
FIRST

1



PREGNANCY
270 DAYS



YEAR 1
365 DAYS



YEAR 2
365 DAYS

DAYS

First thousand days the importance and meaning.

First 1000 days is a distinctive period from conception up until the child's 2nd birthday. It is during this period that underpins a child's health and development. During this, a child's ability to survive, grow, learn, overcome adversity, while achieving their potential begins to develop. First 1000 days not only impacts a child's brain development and their quality of life but also impacts society, due to the stability and success they receive from caregivers (Care, 2021).

In Wales, the first 1000 days is led by Public Health Wales with the objective to improve health (Public Health Wales, no date). The first 1000 days is acknowledged globally. New Zealand have set out similar guidance to support parents in understanding the importance of investing time during this period (Te Whatu Ora, 2024).

During the first 1000 days it is considered the optimal time for intervention to improve outcomes. The first 1000 days is the most crucial time for development beyond body and brain but for a child's metabolism and immune system. Nutrition from the time of conception influences foetal growth, birth outcomes and infant growth (Wrottesley, 2015).

This period is important to a child's life as it when the foundations are being formed for development through love and care (House of Commons, 2019).

The parliament committee published a paper outlining the National Strategy of the first 1000 days. The evidence presented in the paper supports the importance of this period, it is suggested that this is a sensitive time, and it is crucial that caregivers are provided with the skills and knowledge from the time of conception to improve outcomes (Committees Parliament, 2018).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



(Figure 1- Ink and Scribbles, 2023).

Experiences during this period need to include holding the child, hearing language and being able to have the opportunity to explore the environment, The experiences will go into more detail throughout (HM Government, 2021).

From the time of conception, it is crucial that the foetal has access to basic human needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory in figure 1 is a good illustration of the basic needs a baby requires. Especially tier's one to three which focuses on physiological needs. safety and love. Maslow's theory focuses on meeting the basic needs securely while fostering a sense of belonging which is crucial (EarlyYearsTv, no date).



Caregiving

(LeVos, 2022)

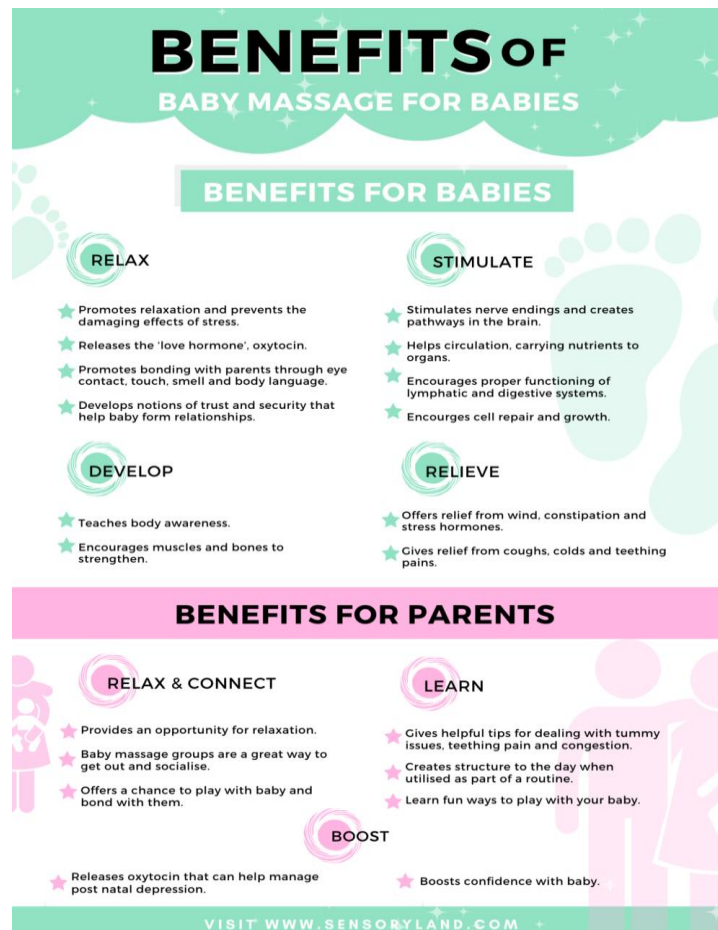
Exceptional Care

What is exceptional care ?

