ECEY4005/C

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I acknowledge the use of AI to put my reference list in alphabetical order.

# Conception - Birth



(Raising Children Network, n.d.)

The main foundations of a child's development are laid during the first 1000 days. Experiences during the first 1000 days can have a positive or negative lifelong effects on the child, During the first 1000 days the child will be exposed to key influences these include, A mothers access to healthcare both during and after pregnancy this helps to ensure that the baby is able to grow safely and healthily.

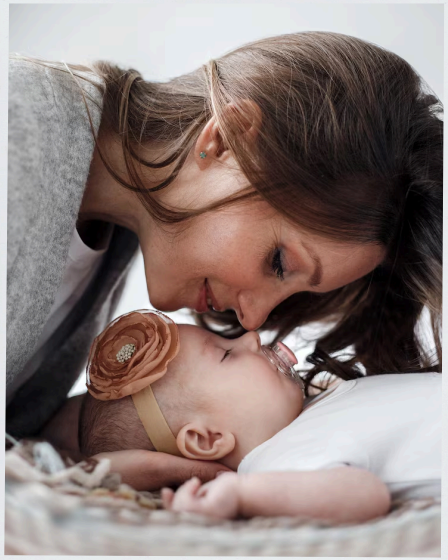
When a mother and baby have access prenatal care it will reduce the risks of low birth weight and premature birth, ensuring that children are at less risk of developmental and physical delays.

This also means that mother and baby shouldn't be exposed to stress and exposer to toxins for example smoking, alcohol and drugs when midwives and health visitors are able to perform these visits it gives them an insight to the environment that the mother and child are exposed to and if needed they will be able to provide help and support to make sure the environment is safe for them. Access to healthcare after birth is also vital ensuring mothers have access to health visitor checks to ensure that milestones are being met and if they aren't the child will be able to access support. Post birth checks also ensures baby has access to vaccinations at the correct time.




(Ausnutria Nutrition Institute, 2022)

# Birth - 12 Months



(Freepik, n.d.).
[freepik.com]

A baby's brain will double in size over the first year of life. And will make 1000's of connects every second it is a vital time for Caregiver's to interact with the baby by talking, singing and touching. A baby's brain with make connections where the baby feels safe and secure with that person.

During the first few months after birth a baby will learn to control their muscle movement. Muscle development and motor control starts from the head downwards, through the arms down to the legs and feet.

Babies will develop attachments to their caregiver this is when caregivers will console a child when they are cry providing that child with a feeling of safety and security.

Around the age of 12 months a baby's memory will begin to develop and they will begin to notice when people leave the room, and they are aware they will eventually come back.

At this stage a child will start to communicate this will start looks like cooing, babbling and crying

Immune system will develop this development is supported by a mother breastfeeding. NHS UK has stated that breastfeeding has lifelong benefits for children

# Health Benefits for brestfeeding

## Health benefits of breastfeeding for your baby

Breastfeeding has long-term benefits for your baby, lasting right into adulthood.

Any amount of breast milk has a positive effect. The longer you breastfeed, the longer the protection lasts and the greater the benefits.

Breastfeeding can help to reduce your baby's risk of:

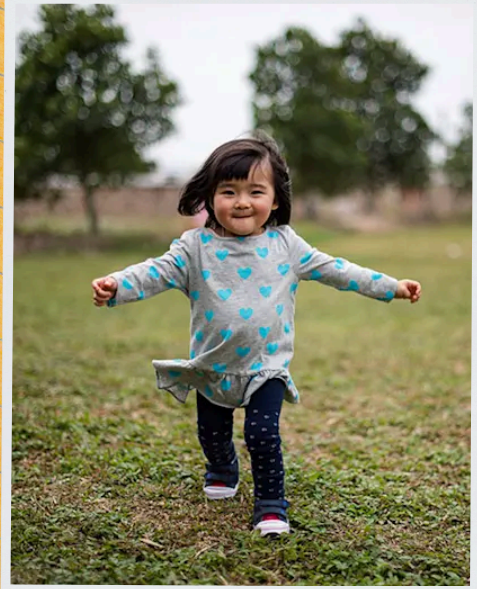
- infections, with fewer visits to hospital as a result
- diarrhoea and vomiting, with fewer visits to hospital as a result
- sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- obesity
- cardiovascular disease in adulthood

Giving nothing but breast milk is recommended for about the first 6 months (26 weeks) of your baby's life.

