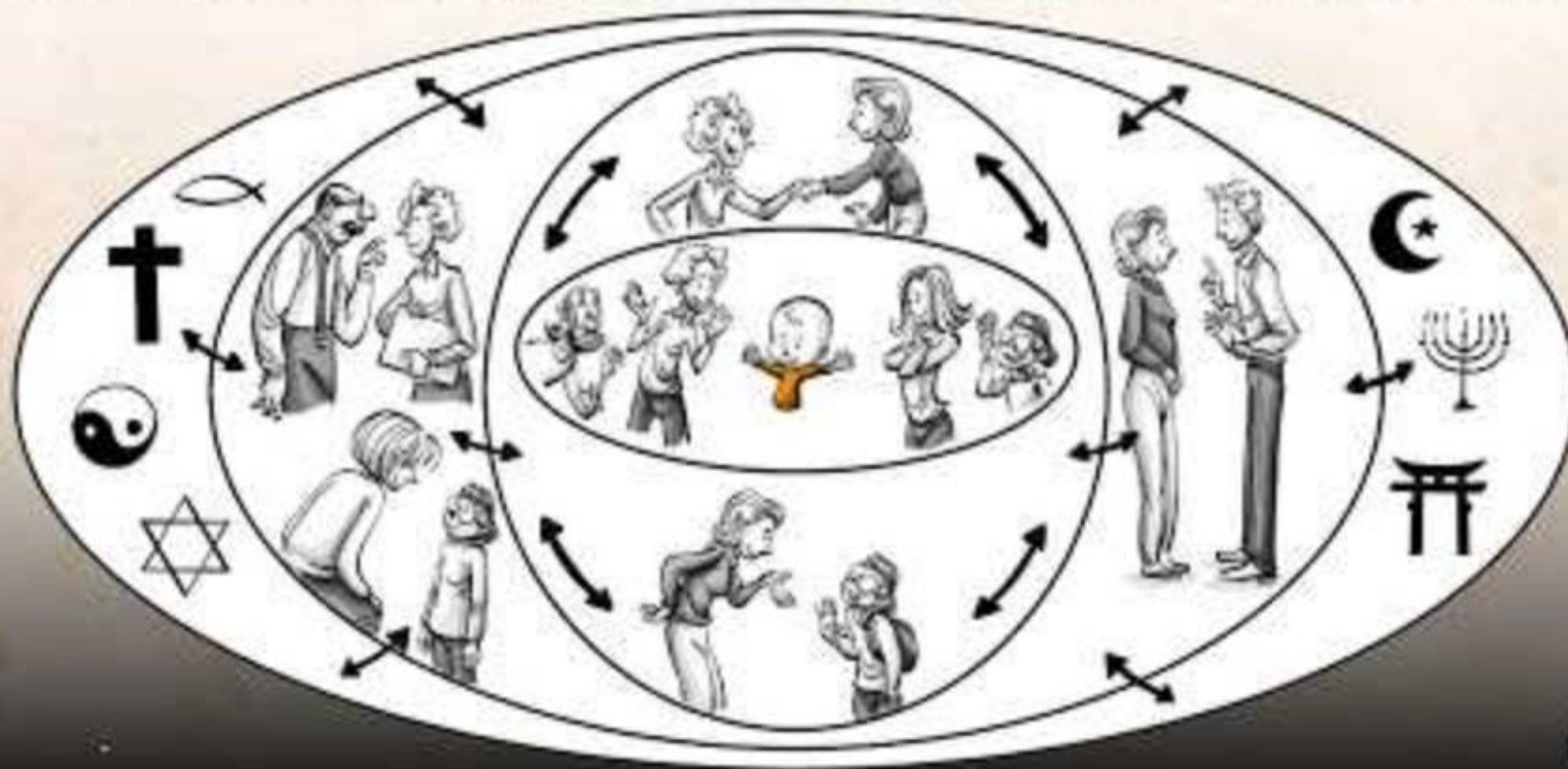


(Rotel Project, 2023)

The First 1000 days

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems: 5 Forces Impacting Our Lives (Sprouts, 2021)

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM THEORY



Link to video



The First 1000 days

Professional partnerships

Professional Partnerships are key to provide early intervention and support for families and their children. Professional practitioners in an early year's settings have a legal and professional responsibility to ensure the well-being and health of the children in their care. Building lines of communication and trust goes a long way in ensuring that families know that they are not alone and that help and early intervention is there for the betterment of their child. The Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) (2022) stress the importance of organisations and individuals such as playgroups, childminders, health visitors, schools and nurseries have a responsibility to foster working partnerships with parents and guardians. The CDHN (2022) would go on further to suggest the importance of acknowledging different ideas to the issues at hand, when looking at a more localised issues, they would need to be dealt with local supports. Such as a safeguarding issue in a local school would need to involve social services from the local authority. When getting the parentship in place there needs to be an understanding that the partnership cannot be rigid and inflexible, a professional practitioner cannot be fixated on the need for structure and predictability. As each day is different and never the same.

