

The First 1000 Days

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The First 1000 days

Pre-
conception

Conception



270 days

9 months pregnancy



365 days

1st birthday



365 days

2nd birthday



In-text citation: (Why the first 1000 days of life matter During pregnancy Pre-conception, n.d.)

What are the first 1000 day?

The first 1000 days starts from conception to a child's 2nd birthday. It is the most important time where we understand the beginning of a child's individual development and their long-term health and wellbeing. This can be seen as a crucial time where practitioners and health care professionals develop an insight into an individual's development. By having the knowledge of this, practitioners and health care professionals can assess and support children and their families where the support is required. Having early intervention is effective to ensure the health and wellbeing of a child, as early on from being conceived, to infants and then later as a young child.

“Good nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood plays a foundational role in enabling a child to grow, learn and thrive. In a real sense, nutrition provides the fuel that drives a child's early development. During the first 1,000 days, the brain grows more quickly than at any other time in a person's life and a child needs the right nutrients at the right time to feed her brain's rapid development”.

In-text citation: (A Foundation for Brain Development and Learning NUTRITION IN THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS, n.d.)





Baby and mother's nutrition

A mother's diet and nutrition's are the only source of nutrition for a growing baby. When the mother doesn't have the calories or nutrients or essential proteins they need to for the growing baby. The baby is and risks of developmental delays, birth and cognitive defects such as folate that is critical to the early development of the brain and spine. Women lacking folic acid before coming pregnant and in early stages of pregnancy. Biology Insights, 2025 suggests that

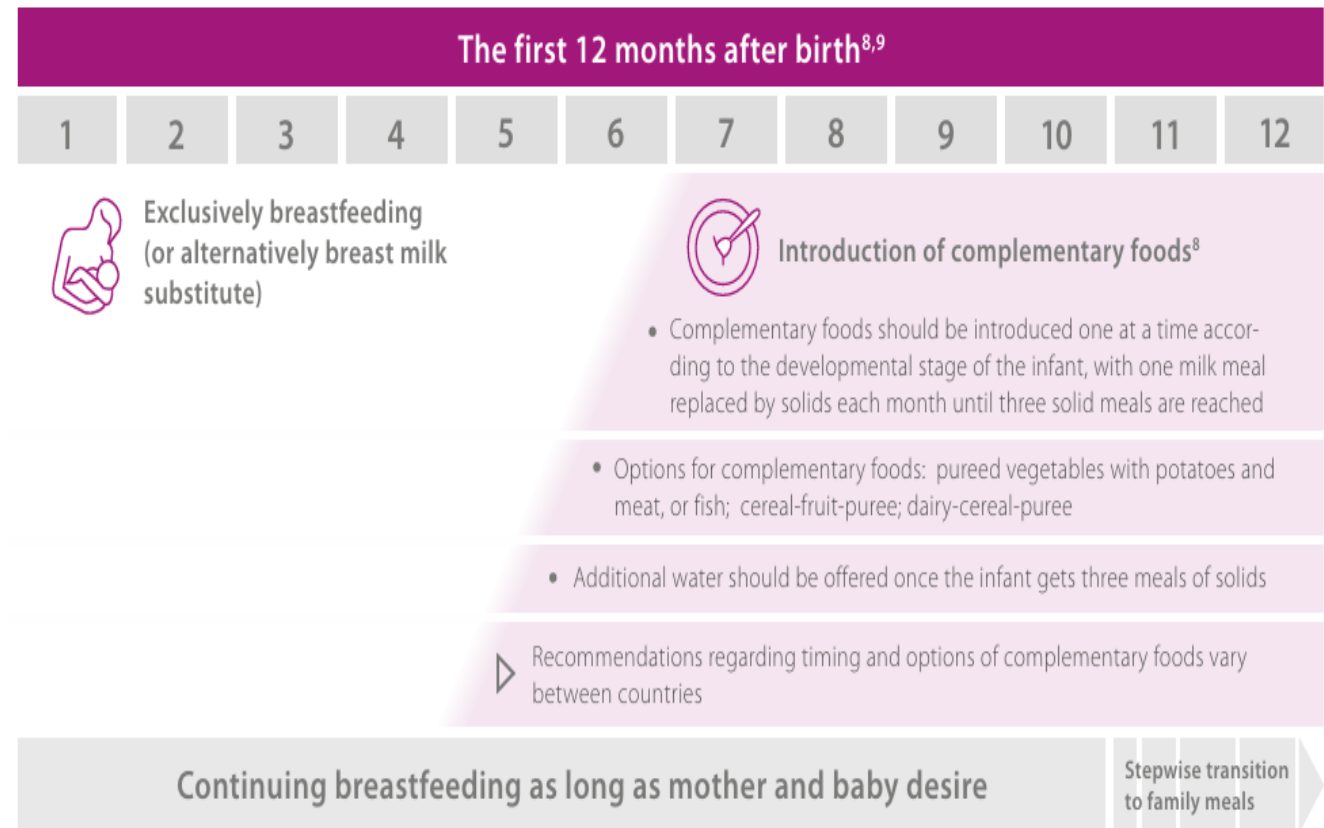
“Neural tube formation is a fundamental biological process during early embryonic development. This intricate event involves the transformation of a flat sheet of embryonic tissue into a hollow tube, which subsequently gives rise to the rudimentary structures of the brain and spinal cord. It represents one of the earliest developmental milestones, laying the foundational framework for the central nervous system.”

