



Care in the first 1000 days of child development

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What is the first 1000 Days?

The House of Commons (2019) describe the first 1000 days as the length of time between a baby's conception and the age of two, they describe the first 1000 days are a significant time in an infant's life. Children are constantly learning, even as a foetus they learn whilst they are in the womb. As soon as they are born, babies can form connections through their experiences. The Babies in Lockdown Report (2020) agrees that a child's first 1001 days are important phase in development. Exploration, communication, and interactions assist in an infant's development in the first 1000 days. The family is a child's primary source of socialisation. Parents and carers play a key role in child development.

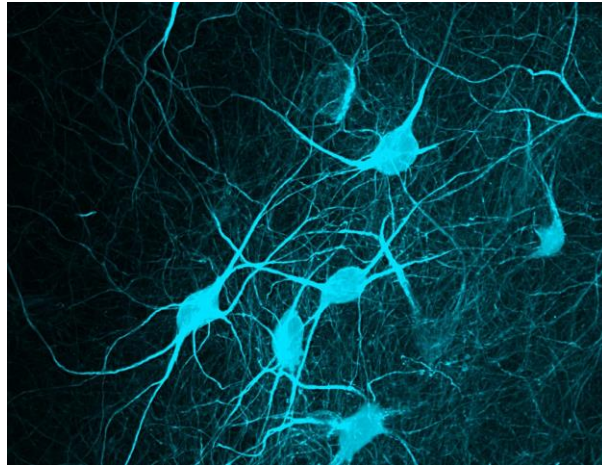
[House of Commons Link](#)

[Babies in Lockdown Link](#)

To effectively care for infants, it is important to understand the meaning of the word care. Dictionary.com (2022) describes the multiple meanings of the word care, such as the preparation of what is required for the well-being of something or having a fondness for something or someone. Professional practitioners should care for each child, it is a practitioner's responsibility to ensure that children are respected, protected and safe. Exceptional care is important as children are constantly developing. Practitioners should assist in a child's development and always put the child's best interests at heart. Gerhardt (2014) describes that an infant needs an emotive adult so they can help managing the child's behaviour. Early years practitioners may also care for infants by assisting in maintaining their hygiene, for example changing nappies or soiled clothes. Practitioners should ensure that this care is respectful whether this be whilst helping infants eat or caring for them as they sleep.

