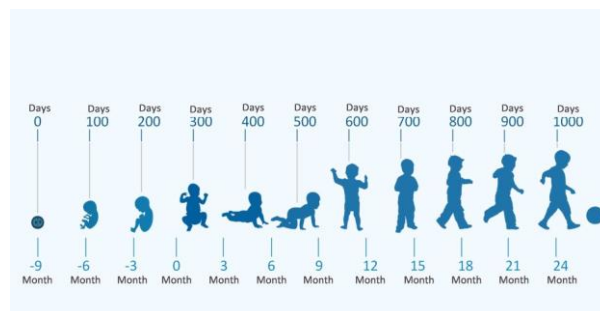




Exceptional Care in the first 1000 days

"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults". Frederick Douglas.

(Calderdale Council. 2017)



1 - The first 1000 days

What is the first 1000 days?

The term "first 1,000 days" describes a child's life from the time of conception until they turn two years old (24 months). During this period, their immune system, body, and brain all significantly develop and grow. A woman's well-being, diet, and stress levels throughout pregnancy may have an impact on the unborn child's life. After birth, the environment, nutrition, and relationships can have an impact on the child's life health and well-being. Babies need to have love, care, support, cleanliness, warmth, shelter, food/nutrition, safe environment, protection, security/stability and attention/affection. (McLeod,S. 2022)

During the first 1,000 days babies' brains develop at the fastest rate. As such, it is important to understand this and for practitioners to provide a positive and nurturing environment. (Unicef. 2013). An adequate nutrition throughout pregnancy and in early infancy will aid in the proper development of the baby's learning, physical abilities, and emotions. However, a child's growth might be negatively impacted during this time if they are hungry, stressed, or subjected to abuse. A child's physical and mental health later in life might be impacted by an unsafe or unhealthy environment during the first 1,000 days of life. The neurological system and growth of the unborn child may be further impacted if parents are under a lot of stress whilst expecting. Heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes are just a few of the health issues that could result from this later in life.

Relationships that are secure and loving are essential for your child's growth. This is supported by Maslow who asserts that babies physiological and safety needs need to be met in order to form strong relationships. (ThoughCo. 2020). Relationships have an impact on how people perceive the world and aid in their understanding of their place within it. Early-life poverty is associated with later-life poor health and wellbeing outcomes. This could be as a result of the unmet needs parents in providing children the necessary degree of care due to the stress brought on by financial hardship. (Pregnancy, birth, and baby. 2022)

Why is it important?

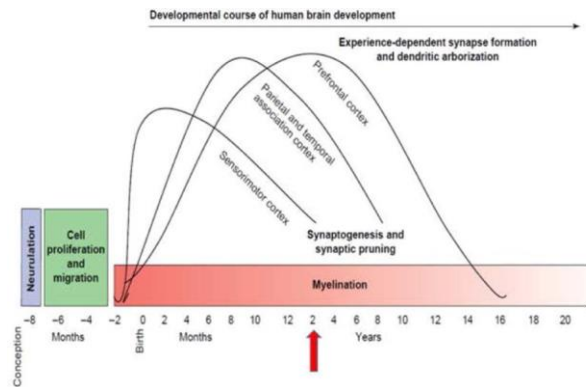
It is important for parents to note that any stress, abuse, or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can influence how the child will develop. Growing up with a stressful childhood or ACEs, children are 30% more likely to attempt suicide later in life. As such it is crucial to intervene in the first 1000 days as it can assist in improving the child's development whilst also enabling them to form stronger relationships later in life. Pre-natal services, such as midwives and ante-natal clinics are also important so that parents are able to access support, guidance or signposted to further services. For young mothers who require mental health support there are services such as Children's and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and may also provide family therapy (NHS Manchester University. 2023; House of Commons. 2019).

The first 1000 days are increasingly gaining recognition as an important concept in guiding public policy. Researchers assert that poor growth and development is a common issue in developing countries due to poor socialising and stimulation, together with inadequate nutrition. (World Health Organisation. 2015). Therefore, with the inadequate nutrition of children they are at an increased risk of suffering with a lack of physical and cognitive development. The economic and social costs of hunger is a growing problem in which there are children suffering from the consequences of the world in which these children do not get the best possible care or outcomes within their development. (Concern Worldwide US. 2021).