Breastmilk is the superfood for developing babies. Breastmilk supplies a variety of nutrients that formula milk cannot replace so this is vital for a child's early brain development. Cited in A Foundation for Brain Development and Learning Nutrition in the first 1,000 days, explores

“A recent study followed pre-term infants from birth until later childhood and found that children who were fed more breastmilk within the first 28 days of life had larger volumes of certain regions of the brain and by age 7, had higher IQs and better scores in reading, mathematics, working memory and motor function tests”.



The first 12 months after Birth



Cited on

[Nutrition_The_First_1000_Days_Factsheet_2019_English.pdf](#)



Early Childhood

In the Early Childhood stage, a child's brain continues to develop at a rapid pace. The brain is developing to interpret and relay information; also increases dramatically during early childhood, enabling the young brain to perform more complex tasks.

Throughout childhood the brain is forming synapses, synapses is defined as the process which is crucial for the development, function and plasticity of the brain; which entails a complex interplay of genetic programming, neuronal activity and environmental influences.

Food is crucial for babies' development as it provides the fuel for brain development and it takes place early on in childhood, this period is when the brain develops remains critically important. A toddler's brain develops rapidly; it is essential that their diet consists of protein, iron, zinc and iodine. In a study cited in A Foundation for Brain Development and Learning nutrition in the first 1000 days suggests,

"Iron plays a significant role in brain development throughout the first 1,000 days, and the damage done by iron deficiency in pregnancy and the first 2 years of a child's life can be irreversible."

Vaccinations

Childhood vaccinations are essential and important way of protecting our children against serious illness. Collated from Gov.Wales, 2023; The table below shows the vaccinations that are available for babies from 8 weeks up until 16 years of age.

		8 weeks	12 weeks	16 weeks	12 months	18 months	2 years	3 years
6 in 1 DTap/IPV/HibHepB	Provides effective protection against: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b and hepatitis B					From January 2026		
Rotavirus Vaccine	Provides protection against infection which includes severe diarrhoea and vomiting in babies. Babies will need 2 rotavirus vaccinations, 4 weeks apart, to be fully protected.							
Meningococcal group B Vaccine	MenB vaccine is offered to protect babies against group B meningococcal bacteria. These bacteria can cause meningitis and sepsis.				12 to 13 months (booster)			
Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)	Pneumococcal infections is one of the most common causes of meningitis. It also causes ear infections, pneumonia and other serious illnesses.				12 to 13 months			
Hib/Men C Vaccine	Against infections that can cause meningitis and sepsis. This vaccine will be given to babies at their 12-month vaccine.							
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) Vaccine	From 1 st January 2026, a new varicella vaccination will be introduced to protect babies and children from chickenpox. This will be combined with the MMR vaccine into a single MMRV vaccine. The full course of MMRV vaccination requires 2 doses.							
4 in 1 booster Vaccine	This vaccination helps protect against 4 separate diseases which include: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio.							3 years and 4 months
Flu Vaccination	Each year, flu vaccines are changed to match the flue viruses circulating that year, so that baby's can get the best protection. This vaccination is offered to children aged 2 to 16.						2 to 16 years of age.	

A black and white photograph showing a close-up of two hands. An adult's hand is on the left, with fingers slightly curled, and a child's hand is on the right, with fingers spread. The hands are clasped together in a supportive grip. The background is dark and out of focus.

Caregiving for Children



Caregiving

Exceptional care in the first 1000 days is providing comprehensive, integrated and person-centred support to families, communities and the wider society this will improve long term health, reduce inequalities and break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

Please click the link below

[The First 1000 Days programme - Public Health Wales](#)



Providing inclusive opportunities in the first 1000 days of a child's life is important and these strategies should be implemented.

