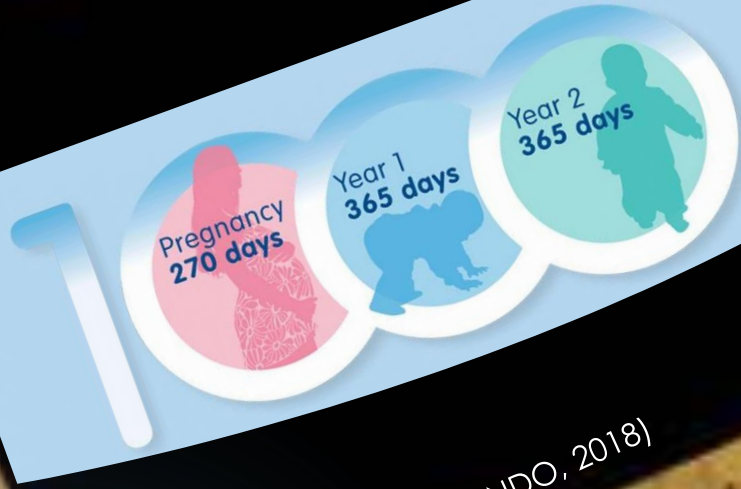




Source: (SENDO, 2018)

The First One Thousand Days

Source: (Centres
for Disease Control
and Prevention,
2023)



What is the first one thousand days?

- ▶ The first one thousand days for a child begin from the moment they are conceived up until they reach the age of 24 months. Throughout this crucial time a baby's body, immune system and brain grows and develops significantly. (Pregnancy, Birth and Baby, 2022)
- ▶ Lawler (2023) highlights that the capability and structure of a child's brain develop at an exponential rate during this period; the first 1000 days see the development of 80% of the brain. A child's learning capacities, memory functions, auditory and visual sensory systems, and information processing systems all develop throughout this time. The First 1000 days are a particularly delicate period. If a child's brain is not given the right care and attention, especially in terms of nutrition, there may be permanent and lifelong consequences



Why is it important?

In their analysis, Brodie (2018, pp. 1-2) states, from birth until the age of 24 months a child's development accelerates in terms of learning, growth and progression in every aspect of life. This is a crucial time and by aiming to do things correctly at the very beginning results in creating solid groundwork for future growth. By adopting a holistic approach with regards to a child's development, allows the child's development to be assessed from many different perspectives and thus not allowing the focus to be solely on one or two areas of development over all others. The definition of having a holistic approach means that the child is being looked at as a whole despite the ability to partition the whole into separate areas. Every aspect of learning, development, and growth is interconnected in holistic child development. The first one thousand days are what determines and shapes a child's future. The mantra 'Eat, Play, Love' encapsulates the requirement or providing young children with opportunities for play, sufficient nutrition, and safety and security within their environment. Nurturing care is essential to giving children the best start in life. The basis of this brain architecture is essential for all subsequent behaviour, learning and health. Furthermore, even while adult brain connections persist, the way in which these early connections develop dictates the strength or weakness of the foundation for future connections. (Archives of disease in childhood, 2022)

The Institute of Psychoanalysis (no date) highlights the importance of the parent-infant relationship which is another key element throughout the first 1000 days. They look at the work of Donald Woods Winnicott (1988), the idea of a sense of self that could only develop in the setting of a supportive environment—the parent-infant connection, for example—is at the core of Winnicott's theoretical matrix. Although, in 1942 Winnicott came to the realisation that 'there's no such thing as an infant' emphasized the idea that an individual cannot be seen without considering the significant psychic influence of their parents. Therefore, Winnicott's ideas would conclude that without the child's parents in the first one thousand days then the infant would not be the individual that they are to date. Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)



What is exceptional care?