According to Public Health Wales (2023) exceptional care during the first 1000 days is influenced by interactions with caregivers, inclusive practice and enabling environments. Core elements include responsive interactions, providing appropriate nutrition and care, safeguarding them from harm, providing language rich environments and opportunities for meaningful interactions. This can be attained through 'serve and return' (Save the Children, 2016).

This is made up of interactions that involve reciprocal communication. For it to be carried out effectively caregivers need to ensure they are paying attention to what the child is focusing on. Through non-verbal interactions, caregivers need to provide positive touch, happy facial expressions and acknowledge what the child is focusing on. When in 'serve and return' it is crucial to use language to name what they are focusing on. An important aspect of this is to ensure the child is given time to respond. By caregivers providing opportunities for this they can strengthen their bond and support the child to understand environments. This provides a positive impact on infants developing confidence, independence and language and an opportunity for a child to feel they are listened to (Southwest Human Development, 2020).

This supports article 12 in the UNCRC 'That a child has the right to be listened to (Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland, no date).



Exceptional care is important in the first 1000 days as it builds the foundations for a child to thrive. It is during this time that irreparable damage can be done to a child's development. Exceptional care supports development of a child's brain and language, while supporting physical and emotional security (VNS, no date).

Holistic approach.

Children's development explodes during the first 1000 days and there are remarkable benefits for children to develop through a holistic approach. Following this approach, it will support areas developing at the same time and interdependently.

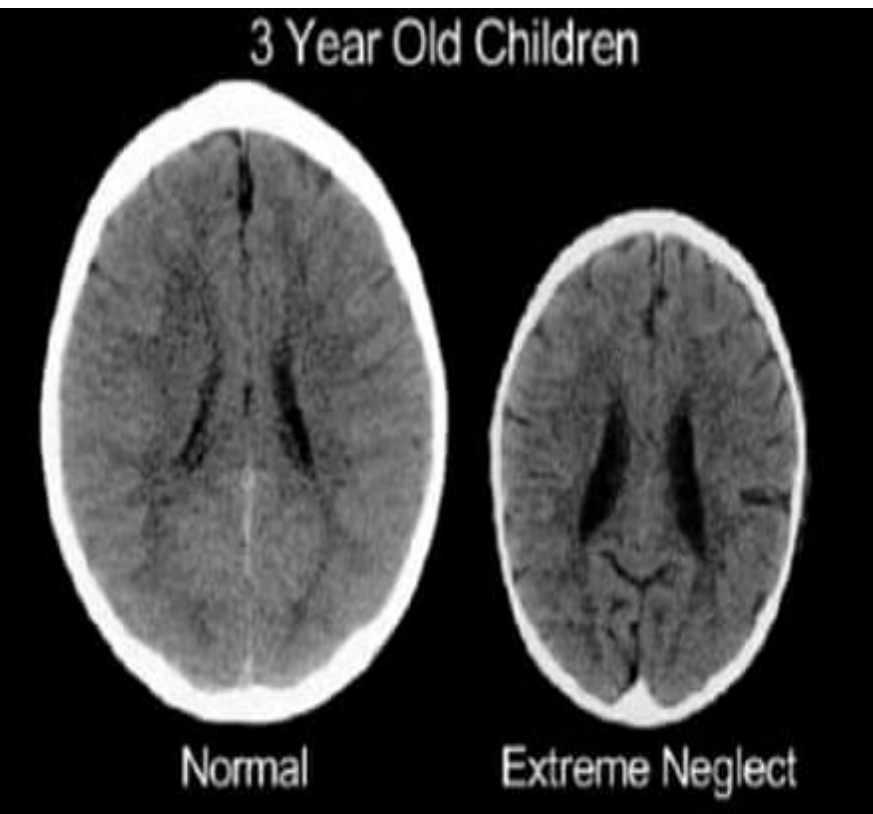
These experiences include, baby massage. This provides an optimal time for bonding with the child and further benefits of this are shown in figure 2.