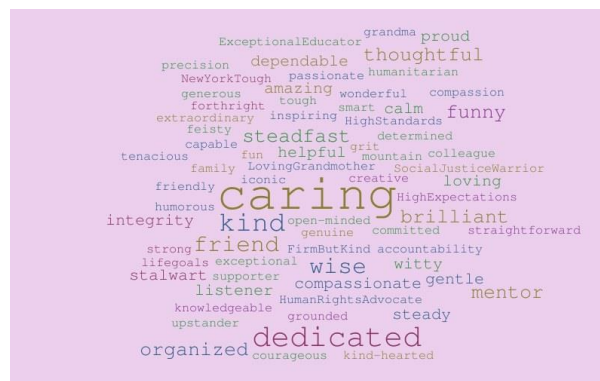
The first 1000 days are crucial for babies as this is the period of rapid development, and where holistic approach is required. The first 1000 days are important as it is a critical time for babies nutrition and brain development. Parents should be made aware of how their nutrition can affect the baby growing in the womb and develop further.

The diagram below denotes data from a study on how improved nutrition can impact in the first 1000 days. It demonstrates how language, higher cognitive function, sensory channels (vision, hearing). Lack of vital nutrients, such as necessary amino acids, essential fatty acids, iron, and iodine, as well as inadequate stimulation and social neglect, will have long-term effects on learning capacity,

behaviour, and the capacity to control emotions during early life more so than later. (Martorell, R. 2018)



2 - (Martorell, R. 2018)



3 - Exceptional care

What is exceptional care?

Exceptional care is providing a consistent care for children growing up in which they feel safe and secure in their environment. Children should feel that throughout their journey in their first 1000 days they should have an enjoyable experience in which they form positive relationships, security, and better emotional and physical well-being. (Exceptional Care Limited. 2020)

It is important that parents and practitioners understand what exceptional care is and how they can then use this to further help children. It is important for practitioners to understand their role in promoting exceptional care so as to ensure that collaborative working promotes inclusion at all times. Furthermore, through early prevention and identification ensures that children are given opportunities to thrive and lead happy, fulfilling lives through to adulthood, and to maximise their potential. (Calderdale Council. 2017)



4 - Practitioners face challenges daily

Current Challenges

Although rewarding for Early Years practitioners, working with infants within a setting can be challenging with numerous barriers to overcome. Due to the legislative framework requirements in Wales by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), guidance's provided must meet to look after children. Due to the paperwork involved, this can lead to overworked and impact stress on practitioners and managers. For example, policies and procedures, planning, daily record sheets, depletes practitioners time in providing and engaging in meaningful play experiences for the infants. Mealtimes should be a meaningful learning time through socialising and enjoying food as opposed to completing log of food intake or catching up on unfinished paperwork. It could be argued that the framework itself provides many barriers for practitioners to fully support infant needs. Researchers assert that the levels of paperwork have been noted to be one of the top reasons that practitioners leave the profession. The key to creating life chances and providing the best beginning to education need is time, space, and dedication as opposed to mountains of paperwork. (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. no date). (Where you stand. 2023)



5 - children need to have a consistent routine

Predictable daily routines provides a firm foundation for infants to learn other essential skills such as basic hygiene. Routines are especially crucial for supporting behaviour in Early Years Settings. Time is a frequent challenge that practitioners face, especially when parents pick up and drop off their children, whereby important information regarding the children may be exchanged which could affect their care. As such, should every parent take advantage of this, then practitioners may face inadequate time to discuss with each parent. A further challenge practitioners might find is keeping up to date information when new services and legislations are released. The pay scale is another challenge in which it does not reflect the practitioners' dedication and hard work which could result in some wanting to leave or protest for more money. (Kaplan. 2023)

Some settings face the challenge of not having enough time in the day to everything that is needed of them which means that they won't have enough time to spend with the children thus can hinder the development of the child as they don't socialise with the practitioners. With owning a setting, it can find certain challenges such as difficulty recruiting staff who are qualified which means not having enough staff to work with the children. This also means that the ratio of adult and child will

be off. The ratio of adult to child between ages 0-2 years is one adult to three children. (NSPCC Learning. 2019)