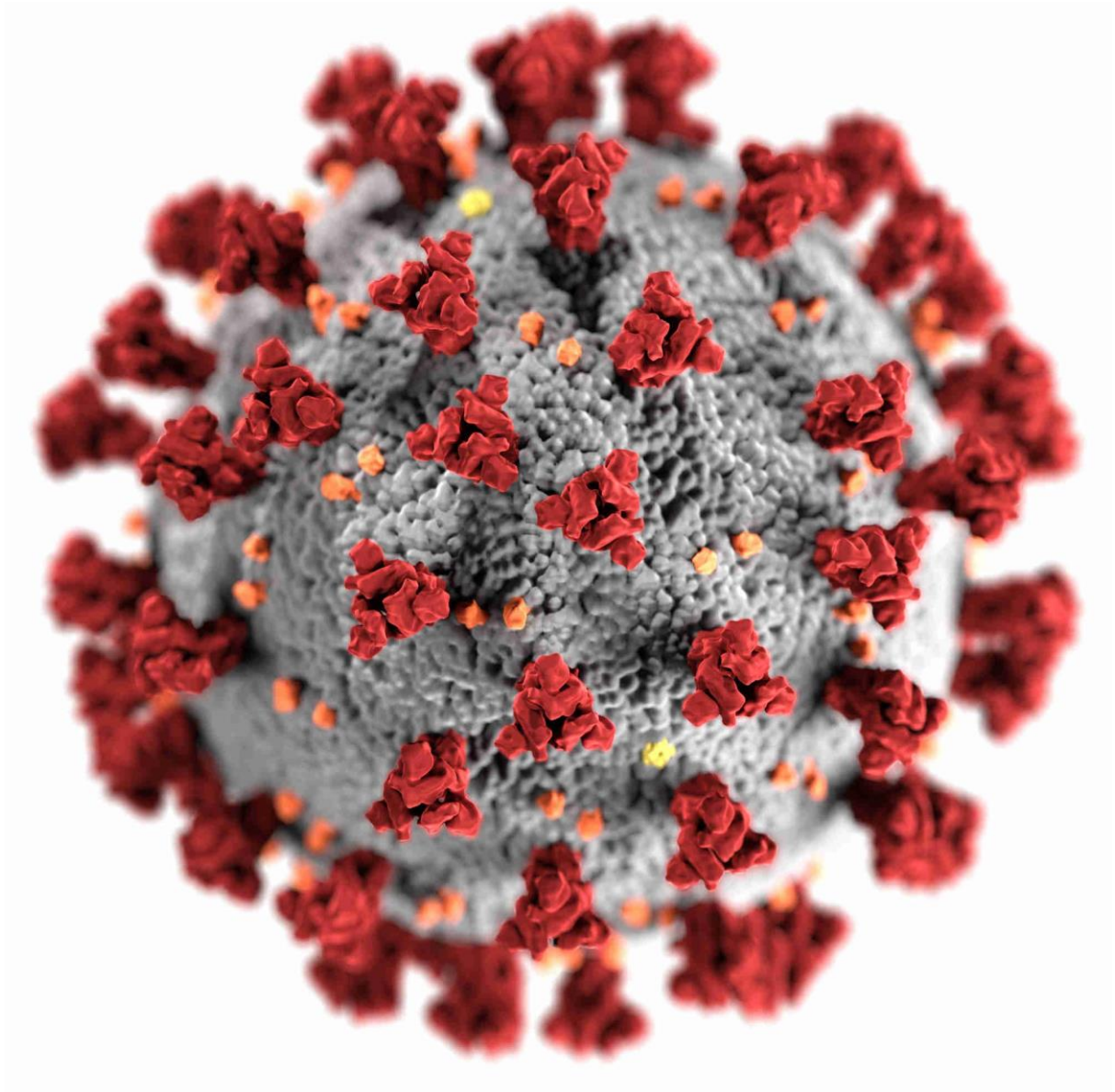
The development of an infant's brain starts in the womb. Parenting for Brain (2022) discusses how a child at birth has 86 billion brain cells. Practitioners alongside an infant's parents, assist in developing a child's brain. First things First (2023) describes how an infant's success in learning is based on their early brain development.

Children have a blueprint for development from birth. Nutbrown (2005) states that infants are born with an understanding greater than one would think. All human actions begin with connections. A nervous system allows the expansion of a functioning imitation of the human body. The nervous system holds communicating connections, these communications are complicated. However, if there is no communication between these connections then the systems are unsuccessful. A baby's experiences assist in constructing these connections. The nervous system is embraced in all aspects of a child's body. Waterhouse (2020) discusses how practitioners should explain children that the nervous system consists of various nerves that send signals to the brain and they then communicate. Early years practitioners should aim to encourage the establishment of these connections.



1 - Neurons in the brain.

Current Challenges



The Coronavirus Pandemic had a large impact on many people's lives. The COVID 19 (Coronavirus) lockdowns and restrictions meant that there were long periods of time in which people were unable to visit different people. The Babies in Lockdown Report (2020) concluded that 34% of participants had the view that their baby's interactions were different during the duration of lockdown. The Coronavirus lockdown restrictions meant that babies were unable to socialise and interact with anyone other than their families, the lack in social interaction slowed down the development process.

Activity Play



There are various ways in which a child can play. Duncombe (2019) explains that play is important for all areas in child development. They can play alone, with other children or with adults. Sutton Smith (1990) evaluated adult child play and concluded that it aided in the development of infants learning. Similarly, to Duncombe, Emmi Pikler (1998) described that play was a vital part in aiding child development. Play allows infants to learn independently. Brodie (2018) identifies that play is

complicated to define but concludes that it is holistic. Play gives children the opportunity to be free and explore as they wish. It is through their experiences that they can develop. Play lets children figure out for themselves what they can and can't do.