- Integrate care service
- Integrated care is an important service as it sees the integration of care services who work together to deliver a service to the people of Wales. The care givers work which is done collaboratively and is coordinated and seamlessly for the smooth deliver of its function. The approach aims to improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities and enhance the quality of life for residents. The service has been designed to address the diverse needs of the people of Wales, ensuring that individuals receive the correct and affective care at the right time. The integrated care is supported by the Social Service and Well-being Wales Act, which highlights the importance of collaboration among the public service to deliver high quality care.
- A collaborative effort of various public agencies to provide seamless care in the first 100day

Holistic service

Holistic service is a comprehensive approach to health and social care referring to the whole person. This includes emotion, spiritual physical and environmental aspects. This approach supports the overall wellbeing and quality of life. The holistic service is aimed to address all core areas of health making sure that the first 1000 days + of a person's life truly cared and supported.

Focus on Inequalities

In Wales, the government is committed to addressing and reducing all disparities within the care system this includes services of health, education and social services. The Welsh government suggests that this approach ensures that all citizens within Wales, regardless of their background, have the equal opportunities and access to all resources that are made available. The Welsh Government's initiatives are guided by the Socio-economic duty which requires public bodies within the three settings to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and address any inequalities that may arise. The Welsh Government requests that this duty is part of a broader effort to creating a more equal and equitable society for the people of Wales.

Community Engagement in early years education in Wales, involves parents, communities and wider society to support children's learning and development collaboratively. Schools and parents work collaboratively to enhance children's learning outcomes with evidence collated by the Welsh Government showing that effective engagement can improve self-esteem, attendance and behaviour. Schools must establish sustainable relationships with its local communities to provide a diverse learning opportunity and support services, which intine improves children's health, well-being, and future employment. Community learning fosters social skills, cultural awareness, and diverse learning experiences benefiting children's education and development within its approach. Welsh legislation and frameworks support the parental involvement and community engagement, ensuring that all schools and local authorities work together to meet the needs of their children and supporting their families.

Community Engagement

Children thrive in environments that support their individual and diverse development needs. Enabling Environments within your setting offers children security, comfort, choice, engagement and opportunities. Children learn best when supported by being provided with opportunities which allow for movement and action, creativity and imagination, independence and collaboration. Spending time outdoors benefits children by offering unique opportunities such as forest schools, where pupils learning through nature. Forest schools is a child-centred approach that promotes holistic growth, self-esteem, creativity, confidence and independence through outdoor sessions.

Enabling Environments

Pikler's approach to outdoor learning emphasizes the importance of natural movement and responsive caregiving for infants and young children. The approach encourages children to explore their environment freely and to develop their physical skills through play. Children should be allowed to move freely and to discover their physical capabilities building on their prior knowledge. This includes the art of rolling, crawling and walking without adult support. Practitioners should pay full attention, gentle handling and cooperative care during routines such as nappy changes, feeding and bathing. The connection between the child and their practitioner is a precious opportunity for development. Pikler's approach suggests that practitioners should take a step back and observe rather than constantly intervene. This trust communicates to all children that they are capable and independent learners who can solve problems and develop skills. Practitioners creating predictable routines and a physical environment that supports children's autonomous exploration and free movement is essential for child development. This includes using low room dividers to separate play spaces from eating areas and providing rest after movement. Finally, Pikler's approach to outdoor learning is a holistic approach which supports children's physical development, emotional well-being and social skills through natural movement and responsive caregiving. Pikler's approach is admired by many practitioners as a valuable framework looking to create a nurturing environment that promote healthy development and learning.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4y6XDgPTbl/>

Please watch

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Factors	Influence
Funding 	NEU Cymru, Wales's largest education union, is concerned about the ongoing funding crisis in education in Wales, with pupils in Wales receiving up to £400 per annum less than pupils in England. Whilst the Welsh government are somewhat restricted by monies they receive from the government in Westminster, the system used to fund schools and colleges is seriously flawed.

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?

Factors

Low Pay

Teacher pay in different UK nations

	England outside of London from Sept 2023 with DfE pay offer	Wales from September 2023	Scotland from January 2024
M0*	N/A	N/A	£32,217
M1	£30,000	N/A	£38,655
M2	£31,680	£30,742	£40,848
M3	£33,455	£33,210	£43,218
M4	£35,328	£35,769	£45,960
M5	£37,538	£38,586	£48,516
M6	£40,479	£42,464	N/A

* Probationer in Scotland

Source: DfE, SNCT and NEU Cymru

tes
magazine

Influence

Wales' early years workforces face the most significant challenges due to low pay of it's practitioners, which has been a consistent driver of staffing issues for many settings across Wales. Despite the recent increases in relative pay, early years practitioners earn thirty six percent less on average than other workers with similar characteristics and working patterns. The Welsh Government emphasis on the importance of the first one thousand days of a child's life underscores the urgency of addressing the pay and conditions faced by early years practitioners.

