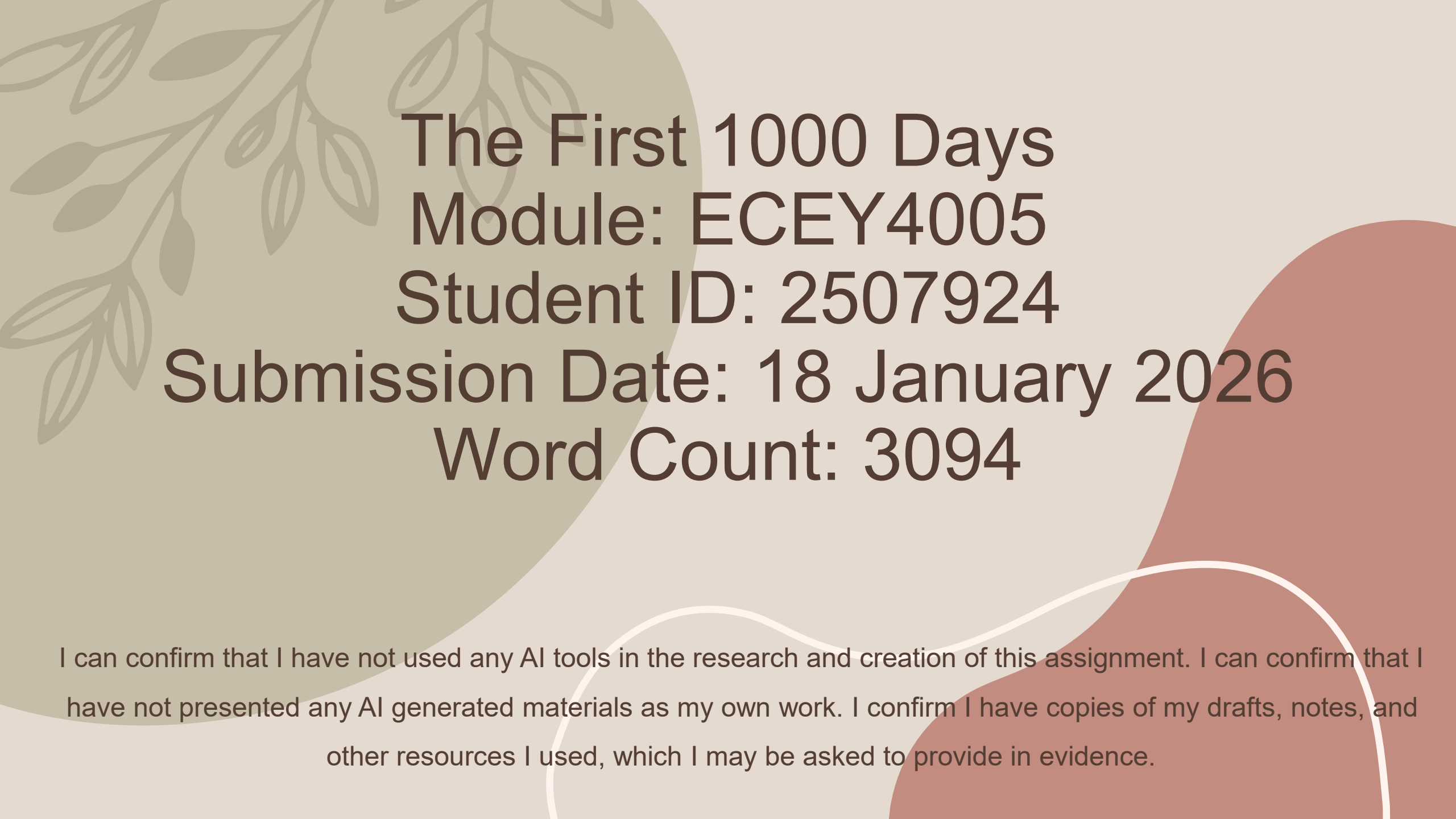
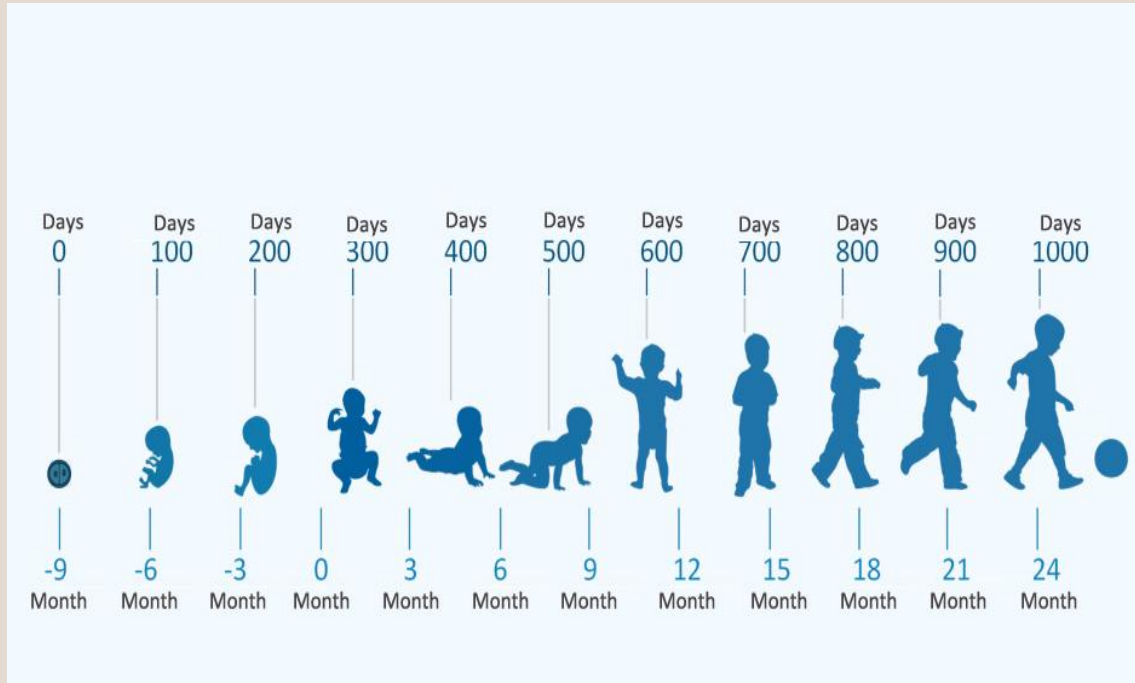