The Welsh Government (2021) explains that a child's experiences should encourage independence and allows them to have their own successes and failures. This helps to build their independence and their confidence by being able to complete tasks alone. Play allows children to be free to be themselves without the intervention of adults. They can pick the activities they want to do and play the games/ things they want to play. Having a range of activities that children can play with, allows them to develop in multiple areas. Having the opportunity to play with other children, assists a child's development socially. Else (2014) discusses the benefits of play and notes that it assists in a child's understanding and that it helps with mental and physical well-being. Being able to play with other children also enables a child to develop their language and communication skills.

Messy play encourages infants to explore with different materials such as water, sand, or mud. Messy play is advantageous for creativity. Messy play is a fun form of free play, it takes off the pressure of achievement in that it allows children to explore freely and learn through various experiences. Gascoyne (2018) notes that practitioners should remain flexible and encourage infants to explore and learn from their experiences. Messy play is beneficial for children as it helps build their social skills by working with others. Allowing children to be as creative as they wish allows aspects of their personality come through. Gascoyne (2018) continues by stating that it is instinct that practitioners know messy play is beneficial for children. Messy play gives children a sense of freedom from the curriculum and the relieves the pressure of specific targets but also furthers their development in letting them be independent and confident in their own learning.

Environments



Skills such as communication and leadership are of great importance when caring for infants in an early year setting. These qualities are related to the “enabling adult” term. The Welsh Government (2021) describe enabling adults as those who produce safe and protected settings that encourage child development. These enabling practitioners allow infants to thrive in a setting that consists of effective communication.

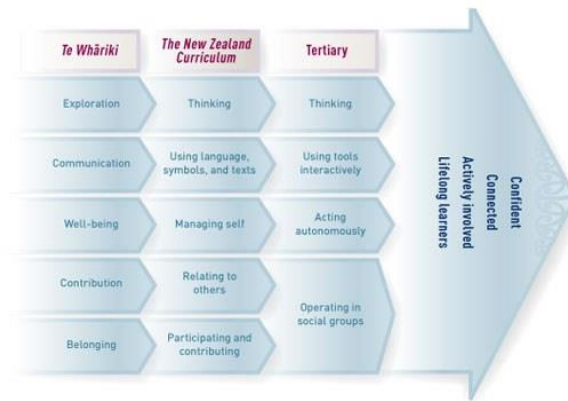
It is advantageous for practitioners to promote independence and exploration to infants. The Welsh Government (2021) continues by stating that practitioners should create environments that allow children to have different experiences as this allows them to express themselves individually. Babies are unable to perform tasks by themselves, therefore having an environment in which they can learn through exploration is important. Infants, like adults can access and use all their senses to explore the outdoors. Forbes (2004) notes that infants are dependent on their senses to educate them of their surroundings. Babies link moving and learning through the senses. When a child is outdoors, they progress in all areas of development. The National Minimum Standard for Wales (2019) clearly states that any provision for children must be inclusive of everyone.

In some places, there are schools that take the forest school approach. This was initiated in Denmark in the 50s and stemmed from influence from Froebel’s work. Williams-Sieghfredson (2012) notes that the Danish Forest School approach is beneficial for children as it allows them to be outdoors at all points of the year. The main aim of Forest schools is for the outdoors to be more than a place for children out energy. Knight (2013) explains that forest schools are a form of accessing outdoor learning and discusses how Froebel identified the significance of outdoor play for infants The approach allows children to have the opportunity to gain their knowledge from nature and the outdoors itself rather than being taught by adults in an indoor setting. The idea is that children have a larger influence on their own learning and by exploring freely and making inquiries into the outside world they can further their development.



2 - Forest School Image.

The curriculum requirements in New Zealand are called Te Whāriki. This approach places value on the relationships between people. Sellers (2013) describes Te Whāriki as an open space for both children and adults and an enabler for cultural understanding.



Each of these different approaches places the child at the centre and they all note how environment is important for the child. However, the Welsh Curriculum and Forest schools are similar as they both identify that being outdoors has a large influence on child development. Each of these approaches encourages individual freedom and the opportunity to explore.