What are the challenges in providing high quality care?



Factors	Influence
Geographic Inequality	The availability of childcare in Wales varies widely, with rural and deprived areas often lacking the provision, which impacts disadvantaged families’ accessing crucial services. Geographical inequality in early childhood provision within Wales is shaped by a combination of factors such as socioeconomic disparities, uneven service accessibility, and regional implementation challenges of national policies. Although significant efforts have been made through frameworks such as Foundation Phase and the Curriculum for Wales, persistent regional and social gaps indicate the need for targeted, data-driven interventions to ensure equity in early years outcomes.

What is the role of an early year's practitioner in supporting children within the first 1000 days?

An Early Years Practitioner in Vale of Glamorgan plays a crucial role in supporting children within the first 1000 days of life.

Their responsibilities include:

Promoting healthy development

Modelling and encouraging behaviour

Supporting individuals' needs and inclusion

Providing a safe and nurturing environment

Observing and assessing children development

Promoting social skills through play

Supporting developmental milestones

Building relationships with families

Implementing the Early years framework in line with the new Welsh curriculum.



What is the role of an early year's practitioner in supporting families within the first 1000 days?

Early years practitioners are instrumental in shaping and supporting the future of children and their families.

Their key roles:

Building trust and relationships

Parent partnership

Empowering parents/caregivers

Early identification and support.

Promoting secure attachment

Promoting holistic development

Providing practical help

Working with wider teams



Whys is it important to work in partnership during the first 1000 days?

What is partnership working?

Partnership working in the first one thousand day is crucial to building strong, collaborative relationship between practitioners, parents and other professional which include doctors , midwives, health visitors and other health care professionals to support a child's holistic development, sharing knowledge and aligning goals for consistent learning and wellbeing at home and with the school setting which is crucial for ensuring positive outcome and address children's diverse needs. Partnership working involves open communication, mutual respect, shared decision-making and valuing parents as crucial parents in their child's learning journey. The benefit of this is for children's increased security, motivation, confidence and developing better social-emotional skills. For parents by having increased knowledge, confidence in support their child, and feeling valued.

The Department for Education (2021) states that

‘Research shows that involving parents and carers in their children's learning is the most important factor in enabling some children to do well regardless of background.’

Finally for the practitioners having a deeper understanding of the child, building strong relationships and enhancing practice.



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Maternal Factors	Support strategies available
Lifestyle and Behavioural Factors (Smoking, alcohol and substance use)	<u>Healthcare professionals support</u> includes regular antenatal visits with midwives or general practitioners who provide crucial screenings for mental health, smoking and nutrition. <u>Nutritional Counselling</u> Prenatal care is often included to ensure adequate intake of essential vitamins which includes folic acid and iodine. <u>Physical Activity Support</u> Communities across Wales offer tailored prenatal classes or advice on safe and moderate exercises. <u>Mental Health Services</u> Parents have access to talking therapies, this can include access to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or counselling. <u>Peer Support Networks</u> Parents can gain support from support groups with their community; this may help address feelings of isolation, reduce stress and share experiences with one another. <u>Technological Solutions</u> such as mobile health apps and telemedicine are increasingly used for remote monitoring and support for parents.

Socioeconomic and Environmental Factors

(Poverty, access to healthcare and quality of prenatal care-

Including race ethnicity and socioeconomic disparities.)

Healthcare Access and Quality. Expanding health insurance to cover comprehensive maternal care and increasing the number of community-based clinics in underserved areas.

Community-Based Support Ensures that engaging midwives, home-visiting programs, and community health workers provide education and support in marginalised areas.

Mental Health and Social Services Integrating mental health screenings and services into routine prenatal care, including support for intimate partner violence.

Policy Initiatives Currently implementing paid maternity leave, flexible work schedules, and income support programmes for lower-income families.

Technology-Based support Telehealth and mobile applications provide remote monitoring for conditions like hypertension, especially in rural Wales.

Nutritional Support Food assistance programs and promoting of nutritious food intake.

Maternal Health
(Pre-existing conditions)

Antenatal and Postnatal Care Having regular antenatal care visits are crucial for monitoring health.

Community-Based Interventions and Peer Support Utilizing community health worker for home visits and education can improve health outcomes. Peer to peer support groups is highly effective for mental health and breastfeeding support.

Digital and Remote Tools Telehealth, text groups and integrated digital records help with the monitoring and continuity of care, particularly in remote areas.