When taking into consideration the definition of exceptional care, Help Children Live Better (2022) highlight Maslow and his motivational theory that is the hierarchy of needs. The theory consist of a five-tier model of human needs and the theory proclaims that humans inspire to achieve their needs in a hierarchical order. The order in which begins with the most basic needs before progressing towards more advanced needs. Carlson (2011) suggests that certain individuals would argue that basic needs for children simply include having food, water, and haven from the elements, however, children's fundamental requirements can be extremely complex. The basic needs include a stable living environment, good and proper nutrition, structured discipline and physical exercise. Whereas the Children's Hospital Colorado (2024) claims that for a child to thrive care givers must provide children with security where they are in an environment that they feel safe, stability with as little disruption to the child's life as possible, consistency including ensuring that all persons involved in the care of the child are on the same page when it comes to nurturing and ensuring that important values stay consistent. Another vital component would be to provide the child with emotional support and love thus encouraging children to build upon their self-esteem, their levels of trust and promoting their independence. The final components include the child having the right to education, enforcing structure such as boundaries and rules and also the care givers need to undertake the role of a positive role model for the child.



Source: (eMediHealth, 2021)



Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)

Why is it important?

Providing exceptional care to children is important as according to American Psychological Association (2023) feel that babies who are quickly and warmly met with needs such as feeding, changing, being held or cradled, and being soothed accomplish a crucial developmental task called attachment. This bond of devotion between parents and children is vital not only for a parent-child relationship but would also include relationships with other family members such as siblings and grandparents. When an effective attachment is established, the child then develops a level of trust in the outside world and thus being able to see that it is a welcoming place resulting in a child being able to converse and explore their environment. This ultimately lays the foundations for further emotional, social and cognitive development.

The role of the parent would also play a key role in providing exceptional care as the work that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) have provided details that parents play an important role in their child's brain development. They are children's first teachers and prepare them to be more independent. They also state that parents are front-line public health workers who encourage, support, supervise, and teach healthy habits, ensure their children are safe and supported in their communities, and ensure that their children receive the education and medical care they need.



Source: (Parent and Carer Alliance Ltd, 2016)



Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)

What is the role of an early years practitioner in supporting children and families in the first one thousand days?

Marlen (2017) had written a feature that focuses on the work of Dr Emmi Pikler (1902-1984) and how their approach can be included when taking into consideration care-giving in modern best practice in a setting and at home. The feature includes the notion that caregivers must be highly trained in the finer points of motor development and play, the choreography of gentle and respectful care, observational techniques, and how to interact with groups of children. They must also treat each child as an individual and continually observe them so that we can know and understand them. Discussing each child's needs with colleagues is important, as is self-development and self-reflection. The relationship between a child and an adult allows the child to play independently, contently, and with concentration. Children's ability to play independently allows the carer to use their time to take care of each child individually, while the rest of the children enjoy being busy.

All about children (2023) highlight the roles and responsibilities of an early year's practitioner as being taking care of children's daily physical needs, such as feeding, changing nappies, potty training, and first aid. Be able to offer a range of fun and exciting activities, from storytelling to messy play. Also, to build close bonds and promote trust in children in care which would also include safeguarding the children and report any concerns and monitor, record and report children's progress to parents.

The Importance

The effects that effective partnership working can have on the child, as Pearson Education Limited (2019) states is that it ensures that the wellbeing of the child is at the forefront, and that the needs of the child are being met in order to provide the best possible care in order for the child to meet their full potential.

