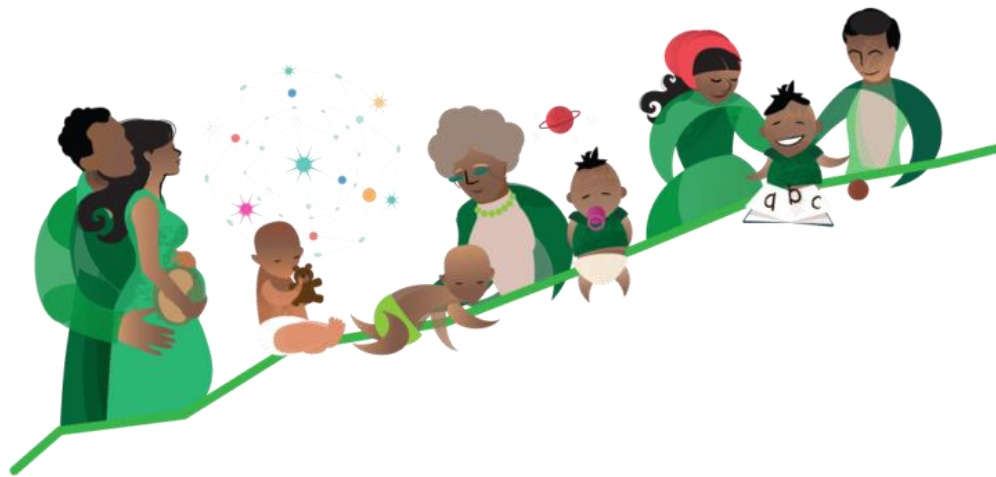




Exceptional Care in The First 1,000 Days

First 1,000 Days



Cusick and Georgieff (2013) explain that the first 1,000 days of life for any child starts from conception and lasts up until around their second birthday. During this time there is a window of opportunity to build a foundation for the child's development, growth, and health. 1,000 days (no date) describes the first 1,000 days as playing a key role in helping to improve the child's future. HM Government (2021) explains that during this time where the child is setting the foundation for their cognitive, emotional, and physical development, they are at their most vulnerable time. This is because during this period, the young child is unable to survive without an adult as they will need support with all essential aspects of life. For example, a child must be fed as it is a necessary for survival. World Health Organization (2021) shows that feeding is crucial and promotes health development and growth. It also states that feeding is particularly important during the first 1,000 days as receiving the optimal nutrition during this time reduces the risk of chronic disease, lowers morbidity and mortality, and guarantees better development overall.

Excel Medical (2022) shows that exceptional care in a medical community is creating an environment that is comfortable and safe. It also ensures that the carer goes above and beyond to make sure that each person is cared for and respected. They do this by putting the person first and providing suitable and high-quality care. This particular source is describing exceptional care in a medical community however, the same aspects apply in exceptional care with children. This is because the caregiver must respect the child and make them feel valued. By going above and beyond at their job in the first 1,000 days, the care giver will be able to notice any learning difficulties or struggles that the child might be having and therefore will be able to try and help and find a solution earlier on in life in order to help preventing it from escalating later on in life.

Current Challenges

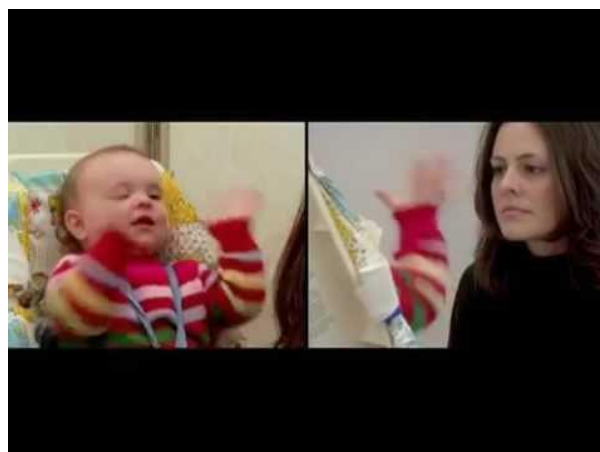


There are lots of challenges that care givers may face when caring for young babies. According to Gaunt (2021) the government was accused of knowingly and shamelessly underfunding the early years community. This is a big problem in the early years sector as if they do not get enough funding, they will be unable to purchase beneficial resources for the babies. Without resources, babies will not be able to discover new things and play which in affect will affect their development significantly.



1 - (UNICEF, 2017)

It can also be challenging to maintain constant communication whilst in an early years setting. Not only is it important to keep in communication with the parents, but you also must be constantly communicating with the children whilst sharing your attention out to all the children.



Another thing that you may need to take into consideration when caring for babies are their routines. Dr Bocknek (2020) shows that routines help with anxieties as the babies will know what to expect. They also help with regulating feelings as if the practitioner sticks to the routine, the baby will not be overwhelmed which is a key element when working in a busy early years setting. Another important aspect of routines is that if the practitioner follows the routine and there is a child that is becoming unsettled the same time every day, the practitioner may be able to work out what is making the child uneasy and therefore find a solution to overcome it.