The First 1000 Days  
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I can confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I can confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

# What is the first 1000 days?



(idsMED, 2019)

The first 1000 days of a child's life is the period starting from conception all the way up to 24 months old (2 years of age). This period of time is when children are continuously changing - the brain develops at the quickest rate, children's immune and metabolic system form and the body grows and develops quickly so it is important to provide all children with the nutrients, safety and stimulation needed for them to develop further. Children having the correct nutrients, sense of safety and experiences within the first 1000 days of life are important as they form the foundation for each child's long-lasting well-being, health and learning (Finnegan and Lawton, 2015).

# Why is the first 1000 days important?

During the first 1000 days children are at their most vulnerable as they completely rely on their caregivers to help support them and meet all their needs. During this time, many things such as stress, nutrients, and environment can influence the baby's development, so it is important to support children and their families in the best way possible. Children make many new connections and neural pathways within their brain during this time to help them with language, physical growth, social and emotional development that shape them into the people they are thriving to become (HM Government, 2021).



(Shutterstock, n,d)

# It is important for brain development:

UNICEF (n,d) highlights that the brain grows and makes connections the fastest during the period of 0-2 years old than any other time during a human's life. It also states that during the period of 0-2 years old there are 'over 1 million new neural connections forming every second' which creates the foundations in the brain that support children's speech, fine-motor skills, gross-motor skills, memory and the tools that help them thrive in life.

