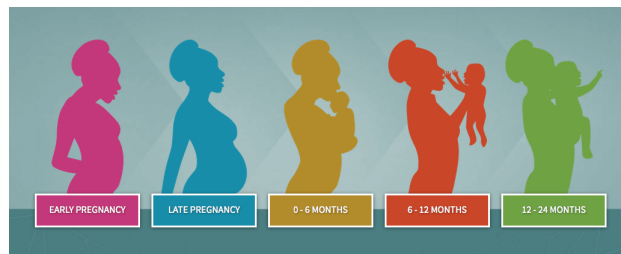




The First 1000 Days Digital Scrapbook

Student number: 2216694 Word Count: 3167 Module: ECEY4005/C

Introduction- What are the First 1000 Days?



To introduce this digital scrapbook, we first need to understand what the first thousand days are, and we can then explore the important factors which play a part in its success. This critical 1000 day period of development begins at conception and continues until the age of two. NHS Wales (2011) regards this timeframe as a particularly important stage in life which can have an impact on the rest of the child's life, and these outcomes will also be evident within the child's extended family. This is supported by Conkbayir (2018) where he suggests that this is a crucial period for development and various research outcomes in adults show factors including mental health, education, emotional wellbeing, and employment can all suffer an impact based upon these first 1000 days. The NSPCC (2015) also reports that there is evidence to suggest that even during the pregnancy stage, the baby whilst still in the womb, is susceptible to stress that the mother may be experiencing. These instances can cause the child's

lifelong resilience mechanisms, of coping with emotions or other such life events, as being far less than a baby who has not been exposed to stressful episodes. There are a multitude of important factors which play an important part during the first 1000 days some of which will be explored in more detail throughout this scrapbook. There will be particular focus on caregiving, the role of professional partnerships, challenges faced, exploring various methods of play and enabling environments, allowing the reader to explore and evaluate the first 1000 days and including research and theory analysis to support it.

Care Giving



Exceptional care from key persons who are involved during the first 1000 days is vital. There are many key persons involved with a child during the first 1000 days, all of which have an important role to play. The involvement of a practitioner within a setting is no exception. Pacey (2015) regards a key person as the influencer who is present and can be trusted. Through observation and support they will enable the child to progress in their development. Guidance from *Birth to 5 Matters* (n.d.) states that the importance of care giving is equally important as play. To achieve effective practice consideration into washing, dressing, physical interactions are all well planned and reflected upon. Being able to respond to and change your approach towards the caregiving based upon the reactions of the child are also important. The foundations for all your involvement with the child must begin with the attachment theory. John Bowlby (2006) suggests that babies are born with the requirement and needs of feeling safe and secure. The baby seeks this through attachment and being close to the practitioner provides this reassurance. This interaction and closeness will affect how the infant reacts to a spectrum of

emotions from happiness to sadness (Pound, 2006). Bowlby's attachment theory is supported by Dr Emmi Pikler where she believed that providing care for a child with respect and patience, during critical times of need, for example wiping the child's face or changing its nappy would build up the closeness and relationship to form a secure attachment. Building on a relationship that is formed by observation, attention and support will lead the pathway to the child naturally developing on its own accord (EYFS, 2017). Having suitable settings are also a key factor, Johnson (2018) states that having an environment that is calming, inviting, and feels safe for the child is important. Encouraging and forming a good relationship is essential to providing exceptional care, Hay (1997) considers that key persons are 'special' individuals who a child can connect with and form strong bonds. This is supported by The University of Sheffield (2015) who state that when you can analyse a child, understand what they require, and can let them know they are secure and loved, this will be defined as 'professional love'.