Some settings can find themselves in which they don't have enough support from the outside such as the government which leads to not having enough funding in which they have to then think of other ways to find the funding in order to function and support children and families. Challenges of caring for an infant in a setting is when there are difficulties in communicating with the parents. It is important to build strong relationships with the infants and their family as there will be a lot of communication between both, especially the parents to make sure the infants needs are taken care of. Routine caregiving activities such as feeding/ nappy changing provides opportunities to build a trustworthy relationship between the practitioners and the infants. (NHS. 2021)

Legislation provides guidance for early years practitioners in developing a curriculum that aims to meet the needs of all children and ensuring the inclusion of those with special educational needs (SEN). Therefore it is important for practitioners to identify and put support in place to give babies and infants the best opportunities to achieve their potential. Babies and infants under 2 years old with complex developmental and sensory needs are likely to be identified at birth through health assessments. Therefore, early years practitioners play an important role in the monitoring and reviewing their progress and development whilst in their care. (GOV.UK.no date)

The setting's environment plays a crucial role in an infant's development. Group care for infants requires a commitment to sustain a caring relationship with each baby and its family. It takes time and consistent contact for babies to intimately know and trust caregivers outside the family circle. Therefore, in order for this meaningful relationship and bonding to occur, it is important that infant groups remain small. Infants need a peaceful atmosphere to thrive-however, overstimulation such as bright lights, too many infants in a group, or constant noise can overwhelm them.

Babies in a group setting can suffer from more illnesses than they would at home-although their immunity to infectious disease are just beginning to develop, they are in close contact with other infants and adults who can pass on germs. As such, it is important to disinfect toys on a daily babies which can be time consuming for practitioners. When caring for infants there is no one size fits all. (Smith, V. 2023).For example, infants with special needs may involve careful supervision in daily routines, for example an infant with severe allergies.



6 - water play

Activity Ideas

Activities can provide opportunities for interaction, social communication and assist in developmental milestones. Gross motor skills activities such as playing catch can increase stability, builds stronger muscles, heart and bones. Activities also helps children's fine and gross motor skills such as walking, running, skipping, or climbing, squeezing, grasping, and pinching. Undertaking a variety of activities allows infants thinking and problem-solving skills to develop. The provision of an obstacle course is intended to enhance their general coordination and gross motor skills. Steppingstones at the beginning, and bean bags that must be balanced while moving between cones can all be included in the obstacle. (National Childhood Network. No date)

Other activities include messy sensory play, paint and water play, reading stories and singing together. By allowing children to read and sing together it allows them to communicate with each other in which they develop their language skills. These activities and others such as playing together with other children will allow them to develop their language skills. Activities provide a carefree, entertaining setting where they can practise speaking new phrases and express themselves. The best method to improve your language and communication abilities is to engage in leisure activities. Role playing is another activity in which it allows infants to use their communication to each other in a safe environment in which they can learn. (British Council. 2023). Providing activities further assists practitioners in getting to know children's abilities, identify developmental gaps and also gain information to complete required assessments.



7 - paint play



8 - sensory bin



9 - children reading together

The Curiosity Approach is a cutting-edge approach to early childhood education that was founded in 2017 by Lyndsey Hellyn and Stephanie Bennett. It emphasises active learning and critical thinking. Children become the centre of their own development—or the pilots of their own play—in this wholly play-based and child-led approach. Using engaging materials and being inspired by passionate facilitators, children are encouraged to explore, experiment, and create. Children will learn throughout every single aspect of their day, whether it is an activity or lunchtime, and there will still be clear rhythms, routines, and rituals within the day, such as welcome time, story time, and nap time. (High Speed Training. 2021)

In applying John Dewey's theory children can be viewed as lively, inquisitive, and eager to explore. Furthermore, He children should engage with others and work both independently and collaboratively with each other and adults. Dewey also advocated for an interdisciplinary education, or a curriculum that connects several subjects, in which children are free to wander around their environment, follow their interests, and choose their own pathways for learning and applying knowledge. (Lorina. 2022)