(University Hospitals,  
2018)



(Seong, 2025)

Maslow believed that every person has basic needs that should be met for them to grow and have a happy and successful life. Basic needs like nutrition, positive relationships, and a safe, stimulating environment with age- appropriate toys all play important roles in supporting brain development and creating the early neural pathways in the brain. When children have all those basic needs met and have positive experiences their brains develop strong foundations and connections that support lifelong development in learning and health (Pichère and Cadiat, 2015).

# It is important for physical growth:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Breast Milk</b><br>WHO recommends exclusively from birth - 6 months and up to 2 years or beyond<br><br>Benefits:<br>Easily available, digested and absorbed, contains all essential nutrition & hydration for babies and helps build immune system | <b>Infant Formula</b><br>Only suitable alternative if breast milk is not available or chosen<br><br>Offers all of the essential nutrition a baby needs - additional water may be needed in warmer weather<br><br>"Follow-on" formula not necessary after 6 months - continue with regular formula to 12 months |
| <b>Dairy Milk</b><br>Can be added to cooking/solids from 6 months<br><br>Not recommended as a main drink until 12 months (whole or semi-skimmed can be offered after this)<br><br>Has nutritional benefits - good source of calcium and iodine        | <b>Soya Milk (&amp; Alternatives)</b><br>Offer from 12 months as part of a healthy, balanced diet (can be used in cooking from 6mo)<br><br>Good alternative for vegan children or those with intolerance to dairy<br><br>Not all brands fortify - ensure overall diet is balanced                              |

(Stirling-Reed, 2019)



(Doherty, 2018)

The first 1,000 days of life are important for physical growth as this is when the body is the most vulnerable but is also developing at the fastest rate. During this time, babies experience a lot of changes in the body for example in weight, height, organs developing and muscles forming. All these important stages of growth within the body depend greatly on nutrition. It is important for children to have a good diet during this period as they need the important nutrients from the milk or whole foods to support the growth of their body such as tissue, the immune system and bones. Having the right nutrients supports children to become stronger, develop gross motor skills and become more independent allowing them to access and experience more of the world, which is essential for them to become the best, unique versions of themselves (1,000 Days, 2018).

It is also a child's right (article 24 of the UNCRC) to be in a safe and healthy/hygienic environment to help protect them from viruses, illnesses or stressful situations as these can impact the child's health, well-being and physical growth. As well as possibly causing health problems in the future if they are exposed to negative environments often. Ensuring the basic needs of nutrition and safety are met in the first 1000 days helps give the child the best possible start in life (UNICEF, 2023).

(Save the Children, 2019)



# It is important for emotional and social development

The first 1,000 days are important for emotional and social development as this is when children form their earliest bonds and learn how to understand and respond to the environment they are in. It is important for children to experience positive, consistent and loving relationships with caregivers during this time as through those bonds babies and children develop a sense of security, trust and learn how to regulate their emotions. When children and babies have positive relationships, feel safe and have a sense of belonging, the brain makes connections and pathways in communication and empathy which improves social skills, giving children the confidence and ability to form connections with others throughout their life. Positive attachments and experiences in the first 1000 days creates the first building block for emotional well being and social development. Which will continuously be built upon throughout life (Centre on the Developing Child, 2020).



(Getty Images, 2025)



# Exceptional Care

# What is it?

Exceptional care provides individualized, thoughtful, and respectful care for a child that supports their brain development, social, physical, and emotional well-being to help the child thrive and give them the best start to life.

## Key Qualities

- Empathy and Warmth
- Kindness
- Respectfulness
- Patience
- Creativity
- Good knowledge
- Providing a safe and enabling environment
- A holistic approach to care
- Ensuring the child's best interests
- Ability to form positive relationships



(Hand in hand Parenting, n,d)

Exceptional care supports babies and children feel valued, safe, seen and understood. This positive care and influence around babies and children support their emotional well-being, healthy brain development and creates strong relationships.

(Birth to 5 Matters, n.d).

# Why is it important?

## Enabling Environments

Exceptional care is important as it ensures caregivers are providing enabling environments. Enabling environments are essential within the first 1000 days as children learn from everything in the world around them. Caregivers have an important role to shape children's development positively by creating a welcoming, accessible and inclusive setting that celebrates everybody (Welsh government, 2024).