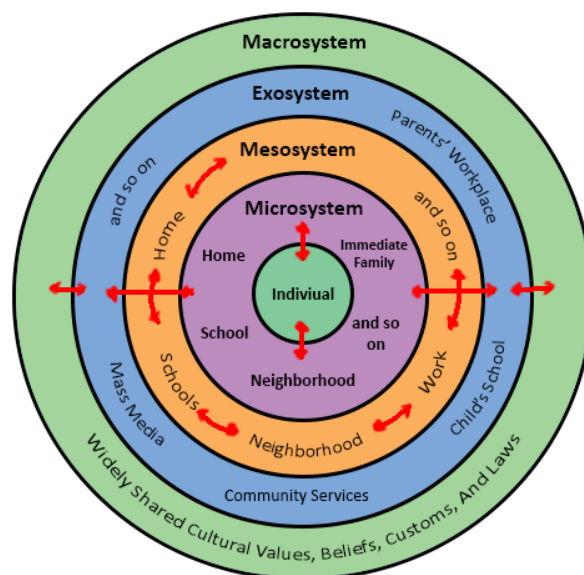
Professional Partnerships



If the practitioner understands the developing brain in an infant, and the affects it may suffer because of certain factors including emotional attachments, traumas and relationships, it will enable them to provide vital support to the child in its early stages of development. The Early Years Learning Framework states that partnerships are one of its five core concepts. If there is a strong bond between the child and the professionals, there will be visible improvements. Communications are paramount to maintain how the child is progressing (Department for Education, 2023).

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partnerships are for the development of a child. The zone of proximal development, explains how with good partnerships, strong support networks, instruction and analysis the child will progress within its own capabilities and develop further. This is regarded as the 'scaffolding' where peers and professionals are aiding the child through close connections of support to develop and learn further (Cherry, 2023). Conkbayir (2018) states the importance of early years educators being at the core of the primary development stages of the child and how the practitioner is entrusted with this responsibility. Neuroscientific connections are being developed in the child and their experiences, bonds, and trust all play a crucial factor in the outcomes of this growth. This is supported by Unicef, the Care for Child Development programme (2012) implements neuroscience and its influences during a child's development. Using this CDD approach the practitioner can create and reinforce the relationships between the child and its primary carers. It will allow parenting skills to develop as they become more aware and understanding of childhood development, recognising that activities, and play will stimulate curiosity and growth and as overall skills build, this will improve the care, love and security of the child. There is a clear link with Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. To develop and progress from the microsystem to the mesosystem requires close connections, communication, and a suitable environment. This will allow for the successful transition between the stages, a sense of achievement and positive development (Pacquette, 2011). Many theoretical influences for example Bronfenbrenner, Dewey and Vygotsky were seen in Malaguzzi's work. He had a firm belief that flexibility within the role of all parties plays an integral part of the child's development. Parents should have an equal partnership with practitioners when decision making, learning and frameworks are considered (Pound, 2005). McIntyre (2018) believes that practitioners should always be respectful in their practice. Communicating, and listening, not being forceful and allowing them time to adapt and settle within their environment. Resources for infant educators (2022) suggests that there are no set points to follow, rather a supporting structure to understand the child's requirements whilst considering your own professional values and bring these both together to provide the best care. By adopting the RIE (Resource for infant educators) approach, freedom, play, environment, trust, inclusion, observation, and consistency are all considered and implemented. If the practitioner has a broad knowledge and respect for this approach the 'authentic child' goal should be achieved (RIE.org, 2022).