Caregiver's providing these experiences support babies in developing beyond their physical, language and communication needs but also in attachment skills while developing socially and emotionally (Brodie, no date).

Figure 2 -(Sensoryland, May, no year).

Brain Development.

Figure 3
(Williams, 2014)

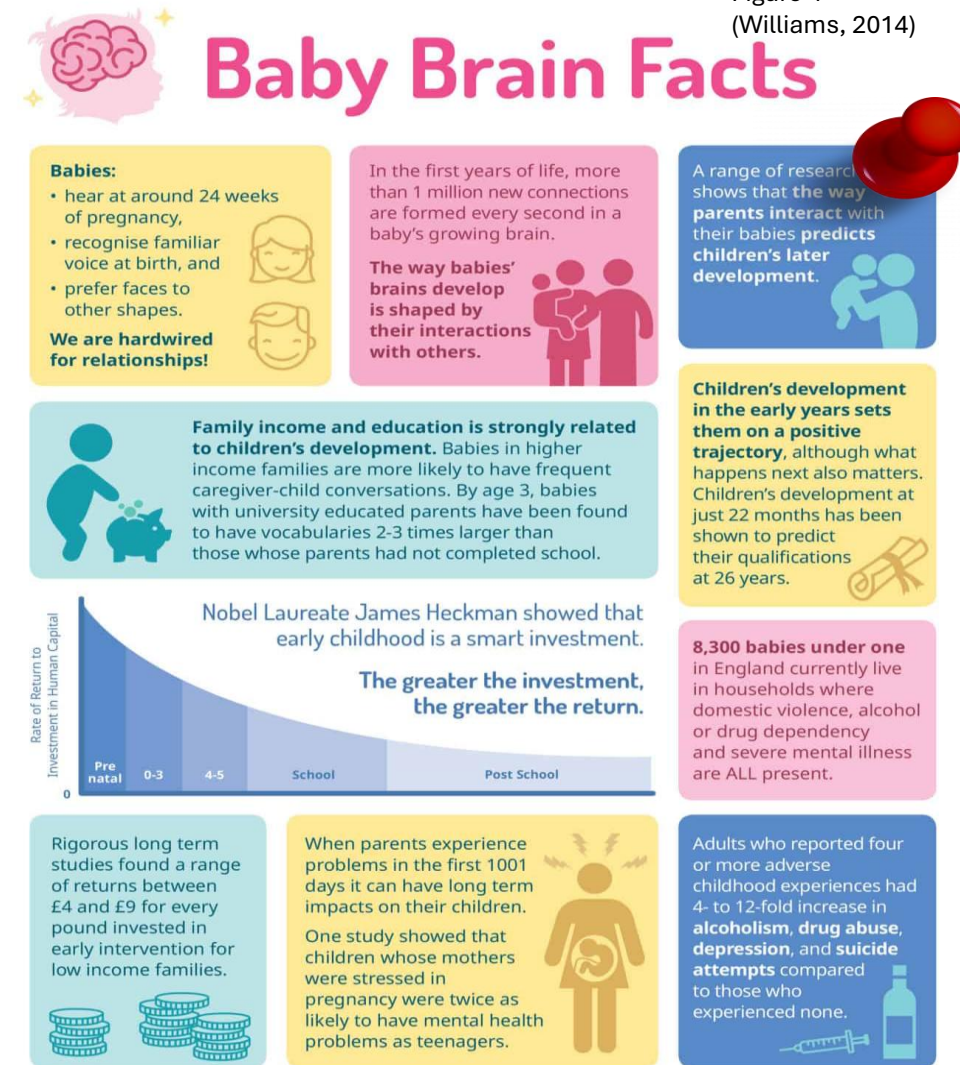


During the first 1000 days is crucial for brain development. Babies' brains develop more than one million new connections per second, the pace during this time will never be repeated. These connections can be formed by caregivers holding the baby (UNICEF, no date).