For more information:



(BioTech Whisperer, 2022)

Through the environment caregivers create a sense of belonging by ensuring a welcoming, warm and nurturing safe space for each child. Caregivers need to ensure the environment has a rich variety of resources and activities that holistically support each individual child's needs, adhering to article 29 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2023) For example, including role playing areas that relate to the children, quiet areas for calming time and reflection, problem-solving activities. These provide opportunities for babies and young children to explore, play, learn, risk- take and make connections through new experiences and age-appropriate resources both indoor and outdoor. Supporting each child's interests, brain, physical, social and emotional development and individual needs (Hollyhock, 2023).

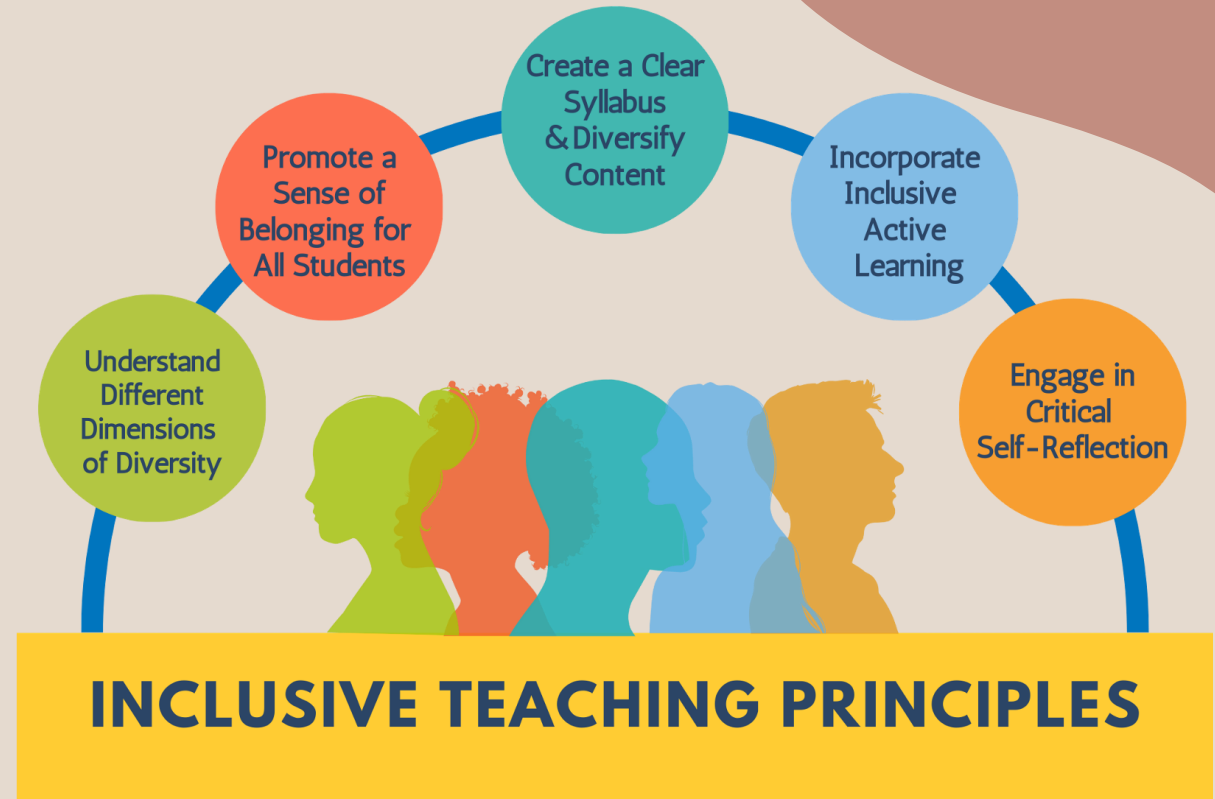


(Community playthings, 2010)

# Inclusive practice

Whitters (2020) suggests inclusive practice within the first 1000 days strengthens exceptional care and enabling environment further through taking down barriers, celebrating diversity, and adapting approaches so that each child receives the best support to reach their full potential.