NHS, 2024

# Toddler stage

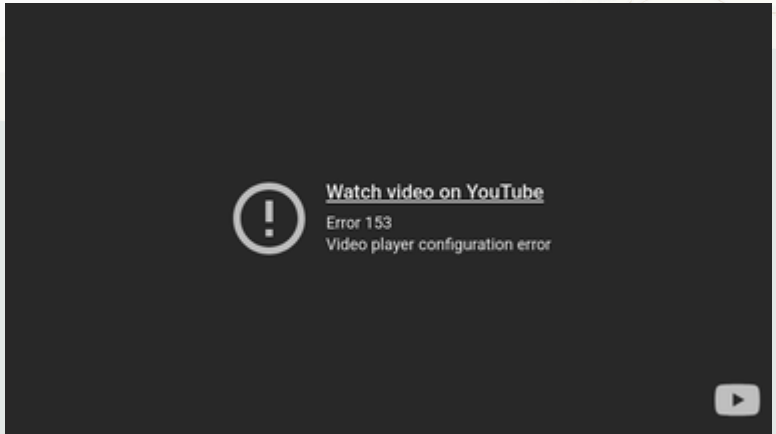
The brain is still developing language, memory and self-control.
Physical development will make massive progress starting with crawling then walking, a child at this stage will start to develop risk taking by climbing on objects.
Fine motor development will also progress at this stage enabling a child to feed themselves and use simple tools.
During the toddler stage a child's vocabulary will develop at a rapid pace. When the caregiver exposes to literature, music and meaningful social interaction e.g. mother and toddler groups it supports a child's language and communication skills.
Also at this stage a child will also start to develop basic numeracy skills by counting and recognising numbers this will then lay the foundations of their mathematical understanding for later learning.
A child will begin to self-regular when they are upset but only with adult support, positive relationships and interactions and encouragement are vital to strengthen a child's ability to self-regulate.
Around the toddler stage children will start to develop their imagination and will use this to play games like pretending to cook and pretending to be mum and dad.
When a child has been exposed to a positive first 1000 days, they are able to have a positive outlook that will shape their future to ensure they are happy, confident individuals that will thrive.



(Aggarwal, 2023)

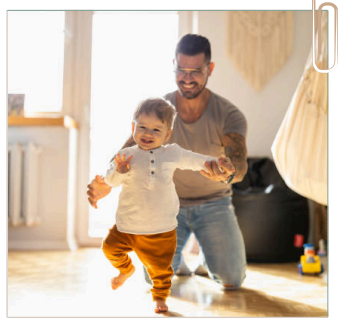
# What is expceptional care giving?

An exceptional care giver plays a key role in a child's development. Bronfenbrenner created the microsystem theory where the care giver is shown to directly influence a child through supportive and nurturing interactions. By caregivers providing safe and enabling environments and responding to children's needs the caregiver can encourage the child to explore, take manageable risks and develop their confidence. When the caregiver can give a child these opportunities, they can directly impact the child's microsystem as it is shown that by a child being exposed to positive caregiver relationships it will strengthen connections with other environments like school and connections with other people. Exceptional care giving is going beyond the basic needs being met, it is ensuring that the caregiver is compassionate, proactive and nurturing. It is not only focused on physical needs being met, but also ensuring that emotional, social and cognitive needs are met. In an educational settings a child centred approach is key to ensure that learning is tailor made to ensure that no matter the developmental stage that children can access what they need to progress but at their own age and stage. This is where individualised planning is vital for a child to succeed.




