



Exceptional Care in the First 1000 Days

The first 1000 days of a child's life is the period from conception to two years old. This period is recognised globally as a critical time, it is a period of rapid development for a child. During this period the baby's brain is only partially formed and developed and are influenced by early experiences. These experiences can have a lifelong impact on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the baby. It is important that these experiences are as positive as possible, as it will impact the child in all aspects of life in the future. It is important that a baby is nurtured to fulfil their potential and has the best start in life (HM Government, 2021).

This is also a critical period for developing communication and physical skills. Parents and carers must encourage and assist infants in learning and developing these skills. Monitoring is important as any delays in identifying problems can cause a significant impact and problems later. Early diagnosis

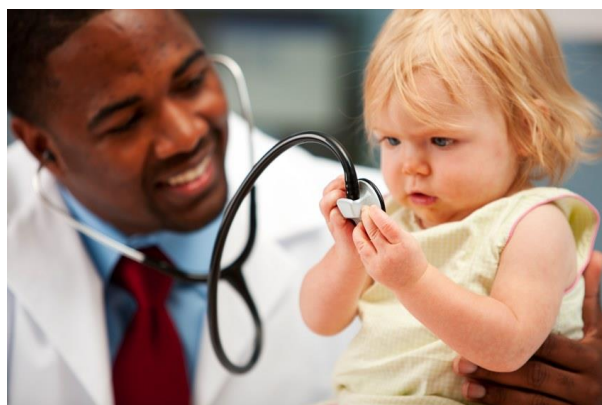
and ensuring parents or carers have access to the information and the services they need is important (HM Government, 2021).



The first 1000 days is all about prevention. A healthy pregnancy lays the foundation for the unborn child's healthy life. The infant hears what the mother hears as it grows and eats what the mother eats, this may lead to the unborn baby reacting if the mother is distressed. The mother's mental and physical wellbeing is crucial for the healthy growth of the infant (Gradovski *et al.*, 2020).

It is important parents receive the ideal kind of assistance and support to provide the best start for the life of the baby because adverse childhood experiences such as a traumatic event resulting from poor parental mental health, abuse, neglect, parental drug misuse and parental conflict can have a detrimental effect on all involved. This is more important now more than ever after the Covid-19 pandemic, the lockdowns and the isolation experienced during this time (Babies in Lockdown, 2020).

This support is provided from midwives, health visitors, social workers, primary care practitioners, General practitioners, and NHS 111. The Covid-19 pandemic has put extra pressure on families therefore, it is important to increase the level of health and care provision for young children in society born during this time and who did not have the same beginnings as children before them. Prevention along with a strong and supportive policy framework can build stronger societies. Giving the help that is needed and when it is needed (Babies in Lockdown, 2020).



Challenges

Some of the challenges that Early Years Practitioners' encounter is working within policies set out by the setting, and adapting new policies set locally by Care Inspectorate Wales, the National Minimum Standards and nationally by Government. Making sure ratio staff to children is always met, which is

not easy with so much illness among staff, babies, and young children currently due to low immune systems from isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other challenges are, planning, designing, and implementing a suitable curriculum and adapting it to the specific needs of all the children in their care. The main aim for babies and young children is play, playful learning, being outdoors and purposeful learning. Learning becomes naturally when the babies and young children are happy with the surrounding environment and competent and encouraging staff but this is not always possible if setting do not have a suitable outdoor space and unable to employ qualified staff (Welsh Government, 2022).



The current cost of living crisis is having a major impact on families' finances. Families are currently having to decide whether it is cost effective working and sending a child or children to a childcare setting as fees have been increased to compensate for the increases in gas, electricity and the nurseries overheads costs (Welsh Government, 2022).

Activity ideas



1 - Loose parts play



2 - Messy sensory play



3 - Water play



4 - Reading stories together

Learning starts within the womb. Babies can hear and feel what the mother can hear and feel it can also recognise beats at three months before birth (University of Washington, 2013). Babies are born with a motivation and the ability to learn, and the brain develops rapidly, and the responses received from others during activities promotes a healthy rapid development. This is achieved by a positive interaction between the child and adult called 'serve and return' this is achieved through sounds and gestures back and fore, child to adult. Being active and learning through exploration, discovery and interactions creates a positive brain connection which leads to positive development. These can be achieved through different activities and some of these are loose parts play, messy

sensory play, water play and through reading together either one on one or in a group (Gradovski *et al*, 2020).



5 - The Pikler Triangle

The Pikler climbing arch is one of these activities it teaches babies and young children firstly to move, stand and step then how to balance, climb, reach, pull and fall. It is used to encourage different movements independently, helping with self-confidence. Children learn to trust their instincts, to understand their own strengths and abilities and to make decisions. This Pikler approach links to the Montessori method where it also encourages freedom, to develop skills, and assess risk themselves. The child can independently learn new movements and skills (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022).