Figure 3 shows, the difference between a child's brain who experience's nurturing care, to a child who has faced neglect. Through a child experiencing neglect this has not only impacted on brain development but increased the chance of a mental health disorder and drug misuse (NSPCC, 2021).

Figure 4 shows, a baby's brain is hardwired by the relationships that are formed from the care they receive.

Figure 4
(Williams, 2014)



**Tackling adversity + supporting early relationships
→ healthier brains + better futures**

References and further information can be found on <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/1001-days/campaigning-resources/>

Theories

Pikler

Pikler developed her theory based on key principles made up from caregivers showing respect for the autonomy of babies, establishing consistent care relationships, progression of motor development and providing opportunities for uninterrupted play (Brodie, no date).

Pikler's theory can be demonstrated by caregivers during nappy changing. According to Pikler this process should be carried out by being calm and gentle, the environment should be free from distractions this supports the attachment theory, while building trust. The caregiver will take the lead, and it is crucial the child's interests are acknowledged during this time. This supports the child being fully engaged. Effective communication with the child during this process supports them not only learning language but developing a sense of 'being held in mind'. During this process caregivers can provide the child 'freedom of movement' and adapt to a child's movement, this will support them being engaged during the process (Marlen, no date).

Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological system theory can support caregivers providing exceptional care especially in the microsystem layer which highlights the immediate family environment. It is in this layer that the importance of relationships are highlighted, as shown in figure 5.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is important to support the relationship between caregiver and child. The caregiver needs be supportive while nurturing and responsive. This will provide a positive environment and experiences which is vital for children to develop socially, emotionally and cognitively (Early Years TV, no date).

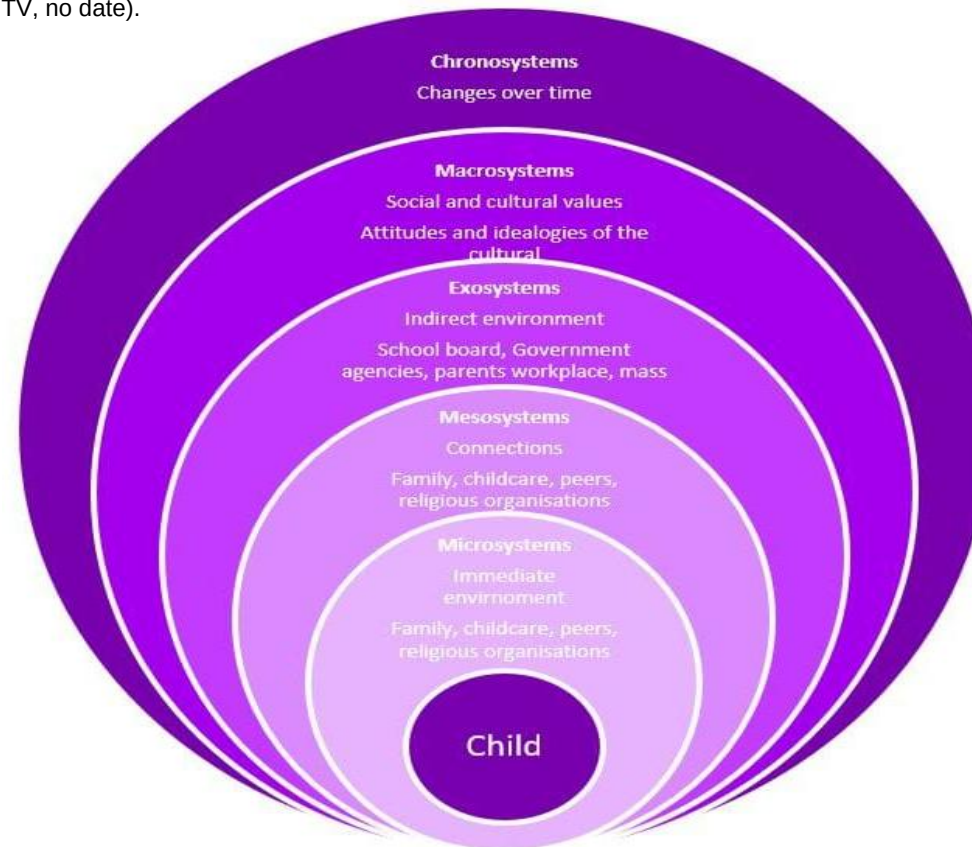
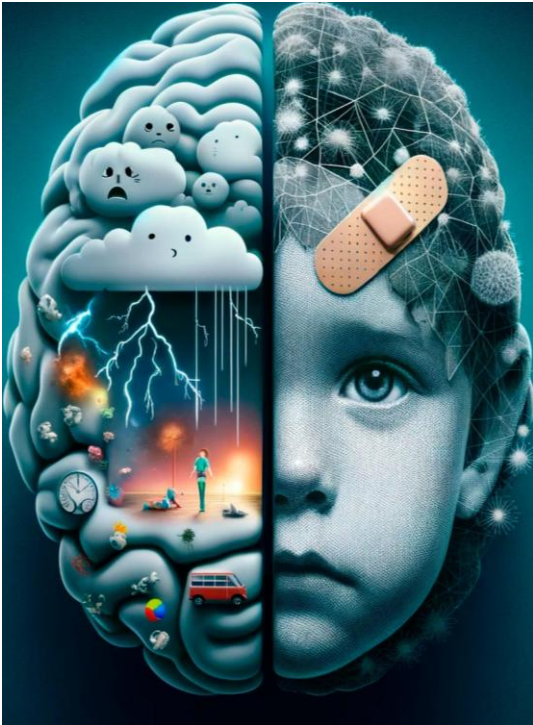