This video explains Brofenbrenner's microsystem theory clearly

Exceptional caregivers will closely observe the child and will notice any change in a child's mood or behaviour and health. You become so intune when working with children that you can often spot a change in them before their parents, an example of this is when I worked with a child as a one to one a number of years ago I noticed that they began having vacant moments which I brought to the ALNCo and parents attention and it resulted in that child being diagnosed with a heart condition and seizures. Without me being attentive and noting that change it could have been missed for several years. When working with children it is vitally important that training is offered to the person supporting a child with a specific need as that child will then have their needs met effectively. It also ensures that the caregiver can build a strong and positive relationship with the child as the child will feel seen and heard and is able to thrive.
Enabling environment should be safe and secure providing children with the confidence to explore and try new things. By adults carefully managing risks children feel comfortable to take risks and to learn from experiences while developing their independence while knowing that they are supported and protected. Children interact with their environments by exploring this meaning regular risk assessments should be done on the environments to ensure that any potential harms are removed. By Caregivers providing the right resources such as toys and learning materials that are the correct age and stage for the child this will ensure that the child is able to succeed and learn at their correct level.

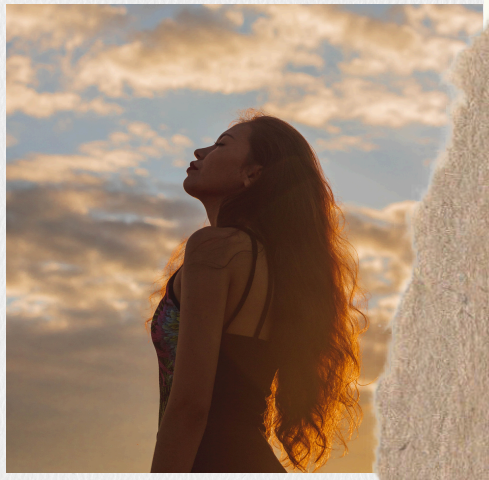


(iStock, n.d.)



(Dreamstime, n.d.)

# Professional Partnerships



Professionals providing a holistic support system during the first 1000 days means that a network of professionals will need to work together to provide care, advice, and guidance to safeguard the children and families in their care.

A range of professionals will provide during the first 1000 days...

- Guidance on health and nutrition
- Safe and enabling environments
- Supporting parents to form strong bonds with their child
- Helping parents to make informed choices for their child's well-being

Professionals who support the mother and baby

- Midwives
- Health visitors
- Early years practitioners
- Mental health services
- Social services

# Maternal factors



Maternal factors like health, nutrition, emotional wellbeing can have a significant effect on the first 1000 days of a child's life.

Maternal stress like postnatal depression and inadequate nutrition can have a massive impact on growth, brain development and early bonding. Prolonged stress during pregnancy can increase cortisol levels which can influence brain development and the ability for the child to regulate their emotions, this is when professionals will collaborate together to support mother and baby through by working together to address and support issues child or family could be facing.

Postnation depression can reduce a mother's availability making clear decisions to benefit the baby, it can also make it difficult for mother and baby to bond and for the mother to respond appropriately to the baby's needs.

Inadequate maternal nutrition can affect the physical growth and the cognitive development increasing the risk of developmental delays in the child.



# Multi-Agency

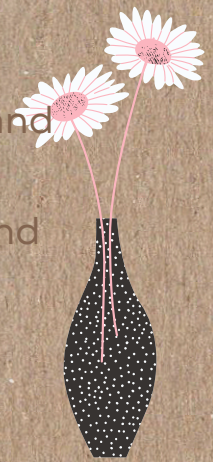
*Multi-agency engagement refers to practitioners, organisations, agencies and stakeholders working together alongside families to meet the diverse needs of babies, children and young people. (Welsh Government, 2025)*

Early years professionals work in partnership with mothers and families offering them support in these areas. Early years professionals can connect mothers and families to services that will support with their emotional and physical needs and by offering community support by ensuring mothers are able to provide their children with the best possible start.

Early years professionals will build trust and communication with the mother/ caregiver to ensure they feel supported and listened this will then result in them being more likely to engage positivity with guidance and any form of professional intervention.

By having a multi-agency approach professionals are able support mother and baby by sharing information and being able to identify any concerns early and enabling them to provide the appropriate intervention with a confident and consistent approach.

When a family is supported by effective partnerships it will enable the mother and family to feel safe, empowered and informed enabling them to be involved with decision any making that will positivity impact the child's emotional, physical and cognitive development during the first 1000 days.