Enabling Environments



1 - Sand Time



2 - Role Play



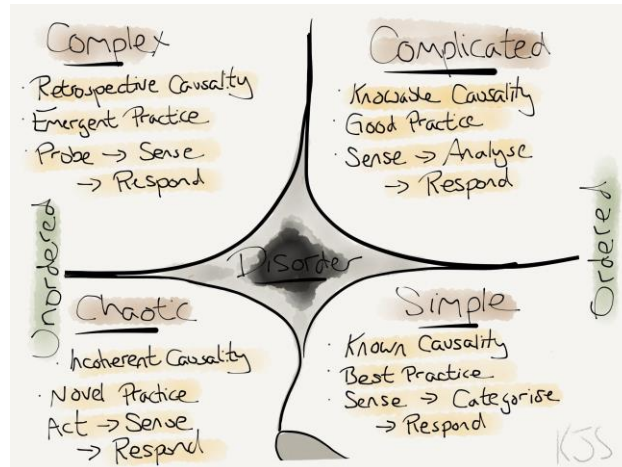
3 - Reading Corner



4 - Mud kitchens

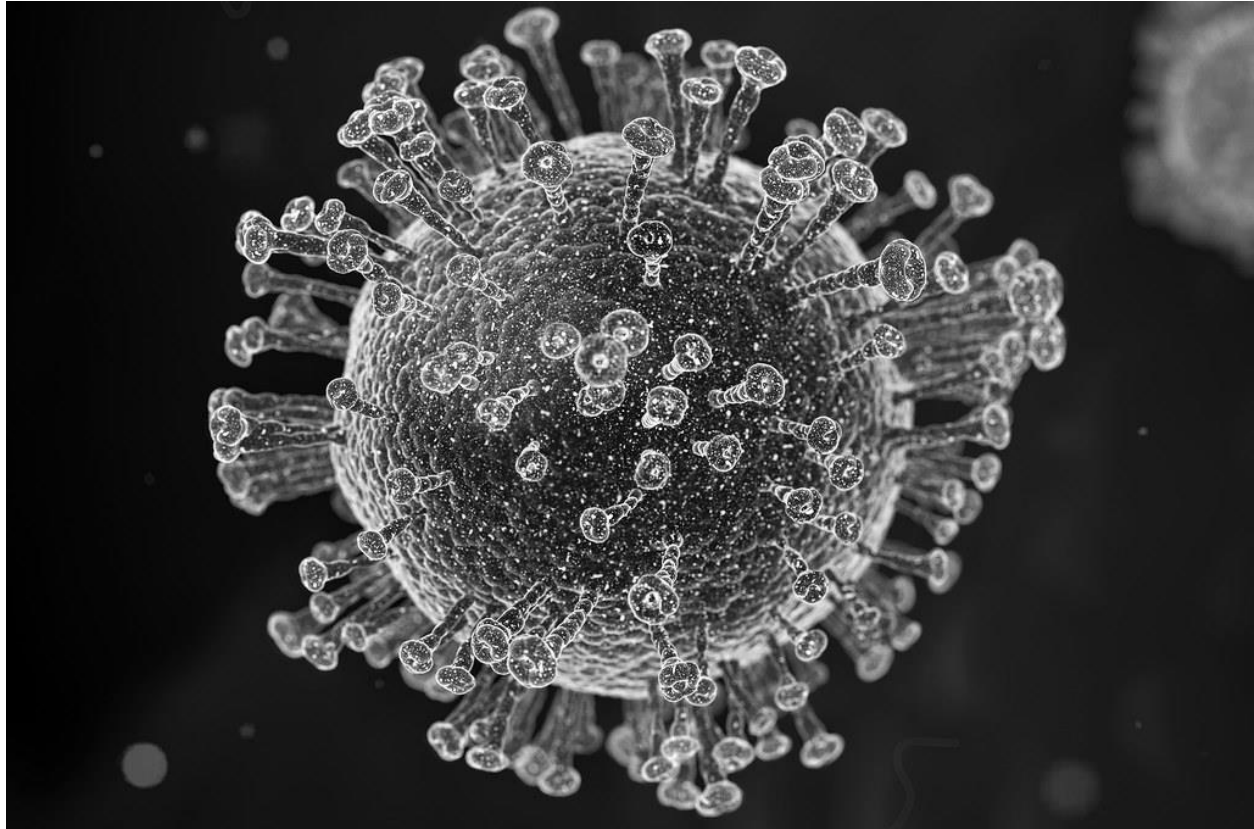
There are numerous elements that play a key part into providing an enabling environment. Early Years Alliance (2016) determines that an area which has been assessed to limit risk, correctly monitored and

provides children with safety from danger is seen as an enabling environment. It should be enriched with an array of resource and activities that will inspire all minds, providing indoor and outdoor areas, that will ensure the child has a sense of belonging. EYFS Practice Guidance (DFES, 2007) explains that not all environments are enabling, and are in need of more influence and ideas. This is supported by Waters-Davies (2022) who also suggests that enabling environments can often be neglected. However, Clare (2012) suggests that in order to achieve an enabling environment, there should be a wealth of resource opportunities, encouraging curiosity, inquisition and exploratory skills. Children require an environment of choice and freedom to convey themselves, allowing them to self-learn at their own accord and developing into a creative and critical thinker.



Froebel took great care with the environmental settings and wider space promoting time spent outside, going on walks and exploring nature (Pound, 2006). This view is evident within the Cynefin framework, meaning habitat translated from Welsh (Mindtools, 2023). The Curriculum for Wales describe it as a feeling of belonging, where the environment and people can be identified, and there is familiarity with your surroundings (Arts Council of Wales, 2023). Maria Montessori's approach was developed from key concepts, all of which are relative to an enabling environment. Nature and reality, beauty, freedom, structure and order, social environment and intellectual environment.

