



The First 1000 Days

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Introduction- What is the first 1000 days. Why is it important. **Caregiving** - What is exceptional Care - Why is it important **Professional Partnerships** - What is the role of the eyp in supporting children and families in the first 1000 days - The importance of effective partnership working. **Challenges** - what are the challenges in providing high quality care? **Activities** - What are the benefits - International approaches

What is the first 1000 days



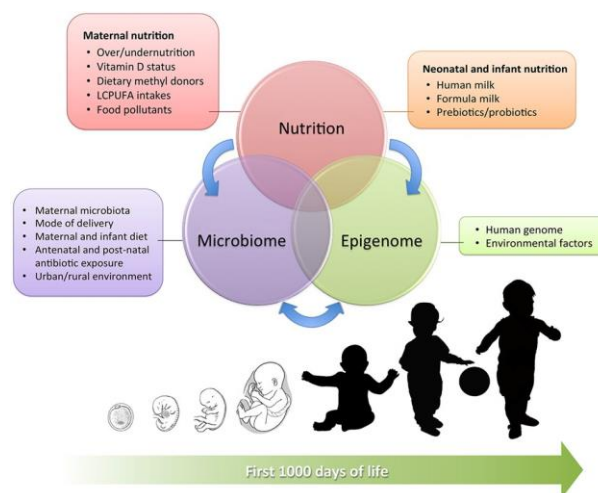
It is a well-known fact the first 1000 days of life, conception to 2 years of age is the most critical for a child's development but they are also a time when babies are at their most vulnerable. There are four main areas of development: motor (physical), language and communication, social and

emotional, and cognitive. Brain development is part of cognitive development. These four areas of development grow rapidly with the first 1000 days.

It is during this time, a child's brain can form up to 1000 new connections every second. For these connections to work properly a child must receive three things, nutrition, stimulation and protection. Babies do not yet have the language skills to advocate for themselves so their carers must advocate on their behalf. When a child experiences lack of love and care in the first 1000 days it can have a negative impact for their future, which in turn could lead to lifelong effects and hinder the development of key traits such as nurturing and kindness it can cause a person to experience depression anxiety and low self-esteem. HM Government (2021)

When a child feels safe and loved it ignites brain receptors, Playing, singing, reading and talking with children helps them form strong bonds and form positive relationships. Nutrition is important during pregnancy and infancy, which are the most critical for brain development. Most of the energy from food consumed during this time is used for brain development. Failure to provide key nutrients during this time of brain development may result in lifelong deficits in brain function Schwarzenberg, et al. Nutrition in the first 1000 days (2018)

By simply responding to a baby's cry or smile, this helps them build positive responses and skills such as empathy. You will notably tell when a baby is communicated with positively as when a person smiles at a baby the baby will smile back as they are used to this emotion and form of communication whereas a child that is placed in front of a screen for entertainment a lot will look very confused or have a vacant expression. The way a child is cared for during the first years really forms the basis their brains need for development. In brief all a child needs in order to develop strong cognitive connectors are the four main areas of development. Love, support, attachment, time, parental support, basic needs, nutrition, caring and stimulating environment are all a child needs.



Caregiving

Firstly when thinking of caregiving practitioners must first think what exceptional care is? The definition of exceptional care is when a person provides

Practitioners play an essential role to children in education, the nature of the job involves working with and caring for people it is very important to ensure that practitioners are able to look after children in their setting properly. Listed below are some essential attributes of exceptional care work

that any practitioner should have. Empathy and kindness are key traits, they are especially important in education. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, usually by mentally putting yourself in their place. Being empathetic allows the practitioner to provide better care for the child. In addition, as previously mentioned children are more likely to respond and develop when shown kindness and empathy. Patience and the ability to remain calm under pressure this is very important for practitioners to be and to model and children are very susceptible to copying behaviour. Being respectful and use of good listening skills, although working with children respect should always be given to them and they will show respect back, children often mirror behaviour of those they are around regularly and practitioners have a duty of care to treat every individual with these attributes mentioned. When looking at caregiving we first must look at the practitioner's role, practitioners play an important part of a child's life. Integral to the progress of all children and is particularly significant in this period of early learning. Practitioners should be modelling good behaviour and should create safe emotional environments. The reason this is important to a young person as it promotes children to begin and regulate their feelings and behaviours in positive ways, and be more comfortable with transitions. Practitioners should a joyful approach to learning, and encourage and support children's natural curiosity. Inness. (2015)