Inclusive practice means caregivers being adaptable to ensure accessibility and participation for every baby and young child. Caregivers include a range of diverse and cultural experiences to ensure no one feels left out and promoting a sense of belonging and safety within an environment (Welsh government, 2024).



(Bently University, n,d)

Together, exceptional care, enabling environments, and inclusive practice create a setting where everyone can reach their full potential.



# Professional Partnership

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

During the first 1000 days practitioners play an essential role for both children and parents. A practitioner's role is to create partnerships with families to ensure that the child has the best start to life as well as providing support to the parents in the best way possible, enabling the family as a whole to flourish. Public Health Wales (n.d) suggests the idea of creating partnerships around the family is to work together and share knowledge, plan together and learn from each other this is important to ensure the child has the best start within the first 1000 days.

Through the partnerships between the family and practitioner, the practitioner will be able to identify any challenges in a child and family's life such as stress, challenges with money, lack of understanding, no support system and burnout. Through recognizing these challenges and understanding that families are complex systems, practitioners can find the best solution for the family to help both parents and baby thrive (Welsh Government, 2024).

# Why is professional partnership important?

## To support families:

Through good partnerships with parents, they will open up to practitioners about any struggles such as not understanding the best way to care for a newborn baby, a practitioner will have the knowledge and skills to model responsive caregiving helping parents understand their babies' cues better and offering advice on feeding, play, sleep, safety, healthy environment and milestones within the first 1000 days. Parents have a right (article 5 of the UNCRC) to receive guidance and support to help them ensure the best life for their child. Practitioners can ensure this by informing parents of support groups, health and wellness groups within the area that could improve the parents, well-being, learning and mental health. Also, a practitioner could run or make families aware of a parent and child group within the area with flexible time that brings similar parents together and exposes children to a rich, holistic learning environment and encourages new experiences through play, aiding children's development (UNICEF, 2023).

# To support family emotional well-being:

It is important that when creating positive strong relationships with parents that the practitioner listens without judgement, is understanding of each family's personal situations. This is essential to build that strong relationship with parents because practitioners can become the constant, trusted support that the family needs to grow and thrive. Mental Health UK (2018) has a theory of visualizing stress in the form of a bucket. Meaning that every person has a bucket and the more people carry without facing the stress, emotions, or weight of the situation, the fuller the bucket becomes, making everything harder to deal with. It is a practitioner's role to offer guidance and support to families and parents helping them relieve some of the water in the bucket that is weighing them down. Through the positive relationship of trust just through talking, mothers who have pre- or post-natal depression can be reassured and gain a sense of self back, becoming less stressed, worried and upset which then creates a calmer environment for the baby and family, improving the mothers and child's mental health, emotional development and well-being (Darwin et al., 2021).