When considering the importance of effective partnership working, Bradbury (2017) presents the work of Bronfenbrenner and how he reiterated the need to consider the environment in which infants and children grow up. The focus of his theory was the influence of situations familiar to children, such as: nurseries, schools and religious places of worship. These institutions work closely with the family of the child therefore the family and the individuals who provide care for the child such as teachers, nursery workers, work closely together on a daily basis. As Gov.uk (no date) states studies reveal that the key to helping certain children succeed regardless of their circumstances is getting parents and caregivers involved in their education. The early years foundation stage places a strong emphasis on collaborating with parents and caregivers. Parents and caregivers seek to be involved in their children's learning therefore effective communication between the practitioner and families is an important factor within effective partnership working. By establishing an effective partnership with families this provides opportunities for the practitioners to be able to share observations thus resulting in giving parents the knowledge they may need to provide similar experiences at home, which can enhance their child's growth and education. For this effective communication to take place the child would have to form an attachment with the practitioner to have the confidence and the trust in working alongside the practitioner. This would coincide with the theory of attachment by John Bowlby (1907-1990). According to Mcleod (2023) Bowlby's theory suggests that children form attachments with others as this will help them to survive, and that they come into the world biologically pre-programmed to form said attachments.

Some of the other elements of effective partnership working include, as per guidance by PACEY (2017) the importance of multi-agency working, which can involve raising any concerns an individual may have about the child's development or any concerns regarding a child safety and or child protection issues. Communication with outside multi-agencies could result in speaking to a professional who may already be involved in the child's life which can be a benefit to practitioners as they are able to seek advice from them and in return the multi-agencies may need to contact the practitioners for their input on any incident/concerns that they may have. Some of these external professionals may include area SENCO's, social workers, health visitors and speech and language therapists. Other important benefits of effective partnership working are highlighted by Pearsons Education Limited (2019) as fostering an inclusive culture, sharing shared objectives, distinguishing and addressing individual requirements of children, offering help for infants and small kids and families and enhancing outcomes, such as those for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Every Child Matters (ECM)

Challenges

The NSPCC (2023) focuses on looked after children, and the information they provide on the challenge of providing high quality care for those individuals are that looked after children usually go from home to home therefore have different backgrounds thus resulting in varied and or non-consistent levels of care and that each individual child has specific needs. The reason in which children are entered into looked after accommodations is due to having experience neglect or abuse thus resulting in complicated emotional wellbeing and mental health needs. On the other hand those children in looked after homes can also experience breakdowns or difficulties within their current placements or multiple different placements which can have a detrimental effect on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. This can result in the children having difficulties in creating stable relationships and or attachments with the individuals and or agencies who are there to help them. Therefore, to conclude the environment in which a child is raised can be a challenge for providing high quality care. If the child doesn't feel safe or nurtured then this can result in an effect on the child's wellbeing.

Another factor than can result in challenges in providing high quality care includes funding for nurseries. According to the information and facts that Priestley (2023) has gathered, the lack of underfunding is having a knock-on effect on nurseries that provide education and care for children thus resulting in 87% increase in the amount of nurseries that have had to close down between April and December 2022 in England, in comparison to the same period in the year 2021 according to the National Day Nurseries Association's analysis. The underinvestment has also resulted in parents and or families being able to send their children to nursery due to financial issues and not being able to afford to pay the nurseries fees and due to the closure of nurseries this then means that some parents who are eligible for funding for example, are unable to find any settings that would accept the funding locally. In comparison to a statement from ITV News (2023) which states that a survey that has been carried out by National Day Nurseries Association has concluded that a quarter of nurseries are expected to come under threat due to the loss in which they have accumulated and that 90% suggest that the funding they receive from the Welsh Government Childcare offer is not enough due to the current cost of living crisis which has meant that bills such as food bills, staff wages and energy bills have had to increase.

Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)

Source: (The Scott Cottage, 2021)

Sensory Play

Research presented by Cleveland Clinic (2022) shows that sensory play has the ability to enable the child to focus on their senses, it aids them in developing their language skills and their fine and gross motor skills and it also benefits a child by enhancing their social skills, cognitive development, and encourages positive risk taking thus making it an activity that encourages meaningful learning.

Sensory play can also be used to address other sensory systems such as the proprioception system and the vestibular system. The proprioception system focuses on the gross motor skills and encourages a child to learn more about their awareness of their own body and how each body part is relative to one another thus resulting in developing their knowledge and skills on how much force and power they need to apply when demonstrating gross motor skills such as holding, pulling, pushing or lifting objects and or items.