Figure 5 (The education people, 2021).

Bowlby

Bowlby's attachment theory will be observed through care as a baby will look for affection when distressed. This will lead the caregiving supporting the child to develop secure attachments which will be observed in a child feeling comfortable to explore when the caregiver is present and will become emotional when they leave. However, an infant that has not received exceptional care can result in them having avoidance attachment. This style of attachment will be observed by a child avoiding their caregiver when they return (McGarvie, 2024).

Challenges



(Caldwell, 2023)

Factor	Influence	Strategies
Poverty	Around 30% of children who live in Wales are currently facing poverty (Child commissioner for Wales, no date). Poverty can affect children not receiving basic life essentials (Child Poverty Action Groups, no date). This influences the care a baby receives as parents who face poverty are unlikely to empathize with their child (Gerris, Dekovic and Janssens, 1997).	Wales have set out 'Child Poverty strategy for Wales'. Within this document it outlines how the government will support families by reducing financial stress (free period products in the community) and support caregivers in the early years of a child's life so the baby can have the best start Welsh Government, 2023). A well-known example of a strategies to support poverty is through the baby bundle bank which supports families in Ceredigion. This supports parents in receiving essential resources and equipment free of charge (Plant Dewi, no date).
Mental health	Caregivers' mental health influences the care they provide to their child. A caregiver who suffers with mental health can negatively affect the connection they have with their baby. This will lead to the baby developing behavioural issues, social and emotional problems and how they build attachments (Brianda et al., 2020b; Mikolajczak et al., 2019; Rabbitt et al., 2012).	A good illustration of strategies to support caregivers is shown through Public Health Wales (2023). This report sets out universal support that caregivers can access through health visitors and midwives. This also leads to caregivers receiving parenting support which is evidence based and then can receive tailored support when identified.
Lifestyle	Babies can receive lack of care through their caregiver's lifestyle. There is research provided by the Government that outlines caregivers who misuse alcohol and drugs. This reduces their capacity to parent (United Kingdom Government, 2021).	Caregivers can gain support for these issues from their GP Surgery who can then pinpoint them for more tailored support. (NSPCC, 2023).

All factors can influence the care a child receives during the first 1000 days. By addressing barriers, it supports children in reaching their full potential and being able to work through Maslow's theory as mentioned. By providing caregivers with strategies to overcome barriers it will create conditions and enabling environments (Public Health Wales, 2023).



Professional Partnerships

(Castle Academy, Astrea Academy Trust, no date).