Challenges

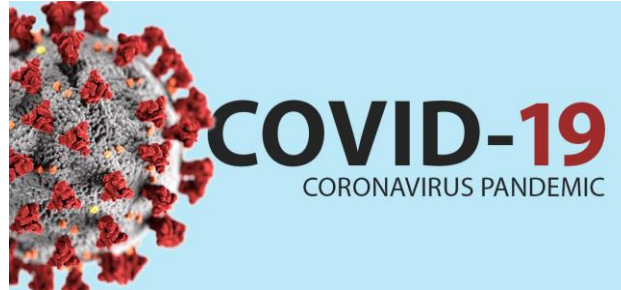


High quality care can be compromised by a range of factors for example environmental, financial, and cultural. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model shows how important the connections between the microsystem and mesosystem are during the development of a child. This is where the primary contact occurs between the child and its closest influences – parents, family, nursery, school and is when the child builds an understanding of experiences, and comparisons are developed between those within the home and other environmental settings, such as a nursery or school environment (Gray, 2015).

The consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic continue to have consequences for children, not just the primary affects but also secondary factors. Kindred and Bates (2023) record their findings of the social anxiety impacts following the pandemic. There has been an acute decline in mental health which has caused a detrimental impact globally. Social anxiety and avoidance have increased amongst adults and loosing this social connection between the adult and practitioner, and the ability to communicate and provide support between all caregivers results in a breakdown of care to the child.

Another example of challenges would be the ongoing cost of living crisis which also causes problems when striving to provide exceptional care as a practitioner. Action for Children (2023) states that currently there are 4.2 million children living in poverty and are suffering: there is a crisis, and they are having to go without essentials such as food and heat. The National Foundation for Educational Research (2023) suggests the impact on young people will be great. The financial crisis has meant that resources have been cut and staff ratios depleted which results in negativity throughout the setting, and levels of care are on a downward slope. The Local Government Association (2023) reports that the

combination of Covid-19, the financial crisis, and a reduction in wider support networks such as family centres, has increased the poverty divide, and there is a growing concern for children needing extra care in early years. BBC Newsround (2022) reports on the devastation that has been caused and the impact suffered upon children, [Cost of Living Crisis](#) (2022).



But it is not only recent national issues that can have an impact on the development of a child, according to Bruce and Meggitt (2015), each caregiver should have a commitment to provide the child with exceptional care, balancing their personal values with the needs of the child. If a breakdown occurs in this link, best outcomes cannot be achieved. Rodd (1997:40) suggests if there is a lack of knowledge in the management of early years practice, there will likely be an unwillingness to understand the importance of the role. Brooker (2008) states that if each child can be recognised individually by the caregiver, their development will thrive. There needs to be a broad understanding of cultural needs, acknowledging specific diets, including native language and ensuring time for prayer. Providing exceptional care to acknowledge each individual child's beliefs and culture can be challenging when resources are limited and the link between caregivers is tarnished by diminishing ratios of support.

Activities



Action for Children (2024) state that senses are used from the second a child is born. Implementing sensory play will assist in a child's development by stimulating taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight ([Action for Children - Sensory Play](#)). In addition to sensory play being a fun activity, it also provides many advantages that support learning milestones. Even from birth, the child is ready to explore the world, and will positively respond when their senses are stimulated.







There are countless examples of sensory play which are adaptable for each developmental stage. Piaget (2005) suggested that the first 1000 days was regarded as the sensorimotor period. During this stage object permanence becomes apparent, and the child's development primarily advances from stimulation of the senses and fine motor skills (Pound, 2005). Piaget had a strong belief that even from the moment you are born, the stimulation of senses will activate intellectual development (Hickey et al. 2018). To support this, Froebel (2005) believed that space and light played a fundamental role in development and that play was at the pinnacle of a child's ability to engage. Much of Friedrich Froebel's influence is evident today throughout early years settings and the child-centred approach (Pound, 2005). Similarly, Vygotsky (2013) believed that the dominant progression in the primary development of children is acquired through play (Tovey, 2013), and the presence of both cognitive and social growth work in unison and develop together.



5 - Vygotski



6 - Froebel



7 - Piaget

[The early years foundation stage framework](#) (2023) also regards play as a vital role in a child's progress. It stresses the importance of nurturing the requirements of the child by providing an environment of stimulating play. Maria Montessori's work is also evident within this framework, and many developmental programmes today. She believed that an emphasis should be placed on the learning environment. This included indoor and outdoor areas, the resources and decorations, and all the people within the environment – both the children and the adults (Mooney, 2013). If the environment in which a child spends considerable time is calming, in order and beautiful, the child will gain essential life skills without the need of a prominent focus on learning each task.