John Bowlby developed a model of the relationship between children and their prime caregiver Bowlby's theory is the belief that infants are biologically wired to form attachments, thus serving as survival strategy, the theory is known as attachment theory, and there are four stages of attachment. A secure attached child is usually happy, secure and explorative by direct result of caregiver being responsive, sensitive and consistent. An ambivalent (anxious) attachment (insecure) – a child with this stage of attachment will ordinarily display anxiousness, anger and insecurity this may be due to the prime caregiver being inconsistent and sometimes neglectful. Avoidant attachment (insecure) – A child will be quiet, withdrawn and does not explore learning areas, this is because the caregiver is neglectful, distant and disengaged. Disorganised attachment (insecure) – The child will usually be depressed, angry, passive and unresponsive as a direct result of being frightened by caregiver. (Main, 2023)

Professional Partnerships

A practitioners role is particularly significant in early learning, creating emotionally safe environments that support children and help them regulate their feelings and behaviours in positive ways. Practitioners should model a happy and exciting approach to learning, and encourage and support children's natural curiosity.

The first aspect to note is that having effective partnerships with external agencies is important for professionals to best support the child and the child's family. Bronfenbrenner's theory describes like a set of Russian dolls the importance of parent partnerships and the child is at the centre. Their home, surrounded by their family, school and other areas in their life that provide support. Connection within these systems that can shape a child's development and learning, in other words the support the parents receive, and that having a good partnership with parents, poses better outcomes for the child's development.

Parents should be supported by the setting in all aspects or discussion with any concerns they have with their child or with the setting that may be sensitive information for example, a change of home life for a child (parent separation) or an incident at the setting that the parent did not feel was dealt

with correctly. It is also important that the parents are kept up to date on their child's development this could be done effectively by keeping daily diaries of the child this not only gives the parents peace of mind but will also benefit the practitioner by enabling them to better understand the child's development and at what rate. (Birth to five matters, no date)

Some settings allow parents to spend the morning within the setting, spending time with their children, this will allow parents to interact with one another and see how their children play alongside their peers, it also gives parents the opportunity to interact with the practitioner at the setting this being an effective tool for reviewing development. Parent's evenings also allow the practitioners to build good rapport with the parents as they can have an honest open conversation about their child's development. Offering a academic progression parents evening during the academic year which usually is the last parents evening of the year thus giving chance for parents to view the next classroom their child will transition in to the next coming year.

Additionally Multi agency partnerships are very important this can be anyone from Health Visitors, CAMHs, Social Services, Speech and Language Therapists, Behaviour Support, Early help hub, Educational Psychologist and a multitude of other agencies. All of these agencies will be able to guide and support practitioners on decisions regarding the child and what strategy will give the best outcome. (Stokes, S , no date)

The three E's are set out as enabling adults, the role of the adult is important to all learners progress. The enabling adult sets the expectation for learning by creating emotionally safe environments that support learners to begin to express and regulate their feelings and behaviours in positive ways. They support learners to cope with uncertainty and change, preparing them to manage transitions and changes in daily routines. Engaging experiences should promote learners' independence, offering challenge and the opportunity to experience success along the learning journey. They should provide opportunities for deep-level involvement and uninterrupted active learning, and be rooted in real-life, authentic situations. The environment, indoors and outdoors, should be central to learners' authentic experiences. During this period of learning, exploration of the environment is a key driver for development. Through exploration of their environment, in the local community and beyond, learners begin to develop a sense of belonging and an appreciation of the world around them. Hwb (2023)