Early Years Practitioners working with children during the first 1000 days play a substantial role in development. Practitioners have a duty to ensure they are working in partnership with parents and agencies to achieve a common goal (Community Change, 2010).

Role of Early Years Practitioner.

The role of practitioner supporting families during this period is to provide opportunities to encourage the children to do what they do at home this provides inclusive practice and breakdown barriers (Birth to 5 matters, no date).

The role of practitioner when supporting children is to support all areas of development. The role includes providing a safe and nurturing environment so they can thrive and have access to meaningful experiences (University of Greater Manchester, 2023).

As shown in figure 6 for a practitioner to support children and families they require certain qualities. Having these qualities, they can passionately support children and families, to achieve the best outcomes. This supports the practitioner in carrying out their role effectively (First Discoveries, no date).



Importance of Professional Partnership

Working together in partnership allows practitioners to have a clear and consistent approach. This will support engagement with families, sharing knowledge and improve outcomes (Open University, 2021).

Under the Childcare Act 2006 working in partnerships will support practitioners to ensure that families are receiving holistic support that has been tailored around their specific needs (Crown database, 2011).

Article 3 of the UNCRC supports partnership working as it states the best interest of the child must be held at the priority of everything (UNICEF, no date).

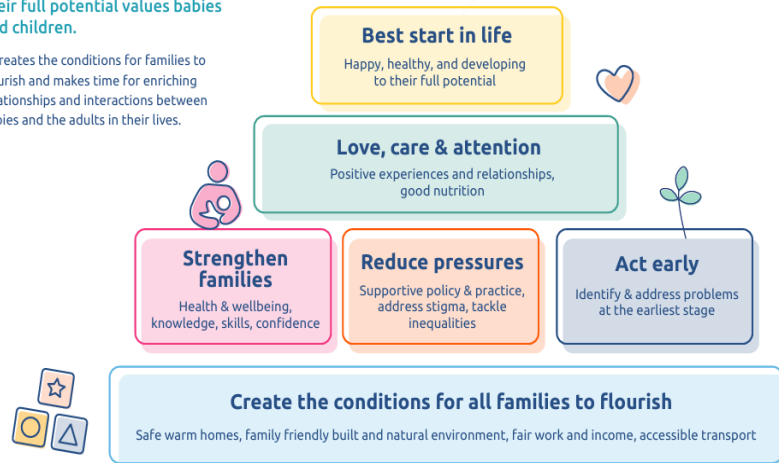
Practitioners should be ensuring they are enabling adults to provide a positive impact on a child's development. Key principles of a professional's showing this can be demonstrated in practice by practitioners modelling a joyful approach and making strong connections families. It is clear for practitioners fulfil their role they need to be enabling adults (HWB, No date).

Framework.

Building a society that gives every child the best start in life

A society where all children can be healthy, happy, and develop to their full potential values babies and children.

It creates the conditions for families to flourish and makes time for enriching relationships and interactions between babies and the adults in their lives.



(Figure 7- Public Health Wales, no date).

Figure 7 shows guidance set out by Public Health Wales, with ways to support families to ensure the environment is being built up for all to flourish (Public Health Wales, no date).

Practitioners working with babies and infants have a duty to carry out effective partnership. This includes working in collaboration with caregivers and agencies. Under the Child Care Act (2004) it places a duty on all those working and supporting children. This ensures partnership working between agencies and parents to improve the wellbeing of the child (Welsh Government, no date),

Another example of framework to support families is in figure 8. This supports practitioners in understanding what level of support their families require and the agency interventions that is needed to ensure they are having the correct support at the correct time. This will support professional partnership on when to escalate support (Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales, 2014).

The Right Help at the Right Time Framework



Figure 8- (Maternity and Early Years Strategy for West Wales, 2014).

Maternal factors and strategies.



(Hartt, 2024).