Following this the CDHN (2022) goes on further to outline to paramountcy of having a joint and consistent outcome that can help define as to why the parentship is needed and what everyone is working towards. Every individual in a partnership needs to know what they are doing and what they adding to the partnership by being there. SO, during a safeguarding meeting a social worker may suggest temporary foster care for a child to ensure their well-being and stability and that child's teacher could being that same meeting advocating the importance of keeping siblings together. While another individual such as health visitor would stress the importance of keeping the children in their current school to maintain a semblance of consistency and stability.

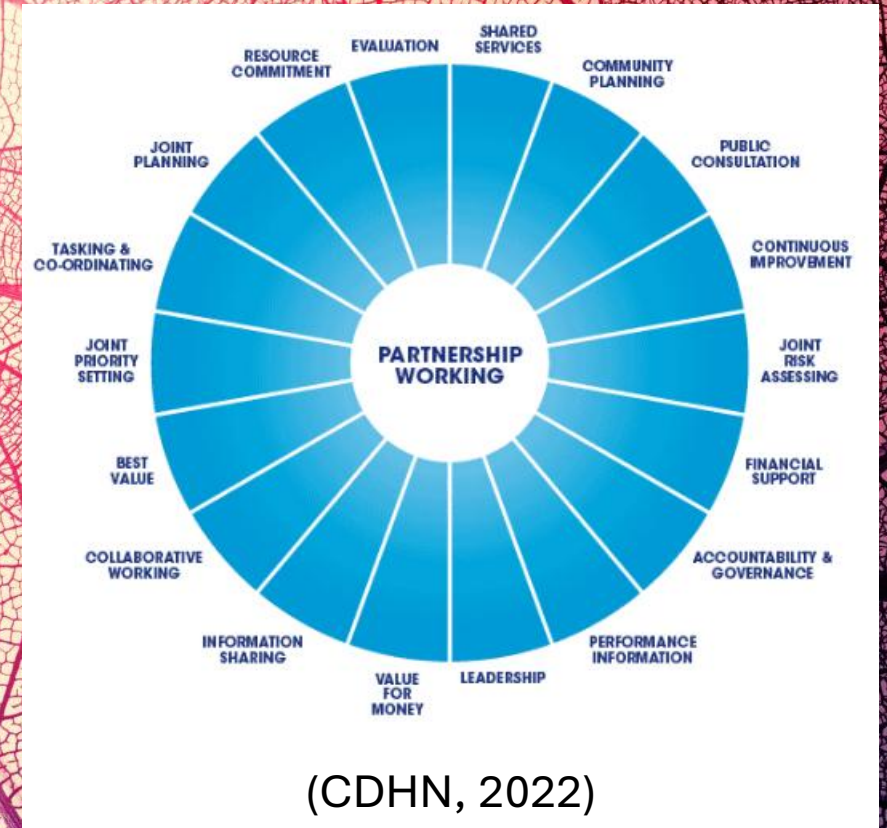
The First 1000 days

Professional partnerships

CDHN (2022) would go on further to support the need to bring resources and potential support together and to avoid repetitions or redundancy of competing support. Professional practitioners working together on all these aspects can ensure that help can be guided effectively and time or resources are not being wasted.

Once a partnership has been established, communication lines established and support recognised we can look at supporting mothers and their child in the first 1000 days and beyond.

Considerable maternal factors play a role in the development and can have a defining impact on an infant from conception to 24 months. Support is there and mothers may be referred and supported in accessing services. The National Maternity Review by NHS England (2016) stipulates the importance of bespoke personal care that can support the mother and their family during pregnancy and afterwards. Each person is different and every experience unique. Health professionals such as a midwife need to be there alongside other practitioners to support the mother in her decisions and keeping her informed through the process. NHS England would go further to put the importance of consistency of professionals supporting an expecting mother. A mother needs to build trust and understanding of the whole process.