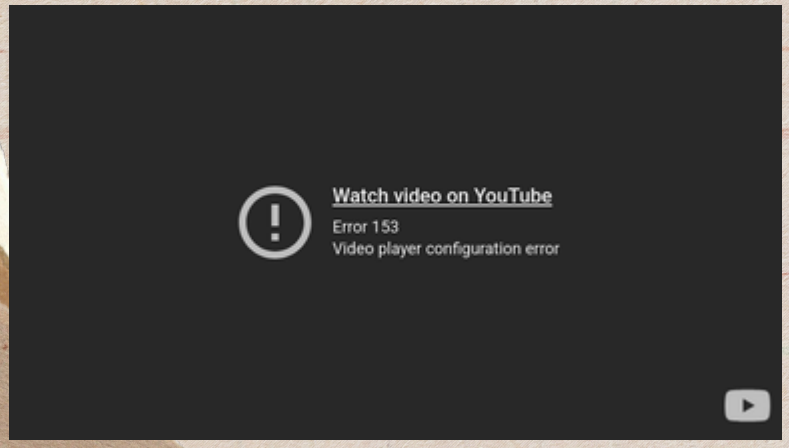


# Flying Starts

When providing support to mother and baby it is vitally important that early year's settings and the home have strong links. This is especially important during the first 1000 days. Government initiatives such as flying starts help strengthen these connections by providing consistent support through home visits, parenting support, health visitors and access to childcare. Flying starts ensuring that guidance is given in the setting and is reinforced at home helping the parents to feel confident and supported.

Flying starts offer support for attachment by providing parents with the skills to build strong and secure relationships with their children. Support is given in a range of ways including

- Home visits
- Parenting support
- Early years services sign posting




Bowlby attachment theory highlights the importance of secure and consistent relationships in early childhood. Strong links between home and setting such as Flying starts support this by helping strengthen the relationship between parents and child during their early years. This video explains the Bowlby attachment theory

# Staff having a strong understanding of child development

Supporting the families enables the professional to offer emotional support for example a parent could be feeling overwhelmed, and the professional is able to it is a cup of tea and someone to listen and help guide the parents to access resources, guidance and local community support.

The early years professional is offered a wide ranage of training to ensure that they are able to support the families and the child appropriately. When staff have a strong understanding of child's development it means they are able to recognise children's needs and ensure they are able to plan activities that are not only age appropriate but also developmentally appropriate ensuring they feel supported in their learning, well-being and growth no matter their stage of development.  These belives are inbedded in policy's within settings "We have high aspirations for every child, and work together to support our learners to achieve their best. Staff work hard to foster a supportive and inclusive environment where children can grow academically, socially and emotionally" (Glan Usk Strategic equality plan (2024-2028)

# Challenges

Professional partnerships are essential for supporting children and families. They can often face a number of challenges that can cause massive implications on collaboration. One example of this is Communication difficulties very often miscommunication can occur if information is not shared correctly and clearly when this happens it can create gaps and the child not receiving the support they need.
Another example of challenges is conflicting priorities due to the number of different multi-agencies they can often have different goals and policy's that can lead to difficulties in collaboration.
Confidentiality issues are also a challenge due to professionals having to balance sharing information to support the child while also being respectful to the family's privacy. This can create tense situations and uncertainty about what information can and cannot be shared.
Funding is becoming an increasing challenge as it can limit resources resulting in a massive impact on providing consistent support to families. Funding is also affecting staffing and is leaving services with insufficient staff this is then causes staff to manage unrealistic workloads leading to them feeling overwhelmed and stressed result in them to missing vital observations of a child's development. Due to unrealistic work load expectationes professionals are needing time off because of stress, this is then leaving the children and families to be support by inconsistent agency staff where they are unable to build those strong relationships and connections.

One major challenge is parental engagement while the majority engage well there are some parents can be reluctant to work with the multi-agency services due to their own negative experiences during their childhood. They could feel that they have failed as a parent and go completely into shut down mode refusing to engage with any support offered. It could also be a lack of transport links for the parent to get to the service providers. Another challenge that could be faced is cultural differences, often there can be differences in cultural beliefs, values or practices between families and professionals. This can affect communication, trust and the ability to collaborate to support the child's developmental needs. In recent years multi-agencies have had to deal with a high demand in their services forcing children and families to go on to a waiting list to access the support needed this is proving to be difficult for multi-agencies resulting in case load or workload pressures professionals managing a high volume of families can result in them struggling to devote enough time to build relationships with the families and collaborate with external agencies to give the appropriate support.