A big aspect that has caused challenges in everyday life, not only in early years sectors, is COVID. During lockdown, everything was shut down. Mothers were unable to get face to face support and advice for their baby, unable to go to mother and baby groups and therapeutic classes or anywhere else. In effect, babies' social development was likely impacted massively. Babies were only able to interact with the people at home and may not have even met a lot of their close family. As a result of this, children may develop speech/language delays and lack of social development. It could also heavily affect their routines as many households had older siblings at home due to school closures and parents working from home, therefore causing a change in the babies structured routine as the parent would need to divide their attention between the family. As well as this,

Practitioners too have different experiences of working virtually. Most are concerned that it is harder to establish how the baby is and to assess and monitor any safeguarding risks without being able to see the wider context and read families' non-verbal cues.

(Best Beginnings, Home-Start UK, and the Parent-Infant Foundation, 2020, pp. 27)

IOE (2013) focuses on the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project. The EPPE project focuses on the effectiveness of education in the early years. These studies were put in place to try and tackle all the challenges above by finding out the cause in order to find a solution.

Examples of Play

Freud (2023) displays the importance of play as she explains that play helps children to express themselves. She also explains that the most effective way for children to learn through play is by allowing their play to be child lead. Play helps contribute to a child's development holistically. This is because these types of activities help fine and gross motor skills, intellectual development and cognitive development, social development, and emotional development. These activities help physical development with fine and gross motor skills as during these activities, children will be using various parts of their bodies in order to participate. They help intellectual and cognitive development as these activities can include problem solving. For example, if the child is playing with building blocks and placing bigger blocks on top of smaller blocks which continuously makes them fall, with some resilience and time the child will be able to solve the problem by understanding that the small block must go on top in order for the tower to stay intact. These activities can also encourage social development as the child may be required to share and interact with others. McBlain (2014, p.47) illustrates the importance of social development as he focuses on a well-known theorist known as Vygotsky. Vygotsky believed that children learn a lot from others and therefore need time to socialise to expand their knowledge. These activities can also affect a child's emotional development as they will understand the feeling of pleasure, joy, and completion. It is also important for the child to be able to experience the emotion of frustration. This is so that the child is

able to understand their own emotions and will set a foundation for them to be able to work on controlling their emotions later in life. Raising children (2022) recognises the importance of emotional development as they can see how it helps children to express themselves and communicate in diverse ways such as facial expressions and body language before they are able to communicate using language. McNally and Slutsky (2016) explain a famous theorist known as Reggio Emilia's approach. This approach suggests that teachers are seen as equal to the children and are also learning alongside the children. This is especially important to children so that they feel respected and comfortable with the adults surrounding them. In effect this makes the children feel safe and are more likely to express themselves and learn.



Water play: Busy Bees (2020) outlines the benefits of water play as they explain it can help with hand eye-coordination, maths, and scientific concepts, helps with concentration and focus, develops motor skills and sensory exploration, and social and communication skills. This shows that water play is an exceptionally good option when helping children to development holistically.



Loose parts play: loose parts play is very child lead. It is simply allowing children to play with and explore lots of different natural items. Flannigan and Dietze (2018) show that loose parts play can have a positive effect on a child's social and cognitive development as well as their physical development. This is because the children will be using verbal and non-verbal behaviours to express themselves as they are learning about the qualities of the loose parts.



Messy sensory play: Gascoyne (2011) explains that messy sensory play is extremely useful for children's memory and understanding. This is because when a child uses their senses to understand objects by touch, smell, sound, taste, and sight it helps them to put names to the things in the future.



Environments



Welsh Government (2022) describes the environment that a child learns in as crucial. Exploration of the environment is particularly important in the early years. By exploring the surroundings, the children start to develop a feeling of belonging and feel appreciated by the world around them. We should make sure that the inside space of the environment is warm, welcoming, practical, colourful, and a generally pleasant place to learn. It is also important to ensure that we are promoting the Welsh language and culture in our settings and make it a communication rich environment. As well as this the outdoor environment is very important for a child's learning. White (2014) shows that parents admire the fact that their children get the opportunity to be in the outdoor environment

whilst in the early years setting as unfortunately some children do not have access to large enough outdoor spaces. The outdoor environment is beneficial for children physical development, and it helps engage all their senses. The outdoor environment is also greatly beneficial for children's wellbeing as well as their health as they are given the opportunity to socialise with others which helps with feelings of isolation. The theorist Friedrich Froebel believed in the impact that a learning environment, specifically outdoors, can have on children's social development. He believed that the earliest years of a child's life are significant to laying a foundation for all the child's further education. He describes the outdoor area as a rich environment that offers opportunities of learning and believes it is important that children appreciate its wonders. This is reinforced by Tovey (2017). Isaacs, B. (2018) focuses on another famous theorist known as Maria Montessori. This book displays the idea that Montessori believes that the environment in which a child learns in is crucial to their development. She believes that it can help children develop into confident adults that are curious about learning about all that life has to offer.