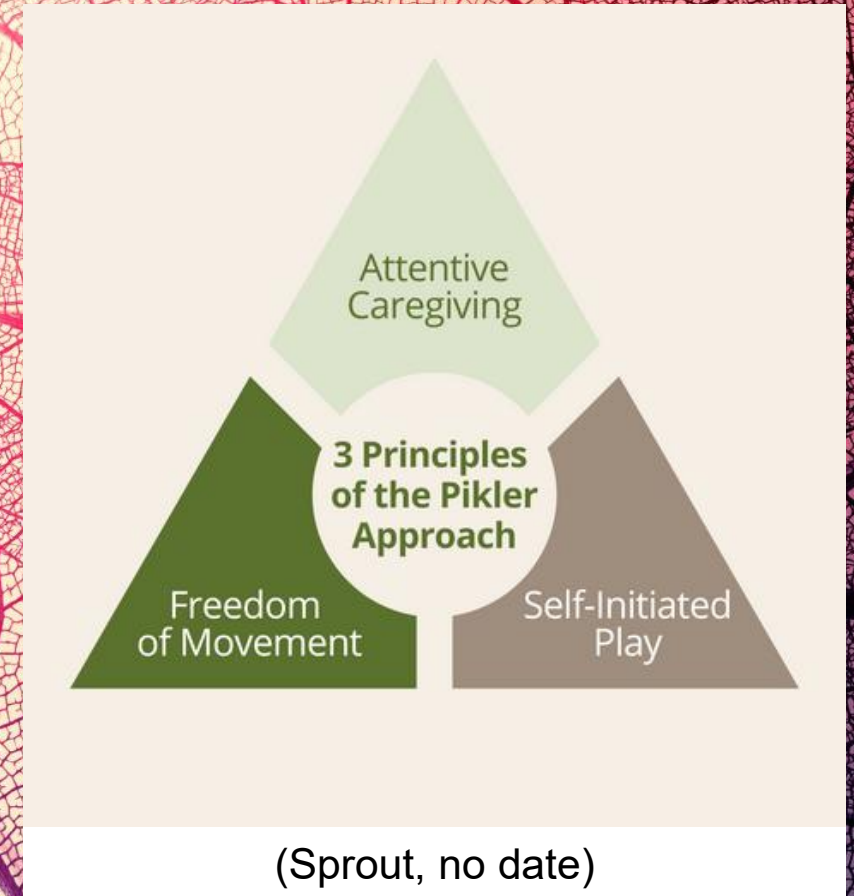
“Partnerships are about the recognising the value in each other” (Dr Hugh Annett 2012)

The First 1000 days

Professional partnerships

There have been many individuals that have played a role in defining and supporting the importance of professional partnerships between practitioners, parents and other organisations. Emmi Pikler (1982) is one such individual that has had such an impact on how professional partnership define and support children from such a young age and beyond. Gutknecht and Bader (2021) have researched and showed that children who grew up in envelopments such as orphanages or in a foster home that does not have the best intentions for that child. This has shown that the absence of a mother or maternal figure has a notable impact on the development of the child. This research was then used in the western world such as the United Kingdom where support structures and organisations can help and support families in the early days of a child's life.

Pikler (1982) had worked quite extensively with multi agency teams and individuals possessing skills and knowledge that can make or break a partnership. She work with different practitioners of differing fields such as paediatricians, child psychologists and professional holding qualifications on the understand of pedagogy. Pikler (1982) working with these individuals ensures that the comparing of information and ideas can take place and for regular and relevant discussions are taking place.



The First 1000 days

Building Partnerships with Families (Early Childhood Management Services, (2016)

Link to video



"Today, Pikler's work is regarded in many countries as proof that it is possible to work with children in a high-quality and emotionally attentive manner and experience healthy development in a care setting – be it in a children's home or in early years settings" Gutknecht and Bader (2021)

The First 1000 days

Challenges in Providing High Quality Care

There are many challenges to overcome in providing good and consistent care for mother and child in the first 1000 days. Barriers exist throughout society and countless factors can improve or in this case hinder the development of children, especially from conception to 2 years old. UNICEF UK (2025) produced evidence and collated questionnaires from a wide range of professionals in different sectors. Challenges such as certain things being overlooked when considering the wellbeing and health of children.

Unfortunately, blind spots exist at any level of government, from the national government in Westminster to local authorities. While early childhood services are there to lessen the consequences of poverty on the health of the child and their family. There are still barriers and children that live in lower income homes may receive more local and national support, they could still miss out and get left behind.

According to UNICEF UK (2025) Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the care and outcomes for children in early years. A compounding impact for those who are already in poverty and in difficult situation. It's also revealed that health visitors had noted a significant increase in various communications difficulties and increased reporting of behavioural issues. The Covid also changed how health visitors and other professionals worked during a challenging time as professionals were being moved and some children and families were left behind.