Maternal factors	Support strategies available
<u>Staffing</u>	The Department for Education have provided a substantial amount of money for workforce training. This will support settings to recruit practitioners and develop knowledge (Department of Education, 2024). Strategies also include seeking further funding and developing initiatives, so people are eager to train in the sector (Thompson, 2024).
<u>Parental engagement</u>	Strategies to support engagement is for practitioners to have open communication. This is shown in practice through open door policies where settings are encouraging a two-way communication. Practitioners need to foster a sense of belonging for their caregivers to build an inclusive supportive environment. A good illustration of this in practice is hosting a coffee morning where practitioners can build relationships and notice changes (Connect Childcare, 2024). These strategies are supported by statutory framework which draws attention to the importance of parental engagement (Department of Education, 2024).
<u>Lack of Resources</u>	Strategies to support practitioners with lack of resources can be looking to the community for donations. Practitioners can ask parents for household recyclable items which would not only provide infants with opportunities to engage in role play but also develop parental engagement (Hughes, no date).

Activities that provide meaningful learning



Activities to support
a child in the first
1000 days.

For babies and infants to thrive, they need to have access to a range of environments and opportunities which will provide meaning full experiences. Activities that support children can be made up from story telling, sensory rich activities and outdoor experiences (Stead, 2024).

Story Telling

Story telling is an activity that supports babies to learn new things and start vocabulary. This activity can develop babies further by supporting them to process emotions. This is through the expressions care givers and practitioners use. There have been a wide range of studies to show that story telling from a young age supports their cognitive and emotional development (Erhard-Weiss, no date).



(Wilkinson, 2019).



The benefits of reading aloud is illustrated in figure 11. This s provides in depth development benefits.

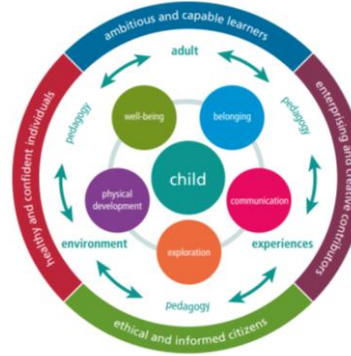
This activity will include caregivers making it a part of their routine and ensuring there are no distractions which links back to Pikler. For this activity to be carried out effectively caregivers will need to use positive body language and facial expressions. This activity will include a caregiver using their tone to engage the child. When carrying out this activity a child's position is a critical aspect. The child needs to be close to the caregiver while making sure they can see the face of the caregiver (Rasingchildren.net.au, no date).

Figure 11 (Read aloud, no date)

International Approaches

Globally there is a different approach to supporting caregivers and children to ensure development. While there are many differences there are similarities in how they approach development in childcare settings. This is illustrated in figures 11 the New Zealand Curriculum for early childcare and figure 12 the Welsh Curriculum, both have similar principles. This includes a child's wellbeing being at the centre and includes meaningful authentic experiences with the purpose for a child to feel a sense of belonging and become healthy and independent (National Day Nurseries Association, no date). The New Zealand curriculum was first designed around Bronfenbrenner's approach as previously discussed (Championsproject.nz, no date).

Figure 12 – (Protheroe, 2022).



The Montessori Approach is child led and focuses on the learning environment (Berg, 2024). This approach has fundamental impact on a child development (Robson and Franco, 2023).

This is shown in practice through allowing a child to experience a discovery basket. This is made up of interesting objects from around the setting. The objective of this allows children to start learning how to explore while experiencing sensory discovery (Learn and play Montessori, 2021).



(Lauren 2012).

The Reggio Emilia is an international approach which has been fostered in schools throughout the United Kingdom. This approach is a play-based learning approach which acknowledges the importance of the environment (Reggio Children, 2022.) According to ESTYN this approach has a fundamental impact on a child developing (ESTYN, 2024).

This can be observed in practice by setting up the environment to provide opportunities of creativity and curiosity as shown in figure 13.. A specific activity would include using shadows and light, so children are being provided with opportunities to learn and understand concepts (Ozuna, 2022)



(Figure 13– (Ozuna, 2022).

Montessori differs from the Reggio Emilia approach. This is because the Reggio approach focuses on collaboration rather than the independent focus Montessori has. Reggio also provides a more flexible environment in comparison to Montessori who suggests the environment should be structured (ReggioEmilia, 2021).

I have not used AI in this digital scrapbook.

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