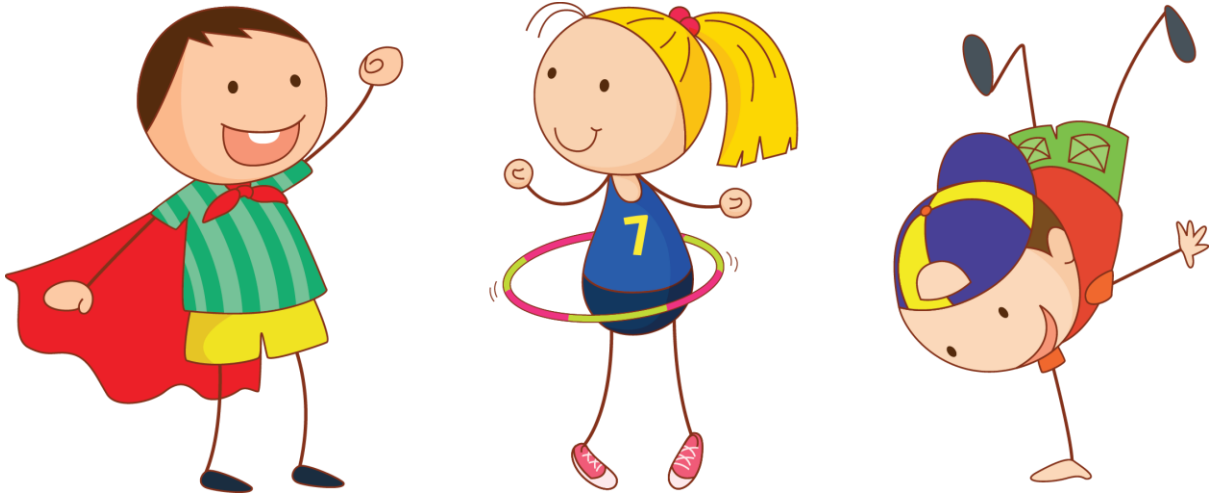
Challenges



When looking at how to provide quality care the challenges that practitioners face should always be considered. Over the years there has been many challenges of providing quality care, as there are contributing factors that are continuing to grow, maintained and non-maintained settings are facing the highest challenges they have ever faced before even with the new curriculum. The challenges that practitioners are facing, for instance lack of funding lack of tools to support learning and staff shortages are just some examples. Other challenges include statutory school age children are presenting more with additional learning needs and delays much more frequently this is much due to the global pandemic, children are also presenting more with mental health issue as a result. (Young Minds 2020).

During the pandemic new-born babies and toddlers did not get the exposure to social development, which has caused many children to be very anxious and have strong attachment issues. The cost of living crisis is also presenting as a challenge as parents are finding it more and more difficult to provide adequate clothing and food for their children. Lower accessibility to external services are also a challenge currently as many external services such as speech and language, educational psychologists , behaviour support teams are also short staffed and have a long wait for referrals to be addressed. The lack of staffing within the industry is posing a huge challenge currently an example of this is the use of agency staff, the difficulty with the over use of agency staff is that there is no consistency for the children. This is mainly due to different staff members being sent out daily. The lack of training agency staff possess is also a challenge. The extreme demand of education is another factor, and as a result more and more qualified teaching staff members are leaving. Another aspect of challenges currently is the lack of adequate communication this may be between staff members and parents or external agencies with the setting, the problems this poses are that important information does not get relayed and adequate and appropriate measures are not being put in place for the children.

Activities





It is often said the learning through play in the early years gives the best opportunity for brain development, during these early years a young person's brain is active. When thinking of activities the practitioner must think if the activities they have set out has meaningful learning. What does meaningful learning mean? The definition of meaningful learning is that the learner fully understands the knowledge that they have learned. Here are some play activities and what they support in a child's development. (Unicef, 2018)

Heuristic play

Is a form of play where a young person interacts with everyday objects rather than toys. Children can be observers, participants, or individual explorers. Theorist Maria Montessori developed her method based on the way children learn naturally and self-paced. Heuristic play is important to children's sensory development as they explore different objects, which enriches their development.

According to theorist Maria Montessori but there are many people that disagree or challenge what the Montessori method is as many people feel that the environment is to prepared by the practitioner to promote the learning opportunities for the young person therefor not giving the young person the opportunity to develop creative imagination.

Sensory play / messy play –

Sensory play is defined as play that engages any of your child's senses. When a child is born, their senses are not yet fully developed this comes in time from having opportunities to explore their

senses. Each new experience they have with different senses enriches their cognitive development such as sight, sound, taste and smell. Secondly, sensory play and messy play helps young minds develop their early motor skills. When children have the opportunity to explore sensory or messy materials they are learning to refine their [fine motor skills](#) as it increases muscle growth in their fingers, wrists, arms. Sensory activities can be capable of enhancement when done outdoors as when a young person is exposed to natural elements, it also allows children to express their creativity and become more aware of the world around them. Having the opportunity to have sensory play outdoors encourages young minds to concentrate, as it requires them to focus by making independent choices, which stimulates their brain. Here are some examples of items that could be used in sensory and messy play indoors or outdoors, rice, spaghetti, water, play dough, flour, sand, cereal, paints, shaving foam, ice, textures and materials, music.

Engaging experiences

According to Froebel the role-play of shops, vets, doctors, dentist, cafes, hairdressers and real life activities such as cooking, gardening, cleaning, taking care of real life animals allows the learning real life experiences, these types of role play allows the learner to make sense of the world around them.