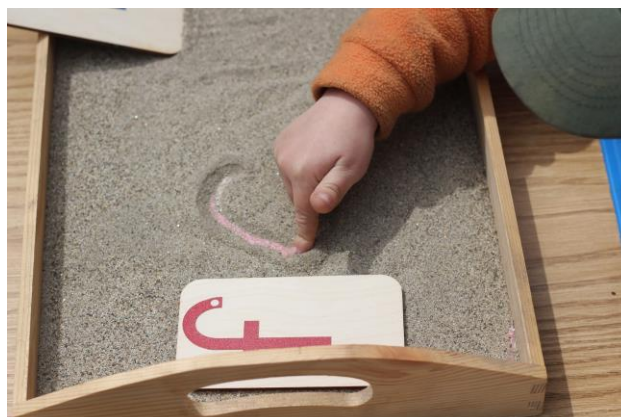
The lasting impact of Montessori's theory is echoed throughout Welsh non-maintained settings, with the new curriculum for Wales. This has been set out in the short clip from Education Wales, [Our National Mission \(2022\)](#). It states that children will progress and develop through a range of skills including communication and exploration. It also states the importance of choice for children and how they

should have the option to revisit activities at their own free will. There should also be hands on learning through play that will aid both independence and social skills (Welsh Government, 2022).

Examples of Activities

Pikler and Gerber (2020) both believed that with support and trust in a child's natural ability to learn through play will lead to positive outcomes if a wide range of resource is available for them to engage with their natural curiosity (Howley-Rouse, 2020). Using a curiosity centred approach such as loose parts play ignites a child's natural ability to explore. Stimulating all senses and aiding development for both cognitive function and physical growth. The Pikler inspired climbing triangle inspires development by providing complete freedom, encourages physical movement and stimulates senses, allowing the child to explore on its own accord (North, 2023).

Messy play encourages the touch senses and enhances explorative skills. There are many sensory activities including rice, sand, jelly and yoghurt. This will provide a fun experience for the child whilst gaining new curiosities. Messy play can be adapted for example playing a game to find the shell in the sand pit, or perhaps some pasta hidden in the jelly (Educational Blossom, 2023).