Professional partnerships/ relationships

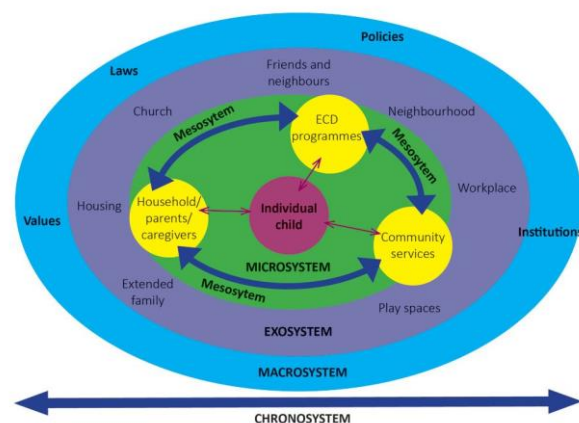


A large part of practitioner's role is to support and maintain the relationships between themselves as professionals and the parents, carers and multiagency workers that participate in an infant's life. Forbes (2004) states that conversations between parents and practitioners about a child's out of home experience is vital. A successful practitioner communicates effectively with parents and carers. Practitioners should remain professional in their relations between themselves and parents. Dunhill (2009) describes how that communication is paramount when working with infants and their families. There are various challenges that impact the effective communication between parents of infants and practitioners. This includes language barriers or poor relationships that may lack in communication which can make parents lose trust in practitioners. Good communication with parents is beneficial to practitioners as it allows them to work alongside a child's parents and get inside knowledge on each child. Parents may be able to tell early years practitioners their child's likes and interests and this can assist a practitioner in future planning for that child.

The relationship between professional practitioners and parents of infants is often linked to the idea of a holistic perspective on education. A holistic view on education relates to looking at the various aspects of a child's development, rather than focussing solely on academic attainment. Brodie (2018) describes how being holistic means looking at something in its entirety not just looking at one specific area and describes how holistic development consists of all areas of learning being knitted

together. Stimulating environments reinforce holistic growth and development. An infant's opportunity to explore freely promotes constructive attachment encounters. Stacey (2009) defines exploration as the way a child explores the world through their senses. Activities such as poetry, rhymes, music, and stories both indoors and outdoors support this holistic approach. Duncombe (2019) describes how a child's learning environment should consist of being both indoors and outdoors. Infants should have access to the outdoors, this advances their health and well-being.

Bronfenbrenner described an ecological system which consisted of several layers with a child at the centre. The model indicated that a child is central to anything and each of their relationships have an impact on one another and this ultimately effects the child's development. Dunlop and Fabian (2002) evaluate Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and imply that positive relations between an infant's family and practitioners create the best environment for the child.



Respectful care and meaningful learning



Touch is important as it helps to bond relationships. Practitioners should ensure that the different experiences that are offered to infants are beneficial and relevant to them. Children should be given the opportunity to explore as they wish, this enables them to develop their independence and educate themselves from their experiences. Brodie (2018) discusses children's emotional development and explains that as children are constantly developing, it is important for practitioners to remain flexible so that children's needs are still being met. Giving children the chance to

investigate different activities and objects using a variety of substances is worthwhile as it inspires them to further their own learning and development. Infants can learn from their successes and their failures. Children should be encouraged to communicate openly so they can discuss their feelings and so they are given the opportunity to be expressive and creative. This communication doesn't have to be verbally, it can be through non-verbal methods such as body movement or gestures. Forbes (2004) explains that body language from infants is highly valued in other cultures. Giving children the option to work with other children or adults allows them to learn from other people's imagination.



Early years practitioners may also care for infants by assisting in maintaining their hygiene, for example changing nappies or soiled clothes. The Pikler Collection (2012) describes Pikler's theories and states that the greatest attention given to an infant is during intimate duties such as being fed or having their nappy changed. Practitioners are required to follow all safeguarding procedures whilst children are in their care. Lindon (2012) when discussing safeguarding, noted that practitioners should use safeguarding guidance, so they are able to follow the legal requirements to protect children. Practitioners should ensure that this care is respectful whether this be whilst helping infants eat or caring for them as they sleep. The National Curriculum for Wales (2019) state that is essential for children to feel safe and have their rights valued. Having a daily routine for infants relates to holistic development due to the impact it has on an individual's needs. It is beneficial for infants to have individuality within settings as each child is different and each child has different needs. Some children may have additional learning needs and therefore may need more help and support.