Within the placement, there may be risks. One common risk that children are often protected from while outside is the rain. Mail Online (2015) focuses on the fact that going outside in the rain can give children a cold and in effect cause them to feel unwell. Unfortunately, this is a common opinion among a lot of parents and that stops children from exploring the outdoor nature. However, people who have a better understanding of the positive effects that outdoor environments can have on children's health and wellbeing, understand that children should be always outside within reason. Early Years Careers (2016) reinforce this as they explain that children should have access to the outdoor environment daily. Children should also be outside if it is raining as long as they have suitable clothing on. If the child is outside in the rain, they should be wearing a coat and wellies. If the weather is not dangerous it is completely safe for children to go outside and explore in the rain if they have clothes that will keep them dry and warm. It is important for the children to go outside as they can then assess risk themselves and learn that water makes things slippery, and some things may become unsafe in some weather. By dressing children in these clothes and allowing them to explore outside, the risk of catching a cold is now lessened however the chance of them assessing their own risks is heightened.



Inclusivity



It is paramount to a child's development to be included and feel respected. Including children and making them feel like they have a purpose can help children's confidence. Welsh Government (2022) states that the environment a child learns in should be accessible for all and any barriers that can affect a child from participating should be dealt with, it should be organised, should have appropriate resources, should be diverse by actively displaying all types of gender, religion, and diverse cultures. Making an inclusive environment can also help a child's creativity and learning experience. Some early years practitioners find it difficult to make all children feel included. This is because all children are different, and you must treat each child equally and not the same. Paul (2016) suggests advice to help get over these barriers by explaining that connecting with parents and getting a deep understanding about the certain qualities of each child can help the children feel included and understood.

Unfortunately, young children experience adverse childhood experiences when they are young. Any of these unfortunate circumstances can include exposure to substance misuse or domestic violence, parental separation, parental imprisonment, bereavement, abuse, or neglect. These experiences can impact children and families differently. It can leave children feeling nervous and stressed which some early years carers can find difficult to manage. As practitioners we have a responsibility to keep children safe from any harm. Research shows that a good quality and inclusive setting can have a positive impact on children who have previously been through these experiences as it can help them to create positive relationships in emotionally safe environments whilst being consistent and building resilience.

Professional relationships/partnerships



Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny (2017) explain Bronfenbrenner's theory on the environmental influences on child development. They explain that Bronfenbrenner's ecological model illustrates the things that most affect the child's life. In the model it is clear that the child's parents and any caregivers have a significant impact on the child. PACEY (2016) has a deep understanding of professional relationships. Whilst working in an early years setting, it is particularly important to have a good bond with the children. Fortunately, a large number of early years workers are comfortable with showing 'professional love' to the children. Professional love shows children that they are respected and wanted whilst in their learning environment. Professional relationships play a particularly vital role in a child's well-being. This shows the importance as if a child feels happy and comfortable in their setting, they will be more eager and excited to participate and learn. Welsh Government (2022) explain the role of an enabling adult. They say we should create emotionally safe environments to support children to show their emotions and feelings. As practitioners we should portray learning as a happy and joyous activity whilst encouraging children's natural curiosity. We should ensure that we have strong bonds with the child, the child's parents, and be aware of any

relevant knowledge on the child's background and past. Unfortunately, one of the differences the child may have is their language. If the child's first language is not English, it can be quite difficult for the practitioner to communicate with not only the child but the parents too. As enabling adults, we should prepare children during transitions and ensure that we are delivering a balanced curriculum that the children find interesting. As adults we should ensure that we are being good role models to the children as Bandura's theory shows that children's behaviour depends a lot on what they have first-hand experienced adults do. Rouse, E (2012) explains professional relationships and explains that multi agency is crucial between families and other aspects of children specific workers. Professional partnerships between multi agencies have also been extremely useful during safeguarding cases.



Respectful care



Ari (2022) focuses on a theorist called Emmi Pikler. Pikler believed that routines are particularly important in a child's life. It was important for children to have designated times for food and bathing. During these times as well as nappy changing time, she expresses the importance of

interacting with the child. Interacting with the child is very important as when you are constantly talking to the child, they are noticing new language that will later help them when developing their own speech.



International Approaches



Turtle, Convery, and Convery (2015) show that in different countries there are different approaches to try and improve children's learning. Froebel, Montessori, and Steiner are all theorists that recognise the importance of children connecting with nature. In countries such as Denmark they have forest schools. Forest schools are learning environments that are based solely outside. These environments help children to learn in a natural way using natural resources. Whilst learning outside, the children get to experience the outdoors with all their senses while still learning completely relevant and useful lessons including survival.

Another international approach is the Te Whariki approach. This is a New Zealand approach that is demonstrated by a woven mat. It shows that children must feel a sense of belonging with the community and family in order to create relationships, improve on their holistic development, and empowerment. The outcome Te Whariki aims for is for children to explore, communicate, feel wanted with a sense of belonging, respected as equals, and nurturing for children's health.



3 - (Family, 2022)

Both of these approaches are different as forest schools believe that children are to independently use the natural resources around them however, Te Whariki suggests that it is the treatment and support that children are given that helps them to develop in their learning.

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