Overall there can be a number of challenges that professional partnerships can face however overcoming these challenged is essential to ensuring that professional are able to work together and support a child's development and a family's wellbeing.

# Sensory play

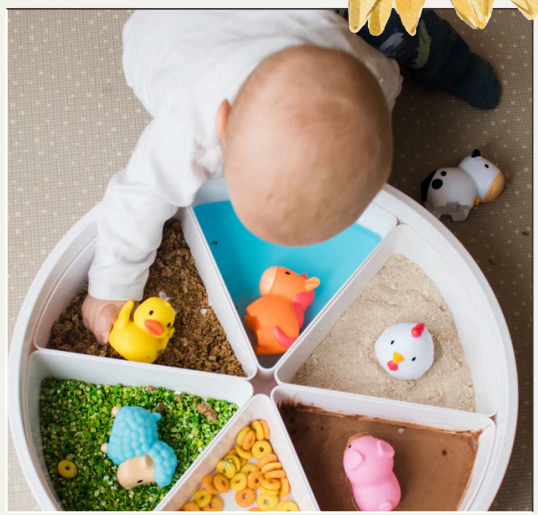
Sensory play has been proven to be hugely beneficial to the first 1000 days. This is because it is when the brain is developing at a rapid rate. When exposed to sensory experiences like touch, taste, smell, seeing, hearing and moving it strenghtens the connections to the brain by...

- Supporting memory, attention and learning pathways
- Assists the brain to organise information
- Sensory play opportunities will activate several areas in the brain all at once

Sensory play is shared between a care giver and a child it also supports the child's emotional security and attachment enabling them to feel safe, regulated and soothed building strong attachments between cargiver and baby.

Sensory play will release oxytocin which is the bonding hormone. Sensory play builds these emotional skills that will help a child throughout their lives.

Sensory play encouraged babies to learn to calm and sooth themselves with soft textures and movement, it has also been shown to help babies manage their stress responses leading to the baby to self- regulate which will then in turn help the child when it grows as they will be able to focus their attention and manage their behaviour positively



Laura (n.d.)... [inspiremyplay.com]

# International Approaches

## Forest schools

The Forest school approach started in Denmark in 1950 and was introduced to the UK during the 1990's. The Forest school a popular educational approach throughout European and Scandinavian countries.

The approach is based on the idea that children of all ages can benefit from learning opportunities in the outdoors these can include woodland, beaches and parks.

The Forest school approach believes that the natural world offers many learning opportunities to develop self-esteem, confidence, social skills and physical skills. It also helps children to understand natural materials and man-made environments.

Many of the activities that children take part in will help them develop life-long skills helping them to manage risks in a safe and controlled way with trained adults. Learning will take place in all weather conditions

" Learning outdoors brings many health and wellbeing benefits: contact with nature makes it easier to think and encourages creativity, develops motor skills, promotes commitment to learning and the students' coping, advances social skills and improves interaction within a group." (Nature Education – Metsähallitus)

Links to articles that highlight how Forest schools positively impacts children in Finland



(ThisisFINLAND, 2019). [finland.fi]



(Vartan, 2021). [treehugger.com]

# Forest school approach Vs UK School System

Here I have created a table to clearly show the differences between UK Educational Approach and the Forest School Approach

| Forest School | UK approach |
|---|---|
| Takes place outdoors | Learning takes place in classrooms |
| Outdoors in all weather conditions | Time outdoor is limited to playtime and PE (Weather depending) |
| Child led and play based | Curriculum led |
| Holistic development focus | Literacy, numeracy and assessment focus |
| Values the process of learning | Focuses on measurable outcomes |
| Adults are more a guide | Teacher led |
| Encourages independence and exploring | Adult controlled activities |
| Supports managed risk e.g. climbing trees, using tools and fire lighting | Risk-averse due to policies |
| Focuses on the individual's progress | Progress is measured against national standards |

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