ENVIRONMENT

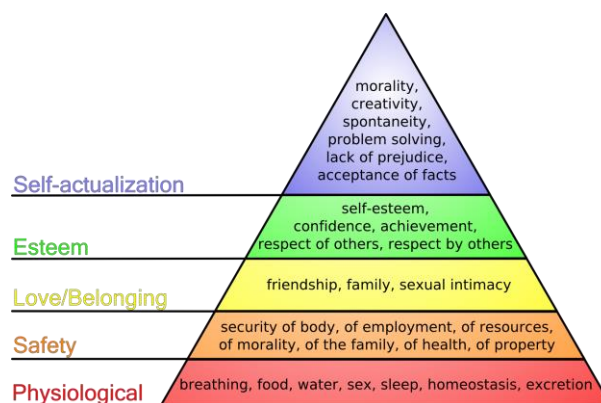
Babies and young children are encouraged to play in enabling situations because they feel at ease, at home, and comfortable there. Children may explore and learn about their environment and the

things they can see, touch, move, or manipulate when they feel emotionally safe and secure. (Early Years Matters. 2023)

Creating an enabling environment it is important to look at the 5 developmental pathways: belonging, communication, exploration, physical development, and well-being. It is important that any environment for children is filled with love and is a language rich environment. Outdoor environments is also important to remember as it should be nurturing and full of potential development. Doing activities outdoors is a great way to help encourage children to develop.

Healthy attachments are crucial for a child's general wellbeing as well as his physical and emotional (psychological) development, according to Emmi Pikler. She discovered that the crucial possibilities for the baby and carer to establish safe, reliable relationships were present throughout the key caregiving activities of feeding, changing, and washing. Pikler understood that by providing polite and very compassionate care routines, new-borns and toddlers form safe bonds and grow to have positive self-concepts and an awareness of their abilities. She discovered that doing so allowed the babies to freely explore their bodies and surroundings without being interrupted by an adult. (The Pikler Approach. no date)

Vygotsky viewed the child as more of an apprentice who learned in a social setting of those who had more experience and were considerate of the child's needs and skills, in contrast to Piaget who regarded the child as actively discovering the world via personal interactions with it. (The Open University. 2023)



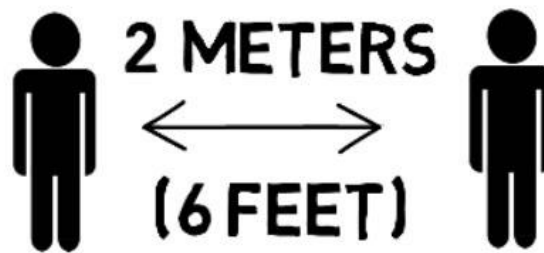
10 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

<https://youtu.be/i6phVXCajzo>



BEING INCLUSIVE

All children have access to opportunities and support during the formative and most important years of their learning and development because to effective inclusive practises. It also enables kids to have self-assurance about who they are and what they want for the future. The challenges practitioners may face when being inclusive in an Early Years setting is that they must actively work to eliminate things like negativity, bigotry, and stereotypes that serve as barriers to inclusion in order to help ensure inclusivity. To cultivate constructive attitudes, clear methods, and cooperative approaches, a team effort is required. (Early Years Alliance. 2019)



12 - 2 meter distancing during COVID-19

COVID-19

Babies born since the pandemic will only have encountered a world in the midst of enforced social distancing and mandatory wearing of face masks for adults and children from aged 10+. (GOV.UK. 2022). As such, they may never have had opportunities to socialise with anyone who didn't live within their household or viewed their grandparents from afar. They would not have experienced similar opportunities to socialise or interact with their peers as opposed to those born pre-pandemic.

A recent study by the British Medical Journal identified that babies born during the first year of the pandemic show slight developmental delays as opposed to babies born prior to the pandemic (Wise, 2022).

COVID effect on babies

As such the pandemic has impacted babies as pregnant mothers and new parents were unable to socialise to provide opportunities to learn to learn and adapt to their surroundings. Consequences of this has been identified as increase in It speech and language delays. (NHS. 2022). Researchers assert that the pandemic has also impacted children's physical development, most notably motor skills as a result of enforced social distancing and being unable to spend as much time engaging in outdoor play. (The bmj. 2022). (Coram Family and Childcare. 2022)