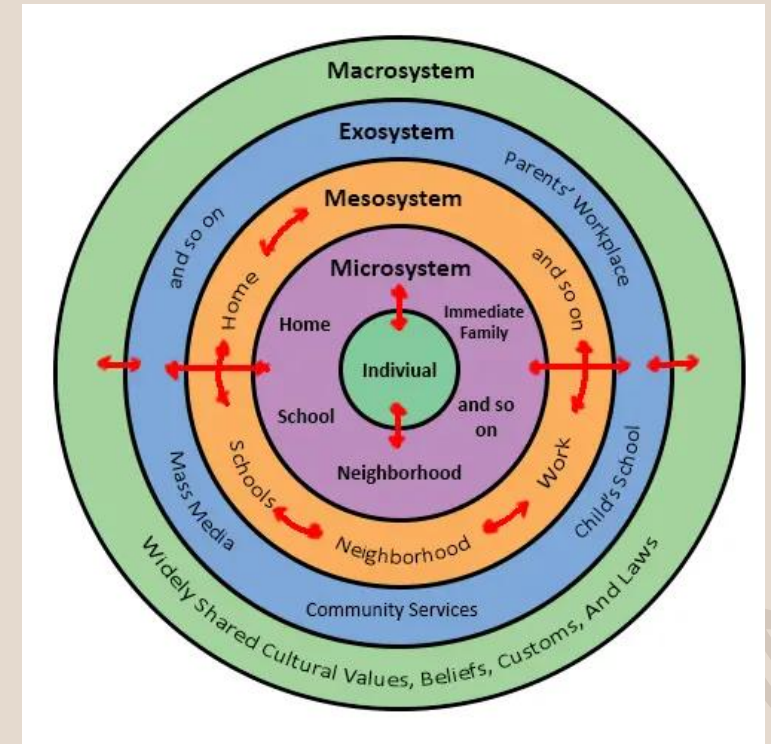


(Knights, 2024)

# Multi-agency working:

A role of a practitioner is to prevent further challenges in a child and family's life so working with multiagency professionals is extremely important within the first 1000 days. Having effective partnership, good communicative and the ability to share knowledge are important skills for practitioners to have to work with other agencies and the family (Welsh Government, 2024).

This important role of a practitioner links to Bronfenbrenner's theory as Conkbayir and Pascal (2021) say his model shows that children's development and growth is influenced by multiple connected systems which include the immediate family and caregivers and larger influences like services and policies and cultural values. Multi -agency work strengthens this by ensuring different aspects of a baby and child's life, like health visitors, early years practitioners, social workers, midwives and family support services work together effectively to provide the best support to the child and family.



(Fiveable, n,d



(Hedgecock, 2014)

When professionals exchange information and skills and responsibility, families get a more consistent and holistic approach to support and care. This lowers parents stress and boosts protective factors. It also helps find and address early issues like developmental delays, attachment problems and safeguarding concerns and by having early interventions as soon as possible during the first 1000 days it has a stronger impact on a child's long-term development (Welsh Government, 2016).