A quote by Friedrich Froebel "In childhood there is a four-fold development of life – the child's own inner life; his life in relation with parents and family; his life in relation, common to him and them, with a higher invisible Being; and, especially, his life in relation with nature, regarded as endowed with life like his own." Froebel 1912

Outdoor environments When children are used to playing outdoors, they are more likely to try new activities, engage with others, solve problems, explore the natural environment, make friends and show resilience. When looking at outdoor learning it should offer a young person connection to the environment in a more meaningful way. Outdoor learning has many benefits as it enhances development such as cognitive, physical, emotional social and creativeness. We use all our senses when we experience the outdoors therefore making the experience richer and more memorable. (Padayachie 2022)





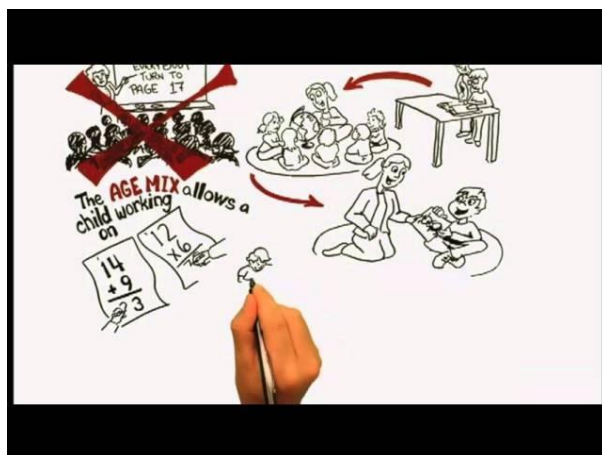
International approaches

When looking at international approaches and the differences between them the practitioner will be able to decide what approach most suits their setting better for the children, here are two contrasting but similar approaches.

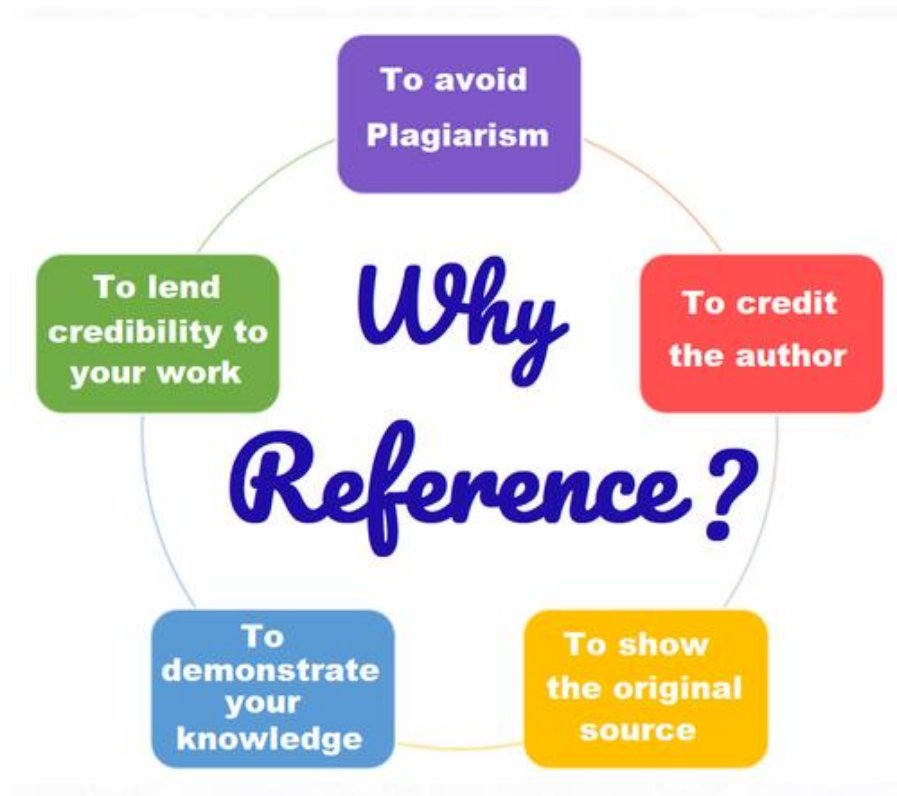
Forest School began in Scandinavia where a child-centred learning approach, which offers opportunities for holistic growth, was key. It later arrived in the United Kingdom in 1993 after staff members from Bridgewater College took part in an exchange visit to Denmark; the staff upon their return adapted the Denmark approach and implemented it within their setting. Maynard (2007, pp. 320) the program supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It helps develop confidence and self-esteem; it offers hands-on experiences in a natural setting. (Forest School Association, no date)

Maria Montessori founded the Montessori approach in 1907 in Italy. Montessori's approach was based on observing children, learning and tweaking learning environments based on teachers' observations. Children can use resources around the classroom to help them problem solve and discover new things. Educators use their observations of children to provide the children with resources that help them meet their current developmental needs. The Montessori classroom is also an orderly and structured environment, where objects have their own place.

When looking at these two approaches it is clear to see that one focuses on child led play and the other is more practitioner prepared play. There are many similarities between the two and in some cases there may be settings who have implemented these two methods together.



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