COVID effect on parents

Parenting during lockdown restrictions presented various challenges for families whose daily lives were transformed overnight. With school and nursery closures, furloughed parents had not outside childcare support. (BMC Psychology. 2021). Parenting during lockdown and its effects on work-life balance was difficult. Parents had to adapt their working patterns around caring for their children through working mornings and nights (ONS, 2020). Levels of parental stress and anxiety also increased due to the pressure of lockdown, with higher levels of stress due to not having enough support to balance work and life. New parents struggled to access health and family support and as

such researchers assert that this has highlighted the under-resourcing of family services, such as ‘7 in 10 mothers’ ability to cope with their pregnancy or baby had been impacted’, whilst ‘68% felt that the pandemic had affected their unborn baby, baby or young child’ (Netmums, 2020). (Office of National Statistics. 2020). The pandemic forced childcare services to temporarily terminate, and as such parents were forced to either continue to work even with children with them or to stop working altogether if their work did not allow children to go to work with their parents.

REFERENCES

BMC Psychology. (2021) Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of parents with young children: a qualitative interview study’. Available at: [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of parents with young children: a qualitative interview study | BMC Psychology | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#). (Accessed:13th January 2023)

British Council. (2023) ‘Fun activities that help develop language learning in children’. Available at: [Fun activities that help develop language learning in children | British Council](#). (Accessed:22nd January 2023)

Calderdale Council. (2017). ‘Foundations of Life- First 1000 Days’. Available at: [COUNCIL.minutes pkg.view doc \(calderdale.gov.uk\)](#). (Accessed: 20th January 2023)

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. (no date). ‘Care Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)’. Available at: [Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales \(CSSIW\) - Cardiff and Vale University Health Board \(nhs.wales\)](#). (Accessed:13th January 2023)

Concern Worldwide US. (2021). ‘The Economics of Hunger’. Available at: [The Economics of Hunger — and the Human Cost | Concern Worldwide \(concernusa.org\)](#). (Accessed: 16th January 2023)

Coram Family and Childcare. (2022) ‘The impact of COVID on early childhood education and care and opportunities to strengthen the system’. Available at: [The impact of COVID on early childhood education and care and opportunities to strengthen the system | Family and Childcare Trust](#). (Accessed:22nd January 2023)

Department of Health. (2012). ‘Chatting with Children at Mealtimes’. Available at: [Chatting with Children at Mealtimes \(ny.gov\)](#). (Accessed:21st January 2023)

Early Years Alliance. (2019). ‘Equity and inclusive practice’. Available at: [Equality and inclusive practice | early years alliance \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](#). (Accessed:21st January 2023)

Early Years Matters. (2023). ‘Enabling Environments’. Available at: [Enabling Environments - Early Years Matters](#). (Accessed:19th January 2023)

Exceptional Care Limited. (2020). ‘Exceptional Care provide a consistent and caring environment in which young people feel safe and secure’. Available at: [Children Care Home Provider North West England - Exceptional Care Ltd \(exceptional-care.co.uk\)](#). (Accessed: 20th January 2023)

GOV.UK (2022) ‘Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions and what makes a good one’. Available at: [\[Withdrawn\] \[Withdrawn\] Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions and what makes a good one - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). (Accessed:12th January 2023)

GOV.UK. (no date) ‘Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)’. Available at: [Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\): Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). (Accessed: 22nd January 2023)

High Speed Training. (2021). 'Curiosity Approach in Early Years: Importance and Ideas'. Available at: [Curiosity Approach in Early Years | Benefits, Meaning & Ideas \(highspeedtraining.co.uk\)](https://highspeedtraining.co.uk/curiosity-approach-in-early-years-benefits-meaning-ideas). (Accessed: 22nd January 2023)

House of Commons. (2019). Health and Social Care Committee 'First 1000 days of life'. Available at: [First 1000 days of life \(parliament.uk\)](https://parliament.uk/first-1000-days-of-life). (Accessed: 20th January 2023)

Kaplan. (2022) 'Why routines are important for infants and toddlers'. Available at: [Teaching Supplies & Child Care Resources for Early Education Classrooms | Kaplan ELC \(kaplanco.com\)](https://kaplanco.com/teaching-supplies-child-care-resources-early-education-classrooms). (Accessed: 19th January 2023)

Lorina. (2022) 'John Dewey's Theory'. Available at: [John Dewey's Theory - Aussie Childcare Network](https://aussiechildcare.com.au/john-dewey-theory). (Accessed: 22nd January 2023)