# Challenges

# Challenges of providing high quality care

## Multi agency coordination difficulties:

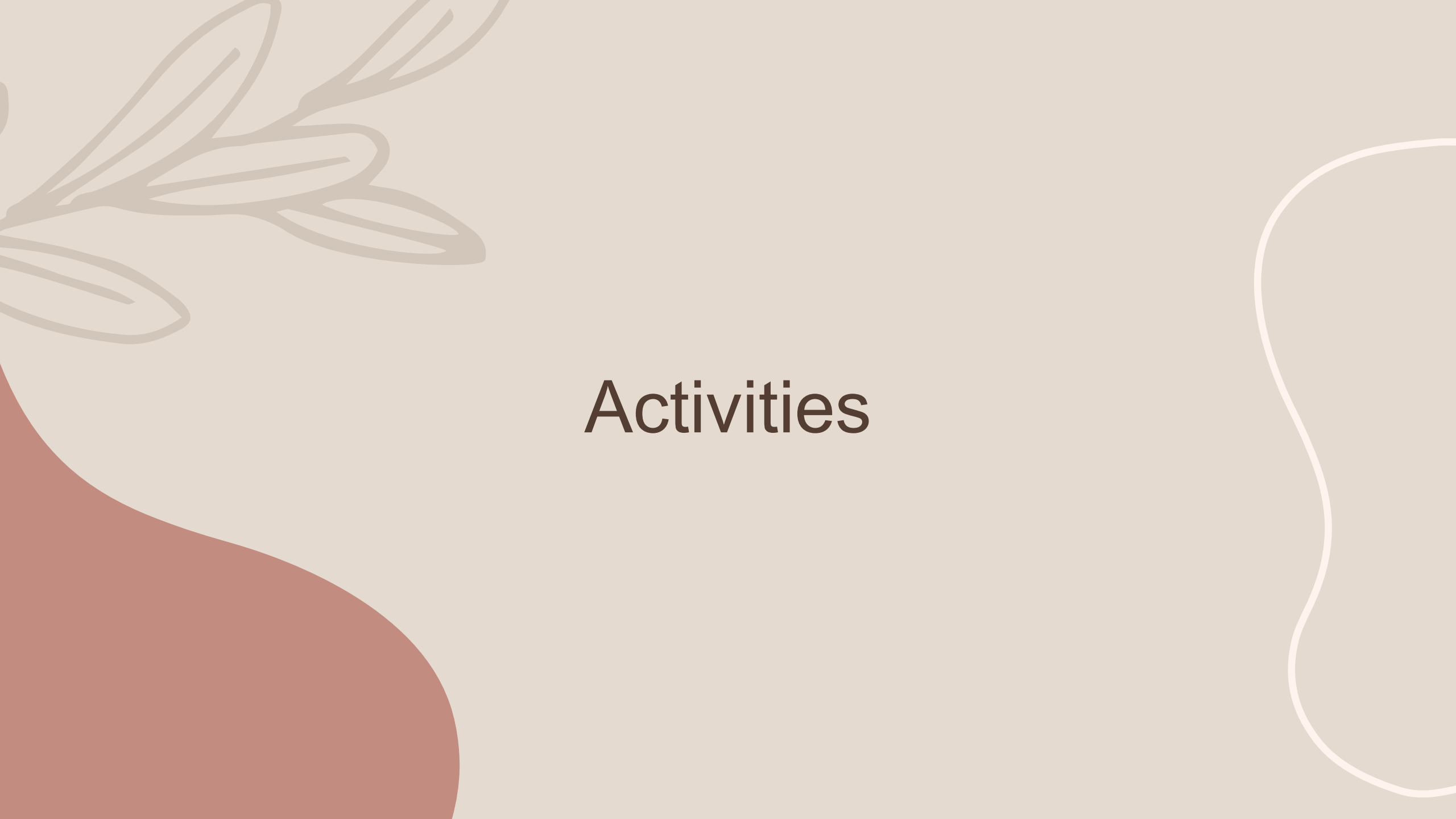
A challenge of providing high quality care could be the slow progression of support for the child. If there is a lack of communication or a large workload then some practitioners may take longer to process information and start the next phase of support for the child and family. Or if the information provided is not direct and clear, the professional may not understand the next steps to provide the best care for the family. Meaning tasks could be forgotten or missed leading to a longer time to intervene and provide the best support for the child and family. Putting up barriers to the child's holistic development (Jill Webb Training, 2025).

## Staffing in early years settings:

One challenge of providing exceptional care within a setting could be a shortage of staff. If members of staff are ill or a position is not filled yet within the setting it means other members of staff are working harder and possibly additional hours. Even though providing exceptional care and safety for the children is priority, if staff shortage is consistent, it could lead to burnout and exhaustion. This issue could cause the consistency of care and support to reduce, impacting babies and young children who rely on their practitioner as the one constant for them to explore, play and learn (Owston L, et al, 2024).

## Limited resources and environments:

Not all settings have an outdoor area or can take children outside due to extreme weather, to provide children with new experiences. Not having an outdoor area could hinder a child's development to experience, grow and learn as outdoor learning offers young children a multi sensational and rich learning experience. It is important for practitioners to adapt and change the environment to allow children to have these experiences like bringing the outdoors in. Creating a natural outdoor environment inside the setting gives children the opportunity to experience the outdoors through touch, smell, sight, taste and hearing. Creating a more meaningful and stimulating environment for the children and ensuring all needs are met (UNICEF, 2025).



# Activities

# Songs and rhymes bag and Finger Games

The first 1000 days are an incredible time for development in babies and young children, and the most meaningful and beneficial learning comes from simple activities and play, sensory experiences and strong relationships.

Children take turns pulling out objects from inside a bag and sing the songs representing that object for example if a child pulls out a toy bus, then the song a practitioner sings is wheels on the bus. This song encourages children memory and language through repetitive signing, encourages fine and gross motor movement with actions like clapping, moving arms from side to side and tapping. A stronger bond with the practitioner can be built through a range of engaging, fun and meaningful songs that involve the children's interests (Care Inspectorate, 2022).