Duncombe (2019) discusses how different countries have different strategies of teaching and explains that in Finland, practitioners are given freedom to teach in a way that they personally think will benefit their students.

Approaches to attachment, nurture, professional care and their impact on professional practice.



Early years practitioners have the responsibility in caring for infants, however they should ensure that they maintain a professionalism when giving this care. It is common for a close relationship to form between practitioners and the children they care for. The term 'professional love' is often used to describe this bond. Page (2016) discusses the term 'professional love' and explains that it is a term used to describe the intimate appropriate relationship between an early year's practitioner and the children under their care. When caring for children, this professional love has been discovered to be of importance so that practitioners are able to form loving relationships with children and provide a positive experience for them. Gerhardt (2014) discusses how toddlers use adults faces to model their behaviour.

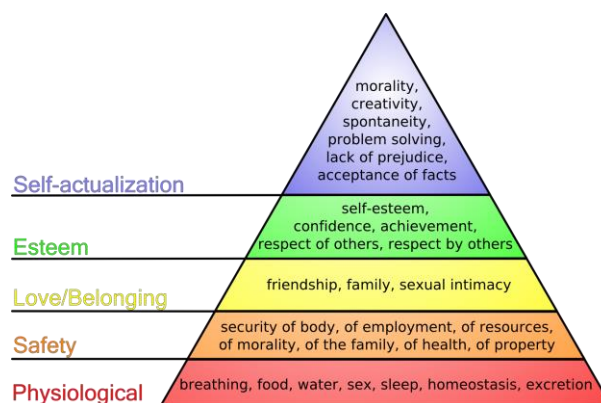
Serve and return consists of the building brain connections and relations. Harvard University (2011) concludes that the serve and return process is vital in developing a child's brain. Some adults choose to respond to a child but repeating and/ or mirroring their actions or vocals. Infants communicate through facial expressions or gestures. When an adult mirrors this behaviour, it aids in building connections in the infant's brain. Children mirror people's reaction and interactions. Gerhardt (2014) continues by stating that if a child's parents smile, a child's development is furthered. These positive experiences assist in furthering their brain development. Smidt (2015) suggests that infants are educated through their experiences and their interactions with those around them.

Professional love is difficult to teach as there are no skills or qualities that can be shown. Practitioners are required to put the child's best interests first, during the first 1000 days of child development, children need this love and affection to ensure they develop as they should. It may be beneficial for practitioners to remain consistent and reliable so that infants are able to form

trusting relationships with them. Nutbrown (2005) explains that it is valuable for children to have a familiar adult around them to further their development efficiently.

Pikler's view was based on the idea that the relationship between practitioners and infants is vital. The Pikler Collection (2012) discusses Pikler's ideas and explains that the relationship between an adult and child is of great importance. She believed that the relationship between an adult and a child allows the child to feel safe and protected.

Maslow created a structure called a "hierarchy of needs". This hierarchy of needs is often displayed in a pyramid structure. Pichere (2015) states that Maslow did not discuss a pyramid in his theory, only levels to a hierarchy of significance. The next level in the pyramid consists of safety aspects such as shelter and protection. If children do not feel safe and protected, then they are not able to progress to the next step. It is beneficial for practitioners to create a caring environment for children. The middle level is belonging, a person's relationships influence this level. Practitioner's relationships with children and their families, as previously discussed had a large influence on their development. After that is esteem, confidence and achievement have an impact on their self-esteem. If a child does not have the confidence to explore and have new experiences, they will not be able to develop effectively. At the top of the pyramid is self-actualization, for someone to reach their full potential they need all other levels of the pyramid. For a child to succeed and develop successfully they need to have progressed through all levels of the pyramid. Pichere (2015) does highlight some of the criticisms of Maslow's model, including the lack of importance placed on humans being sociable beings, it does not highlight how significant socialisation is to people.



3 - Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

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