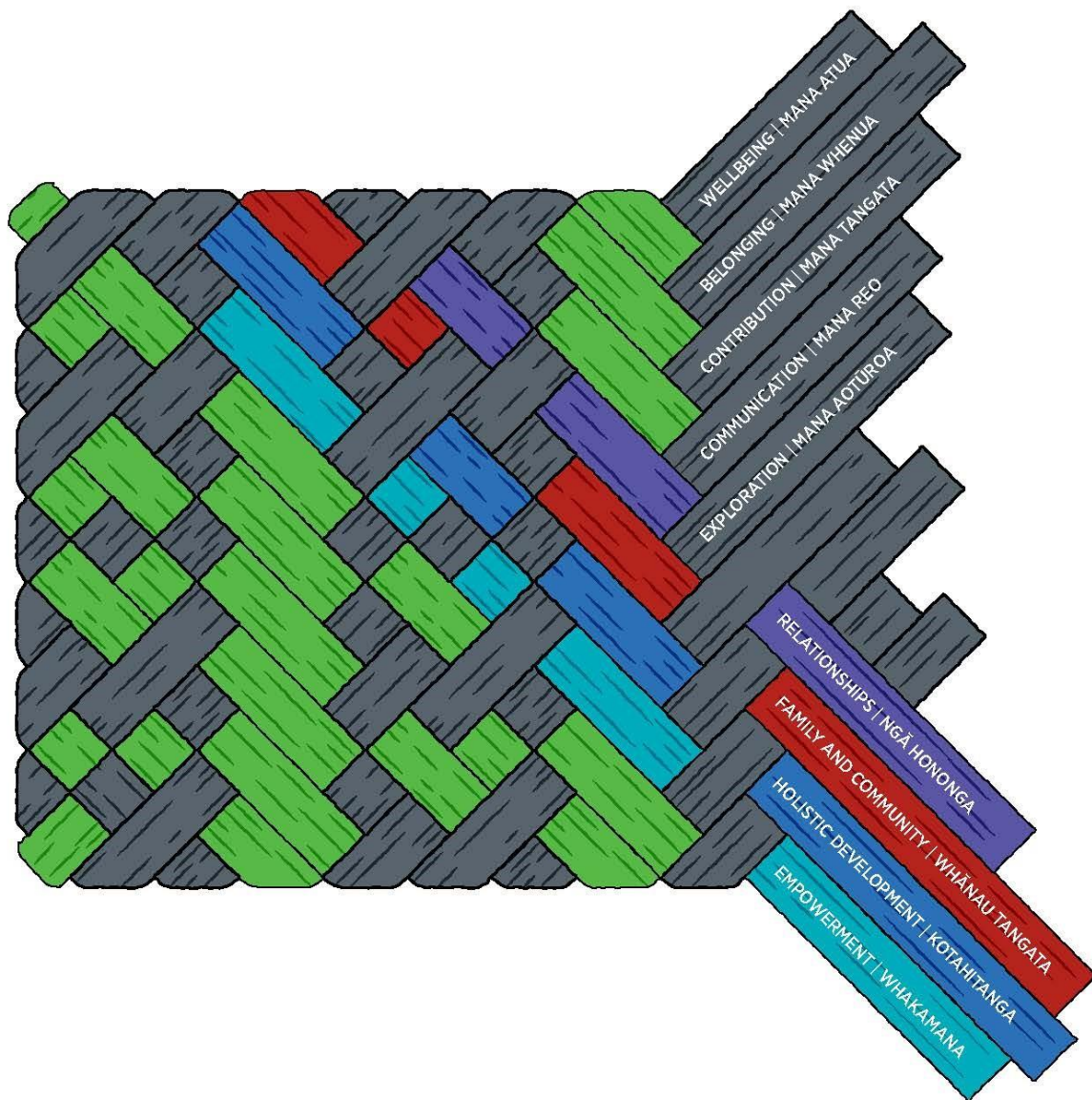






Treasure baskets and heuristic play are also very common during the first 1000 days. Closely linked to Piaget's sensory motor play theory, Goldschmied and Jackson (2004) suggest that a treasure basket can provide a collection of stimulating everyday items which will stimulate the senses (Clare, 2012). Eleanor Goldschmied states that children have been recorded playing with treasure baskets and being in a state of engaged concentration for around 60 minutes (Andrews, 2012).

International Approach



The Te Whariki Curriculum in New Zealand has similarities to that of the Welsh Curriculum. Predominantly a mixed culture framework which is designed to enrich the child, the 'woven mat' as it is translated from Te Whariki, is based upon the four key principles of the curriculum interconnecting with the five core areas of learning and development in the child, which is regarded as the strands. Within this holistic approach respect is encouraged and consideration to the environmental setting is given thought to.



Access to all varieties of resource is considered to be a key element to the role the child will play in their development (Ministry of Education, 2017). Another example of a comparable approach is Reggio Emilia, which adopts an approach by means of sharing, communicating and having mutual respect (Savage, 2015). Kinney (2005) claimed that a lot can be learnt from children. The child should have a voice to share with us what is important in their minds (Nut-brown, 2013). If a connection can be made the journey for a child to develop and achieve each milestone is set out in key concepts shared and repeated across various curriculums globally. Values, respect, time, environment and promoting creativity in children will enhance the effectiveness of a child's development (Thornton, 2010).



Inclusion



The importance of inclusion is clearly portrayed within the United Nations Conventions Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) where there are many articles that must be considered when understanding inclusive practice. Article 31 is one of the most prominent: very child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities. This is documented in the curriculum for non-maintained settings in Wales, which states that a child's environment should be welcoming, and adapted to suit all needs for children, thus avoiding any potential barriers where a child might not develop and learn to its full potential. It is also essential that all children are provided with undivided support to enable their learning outcomes (Welsh Government, 2022).

Freidrich Froebel and Maria Montessori were both advocates and great believers that children should be at the core of learning and play should be the focus point in development. Play should be a primary offering when caring for children (Nutbrown, 2009). Having the capability to be impartial in your approach and providing accessibility to resources and activities for every child is particularly important, however it is essential to address and make changes where necessary, to the environment when considering inclusive practice (Crawford et al., 2014). There were ten key principles devised within the 1959 Declaration of Rights of the Child, these were then revised in 1989 where there was a total of 54 articles which were more in depth and provided more insight. Due to the scale and complexity of these articles, they were grouped into four sections: prevention, provision, protection and participation.



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The Equality Act (2010) provides clarity on fair treatment for everybody. Within this act it lists nine characteristics which are regarded as protected and treatment of an individual cannot be any different to a person without these characteristics (Gov UK, 2015). Disability, gender, race and religion all fall within the Equality Act and early years settings are anticipated to have tailor made policies and a framework that positively engages its practitioners to practice in a non-discriminative manner (Mukherji, 2017).

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