Educating and Empowerment Providing high quality education on danger signs, nutrition and breastfeeding is essential.



Activities that provide meaningful learning



Sensory play is defined as any activity that stimulates our senses which include the sense of touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. Sensory play helps children interact with and make sense of the world that surrounds them.

If asked about senses, many people would probably cite the five senses of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Although these external senses are vital, we also have the crucially important inner senses of vestibular (Sense of Movement), interoception (Internal sense – hunger, toilet and being cold/hot) and proprioception (the sense of where our body is in space and the world around us.)

Gascoyne (2012.p3) states that

“Every sensory experience provides the foundations upon which all subsequent knowledge, through and creativity are based.”

Sensory play is essentially play that engages one or more of the senses. Play clearly has the potential to be sensory. Sensory play differs to other types of play in that the sensory focus adds a significant and integral extra dimension to the play. User cited in Gascoyne (2012) describes the opportunity for children to use all their senses or play that encourages the use of one sense.

Gascoyne (2012.p3) suggests that

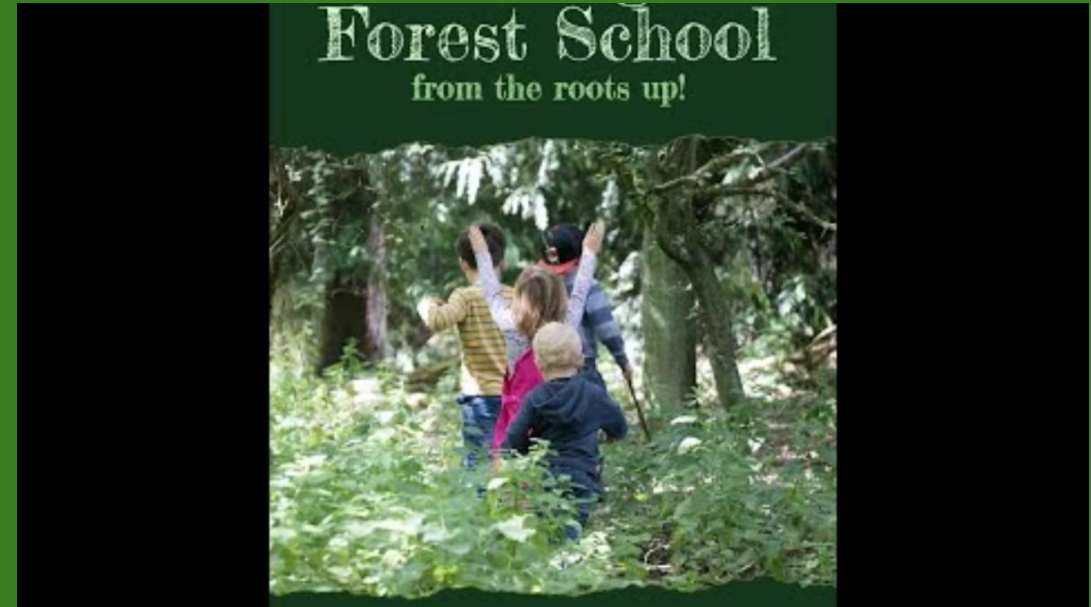
“Sensory play is commonly accessed in the outdoor environment, and some forms, like sand and water play can be intrinsically messy.”

Forest Schools

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers children opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops children's confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

The Forest School approach fosters:

- Social skills
- Emotional resilience
- A deep and meaningful spiritual connection to the outside world
- The physical development of pupils
- The intellectual capacity to think, learn, plan and execute



Messy Play

Messy play is also known as sensory play. Messy play uses children's five senses that lets them explore different materials, textures and objects. It also helps develop children's creative and cognitive skills.

Messy play benefits children's development in many ways and develops:

- Physical skills (Fine Motor Skills)
- Cognitive skills (Develops thinking, exploration and problem solving)
- Understanding of senses (Exploring new textures and sensory experiences)
- Social skills (Developing the skills of sharing and turn taking by playing with others)
- Imagination (Opportunity to try new things and experiment in a safe environment)
- Self-esteem and self-expression (The sense of feeling safe to experiment more and know there is no right or wrong way to play)



Montessori Education

The Montessori method of education involves children's natural interests and activities rather than formal teaching method. A Montessori classroom places an emphasis on hands-on learning and developing real-world skills, such as problem solving and help and teaching each other.

Baro (2023) suggests that Montessori method is not well-suited to all children because the Montessori approach is only based on the idea that children are innately curious and motivated to learn. This may not be effective for those children who are shy, struggling or who have additional learning needs. These children may require more structure and individual plans in order to be successful.



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