The vestibular system focuses on the child's balance and our movement and how the child is able to maintain their balance when participating in activities. By addressing these additional senses this demonstrates how sensory play promotes holistic development as it looks at the child as a whole and doesn't purely focus on one area of development alone.

Not only does sensory play support a child's development from a very young age but it also aids the nerve connections in a child's brain pathways which ultimately aids the child to attempt and complete more complex tasks.



Source: (Word To Your Mother, 2024)



Module: ECEY4005/C number: 2306/42 word count: 3169

Source: (Unique Ideas, no date)



Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)



By participating in sensory play a child is able to develop their language skills by learning different experiences within the environment which helps promote the ability to learn alternative ways to communicate their wants, needs and emotions. By engaging a child's senses it enables them to eventually overtime learn how to communicate what they are doing in a more descriptive manner.

Sensory play encourages the use of tactile play such as building, mixing and pouring which are beneficial as this enables a child to use their smaller muscle groups which enables them to coordinate their movements. Materials that can be used during tactile play to help promote their fine motor skills include dried food such as pasta or rice and even materials more malleable such as slime or play dough.

Sensory play helps a child to develop their gross motor skills. Activities such as throwing or catching a ball, running, jumping or crawling. These particular activities aids a child's ability to use their large body muscles such as their legs, arms and their core.

Sensory play does wonders for a child's cognitive growth also. It enables a child's ability to participate in experiments, it gives a child the opportunity to think about how things work and how a child solves problems by allowing a child to try something new and work things out for themselves.

This can result in sensory play being a more child led approach. Allowing the child to participate in the way in which they want to not in a way that they have been told to do.

Sensory play can also have a calming or soothing effect for those children who are more worked up or find it difficult to remain focused in a lesson and on the other hand it can also help a child who may be feeling more stagnant or inactive.





Source: (Hello Wonderful, 2018)

Activities that can be included in sensory play:

Sensory bins or trays- filling a large box, bowl, or a variety of different objects with materials such as sand, water, buttons, pom-poms and thus including the use of tools such as shovels or buckets to enhance the activity. Even the inclusion of a certain theme for a tray such as under the sea or a farm. This would also encourage the children's use of their imagination and their imaginative play skills. The idea of this activity is trying to get the children used to unfamiliar textures.

Playing outside- this is a positive activity choice as this encourages children to explore different enabling environments which is highly beneficial to a child's development. Getting them used to different surfaces such as sand, grass or gravel, letting the children play in mud or snow. Any activity that encourages a child to use their body to move is a positive method of play.

Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)



Source: (Twin Mom Refreshed, no date)

International approaches

The Reggio Emilia approach

Dr Hargraves (2020) has underlined The Reggio Emilia approach and has suggested that the ultimate focus of the approach is to encourage a child to make sense of their own individual worlds by wondering with the child about their experiences, and how they think and feel thus resulting in responsive and flexible approach that focuses on a child's interests, what motivates a child and what is significant to a child in their lives.

By applying this approach results in practitioners and teachers being able to produce a well-planned and enabling environment with proactive items and materials which provides the child with a meaningful learning experience.

The approach promotes a child led approach as practitioners are encouraged to ask children questions but also encourage children to ask questions thus resulting in allowing children to do their own research to find out the answer to their question for themselves. Practitioners take on board the child's interests and uses these to develop group experiences and projects. Practitioners are also only there to follow the children and make alternative suggestions or ideas to help support their learning as supposed to planning a set activity in which all children must participate.

On comparison, this approach and sensory play both promote a child led approach and their focus is a child's holistic development. They both also give the child the choice and put the child at the forefront of the decision making. Similar to the Reggio Emilia approach, the children do not have to participate or touch materials if they don't want to, and sensory play cannot be rigid or structured.



Source: (Sprouts Learning Company Limited, 2020)

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Source: (WallpaperAccess, 2024)

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