(One Way UK, n,d)

Lester (2025) highlights that Froebel suggests that stronger bonds can be made through songs, rhythm, movement and finger plays. Babies do not know or understand words but through finger play and repetitive songs they will be able to make those connections and develop their language, memory and eventually gross and fine motor skills.



(One Way UK, n,d)



(KindiCare, 2022)



Adobe Stock (n,d)

# Treasure Basket Exploration

Another activity that aids meaningful learning and development during the first 1000 days is a treasure basket. This is when a shallow basket is offered to children that is filled with a range of different textured objects. Such as, hairbrushes, pinecones, wooden spoons, feathers and small textured sensory ball. These items can be changed to keep it engaging and to suit the age group of the children. The basket is then placed in the setting, and it is for the practitioner to let the children explore freely without intervention (Bruce, 2023).



(Saenz-Molina, 2016)

Treasure baskets are multisensory encouraging children to learn through sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste. It develops children's curiosity, independence and concentration as it can take a long time for children to move their body and understand how to use senses to explore the new object. It also helps children decision make through choosing on their own what object they would like to play with and encourages creativity and imagination through coming up with what the object is and how it is used (North Yorkshire County Council, 2017).



(Cousins, 2015)

This activity links to both Frobel (Bruce, 2023) and Montessori (Issacs, 2018) as both theorists highlight the importance of having first-hand experiences with a range of natural materials to choose from and for children to explore these materials independently through play.

# Outdoor sensory walks

Outdoor sensory walks are a great way to holistically support children's development. One way making outdoor sensory walks more fun and engaging is by using a book such as *We're going on a bear hunt*. This book can be used to explore key point of the book as well as the different types of natural environment such as walking through the long wavy grass, the deep cold river, thick oozy mud, hearing the crunch of the leaves and sticks beneath the children's feet as they walk through the dark forest. North Yorkshire County Council (2017) suggests that outdoor activities are a meaningful learning opportunity for children that promotes yet nurtures curiosity, independence, emotional well-being and encourages to use all five senses to make a deeper connection to the natural world around them and is supported by Forest School and Reggio Emilia.



Natural Resources Wales (2015) says Forest School encourages on giving children frequent time outdoors where they can explore freely and independently, connect with the natural environment and build confidence. An activity like a themed outdoor sensory walk supports this as it encourages children to touch grass, mud and leaves, listen to what is around them, feel the wind and heat from the sun, and notice changes in the environment as we explore further into the book/forest, helping them develop resilience, curiosity as well as building emotional well-being.



(Shutterstock, n,d)



(Nurture Kindergarten, n,d)



(Community Playthings, n,d)

However, Hargraves (2019) suggests Reggio Emilia sees the natural outdoor environment as a third teacher meaning that children are guided by nature itself and less by the adult. During a sensory walk children are encouraged to use their senses to explore the different textures, sounds and colours which can prompt curiosity to ask questions, become more creative and imaginative, and further investigate their surroundings. Through having a safe environment where children can explore nature practitioners can take a step back and observe the children to see how they approach new challenges, make connections and what interests them to incorporate that into the next session.

This activity is a meaningful learning opportunity for children that promotes yet nurtures curiosity, independence, emotional well-being and encourages to use all five senses to make a deeper connection to the natural world around them.



All three activities are easily adaptable to ensure inclusive practice and holistic development. Themes can be changed to promote different cultures and traditions. Accessibility can be altered for children with limited mobility to experience the outside world such as bringing the natural outdoor materials to them or changing the environment for them to move around freely. The activities are easily changeable to ensure that all children can participate, and practitioners can swap and alter the materials used to suit the child's level of need and development (Parenta, 2021).



# Conclusion

It is clear to see that the first 1000 days of a child's life is exceptionally important. Through support, a rich learning environment and a range of experiences babies and young children are encouraged to learn new skills, have good understanding and knowledge of the world, form relationships and understand capabilities, which creates the initial building blocks for the child's further development, health and well-being (Gradovski, 2019).

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