"Health Visitors are qualified nurses and midwives who have additional specialist training to support families both during pregnancy and right up until your child is in their early years of primary school."
(SNEE, 2026)

The First 1000 days

Challenges in Providing High Quality Care

There are other challenges that can hinder the impact and delivery of high-quality care. Knowles (2018) has noted that gender barriers continue to exist in the United Kingdom. Though more women are making up a big portion of the workplace and it's the highest it has ever been. It's also been noted that Women tended to occupy roles such as nursery nurses and teaching assistants. This will undoubtedly have effect on women and especially women who are pregnant and raising a child. They may feel they cannot have child as their job doesn't offer enough support, or their career could be in jeopardy.

Challenges surrounding language and culture can have its own challenges. Knowles (2018) would go add further that professional practitioners need to understand their children and their diverse backgrounds. Practitioners need to make note on how a child's name is pronounced and practice this with the parent. Ask questions on what their child likes to do at home, what language they can speak and how to provide support and guidance. What level of English is understood by the parents and child. Cultural and religious needs that need to be considered for the child and parents. Also, to take note of any concerns that the parents may have and to give time and understanding of what they may be concerned with.



The First 1000 days

*DW News. (2022). A Lost
Decade for Children*



A lost decade
for children



Link to video

The First 1000 days

Activities

There are many ranges of activities that can be done with children that can benefit their well-being and development. There are some activities that come are inspired by other countries. Many theorists and places played a crucial role. Vygotsky (1981) has had a profound influence on how people see children in term of the development and learning. That children thrive when building key relationship with those around them and the type of environment they are in. He played an important that gave rise to the Reggio Emilio theory. According to Learning Teaching Scotland (2006) Reggio Emilio places the child at the heart of their learning and to make children into competent and confident learners.

An activity that would be beneficial to children if they are 6 months to 2 years old would-be happiness boxes. Evidence for learning (2020) goes into detail the benefits of happiness boxes. It is something tangible for a child to explore and experience. For a child they hear, smell, touch and taste what is in that box. The box could be bespoke and reflects on the child's likes and wants and what makes them happy. It enables a chance for another adult such as a practitioner to sit down and to get to know the child and build up a report. An adult can be there to support, play and engage. Or to simply observe and see what make the child happy.

This can be seen with Reggio Emilio, how the child is at the centre. Learning Teaching Scotland (2006) view the importance of seeing the child as an individual and not an empty shell. That child has limitless potential and growth.



(Evidence for Learning, 2020)



The First 1000 days

Activities

Another that would be beneficial from conception to 2 years would be forest schools and the role they play in utilising our environment for learning and growth. Forest Research (2022) brings the importance and support for forest schools in Britain. Though forest schools have been in the United Kingdom since the 1990's it has grown. The idea and theories behind it came from Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark. This approach has been adopted over Europe and beyond. This approach has been adapted to help all and to remove barriers of learning for ALN individuals. The forest research (2022) would go further by informing the benefits, such as providing the much-needed opportunity of hands-on learning and to build character and confidence.

A certain approach was developed in Wales according to Forest Research (2022) it was to develop an idea of what children wanted and the impact it could have for children in Wales. Data collection was needed to have a base work from and if further observation were needed.

“This experience has been incredibly valuable to our children. We have been lucky enough to experience a full year at Forest School and the benefits have been striking. These children now are independent and confident.”

Forest Research. Teacher, Lognor, Shropshire



(Wildlife Trust, no date)

The First 1000 days

Activities

A final activity to consider for the First 1000 days would be reading books and the imagination and message that can be brought to a child's mind. Birth to 5 Matters (2021) raises awareness of reading to early years children. From the very first days of birth reading brings the colourful meanings for language in young minds. Vygotsky (1986) also links to the importance of the developing languages in children and providing opportunities for relationship building between parent and child. This is great way to include elements and resources for role play and activities that stimulate imagination and creativity.

When reading to a child there are many different ideas that can be used. Such as taking your time and allow the child time to process the words and images. Bring the story to life. Changing voices and tone. Make use of props to use on the story and give meaning and life to the characters in the book. Use this opportunity for discussion and conversation with the child and to allow them a chance to form opinions. Make the use of prompts and avoid closed questions give the child freedom.



(iStock, no date)

The First 1000 days

*Baby Pillars. (No date) DIY
Activities for 6-month-old to
10-Month-old.*



Link to video

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