Martorell, R. (2018) *Improved Nutrition in the First 1000 Days and Adult Human Capital and Health*. Available at: [Improved Nutrition in the First 1000 Days and Adult Human Capital and Health - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31411111/). (Accessed: 14th January 2023)

McLeod, S. (2022) 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs'. Available at: [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - Simply Psychology](https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html). (Accessed: 16th January 2023)

National Childhood Network. (no date) 'Physical Activities for Babies'. Available at: [Promoting Active Play \(Physical Activity\) in Early Years Settings - Active Play/Physical Activities for Babies - National Childhood Network \(ncn.ie\)](https://ncn.ie/promoting-active-play-physical-activity-in-early-years-settings). (Accessed: 21st January 2023)

Netmums (2020), 'Babies In Lockdown Survey Shows Impact of COVID on New Parents', Available online: ['Babies in Lockdown' Report Shows impact of coronavirus on new parents - Netmums](https://www.netmums.co.uk/babies-in-lockdown-report-shows-impact-of-coronavirus-on-new-parents) [Accessed: 21 January 2023].

NHS Manchester University. (2023). 'Averse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Attachment'. Available at: [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) and Attachment - Royal Manchester Children's Hospital \(mft.nhs.uk\)](https://mft.nhs.uk/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-and-attachment). (Accessed: 22nd January 2023)

NHS. (2021). 'How to change your baby's nappy'. Available at: [How to change your baby's nappy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/a-z/how-to-change-your-babys-nappy). (Accessed: 19th January 2023)

NHS. (2022) 'Pregnancy and coronavirus (COVID-19)'. Available at: [Pregnancy and coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/a-z/pregnancy-and-coronavirus-covid-19). (Accessed: 22nd January 2023).

NSPCC Learning. (2019) 'Recommended adult to child ratios for working with children'. Available at: [Recommended adult to child ratios for working with children | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning/recommended-adult-to-child-ratios-for-working-with-children). (Accessed: 12th January 2023)

Office of National Statistics (2020), 'Parenting in Lockdown: Coronavirus and the Effects on Work-Life Balance', Newport. Available at: [Parenting in lockdown: Coronavirus and the effects on work-life balance - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/people-and-population/parenting-in-lockdown) [Accessed: 21 January 2023].

Pregnancy, birth and baby. (2022) *The First 1000 days*. Available at: [The first 1,000 days | Pregnancy Birth and Baby \(pregnancybirthbaby.org.au\)](https://pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/the-first-1000-days). (Accessed: 12th January, 2023)

Smith, V. (2023). 'There is no 'one size fits all' way to parent'. Available at: [There is no 'one size fits all' way to parent - The Mummy Bubble](https://www.themummybubble.com/there-is-no-one-size-fits-all-way-to-parent). (Accessed: 12th January 2023).

The bmj. (2022). 'Covid-19: Babies born during the pandemic show slight development delays'. Available at: [Covid-19: Babies born during the pandemic show slight development delays | The BMJ](#). (Accessed:12th January 2023)

The Open University. (2023) '2.2 Development is determined by environmental factors: Vygotsky'. Available at: [Introduction to child psychology: 2.2 Development is determined by environmental factors: Vygotsky - OpenLearn - Open University](#). (Accessed:12th January 2023)

The Pikler Approach. (no date). 'Benefits of the Pikler Approach'. Available at: [About — Pikler UK Association](#). (Accessed:21st January 2023)

ThoughtCO. (2020). 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained'. Available at: [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained \(thoughtco.com\)](#). (Accessed: 17th January 2023)

Unicef. (2013). 'The first 1000 days of life:the brain's window of opportunity'. Available at: [The first 1,000 days of life: The brain's window of opportunity \(unicef-irc.org\)](#). (Accessed:22nd January 2023)

Where you stand. (2023). 'The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)'. Available at: [The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales \(CSSIW\) \(whereyoustand.org\)](#). (Accessed:13th January 2023)

Wise, J., (2022), 'Covid-19 Babies Born During The Pandemic Show Slight Developmental Delays', BMJ, 376:029. Published 07/01/2022. [Covid-19: Babies born during the pandemic show slight development delays | The BMJ](#)

World Health Organisation. (2015) 'Stunting in a nutshell'. Available at: [Stunting in a nutshell \(who.int\)](#). (Accessed:22nd January 2023)