The Pikler Approach demonstrates the importance of our hands. Our hands are a powerful object. It can represent positive emotions and reactions, but it can also show disapproval and disappointment when using various gestures. Hands are important to babies as they are unable to communicate verbally so they explore objects and environments by using their hands by touching objects and experiencing different textures and able to move objects. It also emphasises that freedom to explore is the most powerful tool we can give a child along with a calm environment, tender words, and gestures. Respectful and deep care surrounding a child's routine helps to build a secure attachment. Giving the child choices to explore options helps to increase psychologically and physically. They gain confidence in decision making and influences the child's emotional well-being for example, giving them the choice what t-shirt or trousers they want to wear (Vamos, 2015).





Babies learn information more effectively when they are interested in the activity, and curiosity primes the brain for learning and enhances the enjoyment of subsequent learning. The Curiosity Approach (2017) founded by Lyndsey Hellyn and Stephanie Bennett is an innovative and creative method of supporting a child's development. The main aim of this approach is active learning and critical thinking and hopefully helps create a generation of thinkers, doers, and investigators. The approach places the child at the centre of the learning process allowing opportunities to be imaginative, creative and to explore. Modern toys and technology are removed and replaced by everyday items, encouraging the children to create their own toys out of natural materials. This approach gives the child control to shape the play, instead of the toy directing the play, allowing problem solving, this all takes place in a calm, welcoming and in a secure environment. The Curiosity Approach has been inspired by many educational theories such as Montessori, Steiner, Reggio and The Te Whariki approach from New Zealand which focuses on experiential and self-directed learning (Day Nurseries.co.uk, 2023).



6 - Noam Chomsky

Curiosity is also important for language learning and Noam Chomsky, based his language theory on the idea that all languages contain similar rules and structures and that children gain language the same way, he refers this as 'Universal Grammar' and that everybody is born with a set of rules about language in our minds. It supports the ability for a child to communicate, to express and understand feelings to assists with cognitive function. interpersonal development and maintenance. Language development lays the foundation for reading and writing (Researchgate, 2021).

Environments

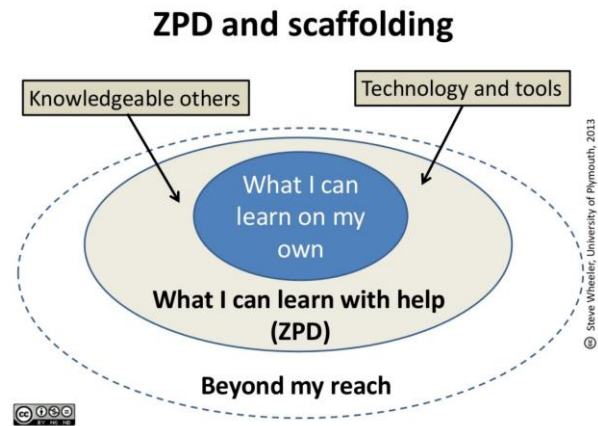


(Bradford and Knowles, 2016) believes that children need to know from a young age that they matter, therefore it is important that all children have a choice to share in decisions relating to learning and the learning environment. The new Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings for Wales sets out the guidelines nurseries need to act in accordance with and implement in their setting. The environment in the setting should be welcoming, they should value and celebrate diversity and be inclusive (Welsh Government, 2022). Creating an enabling environment for babies and young children means developing an environment in response to the cognitive, affective, and physical learning needs by actively interacting as opposed to passive observations which contributes greatly to assessments and planning (Blandford and Knowles, 2016).

This can be achieved firstly with pleasant surroundings, making the children feel at ease and showing respect to each other. Making sure that there is plenty of suitable resources and are accessible. Qualified member of staff to engage with quality and genuine interaction by listening to the children and encouraging. One way of interacting is having a photo of a child putting on a coat near the cloakroom, on the wall at the height of the children drawing their attention to the photo and encouraging them to do the same but giving assistance if needed. Various photos in different areas within the setting will encourage interaction, help build positive relationships and the child learning life skills in the process (Blandford and Knowles, 2016).

A structured and well-planned setting will support a child's growth in their comprehension of mathematical, for example, by providing visual and hands-on chances for learning about number, form and pattern both indoors and outside. Children should be given opportunities to develop their

fine and gross motor skills, taking risks to gain confidence by physically challenging themselves. Practitioners can use Vygotsky's Scaffolding Zone of proximal development, as a tool to help them with observations of the children, making a note of what the child is capable of doing on their own and with assistance. This can also help with planning further activities to enhance experiences (Welsh Government, 2022).



7 - Vygotsky Scaffolding Zone of proximal development

Being Inclusive



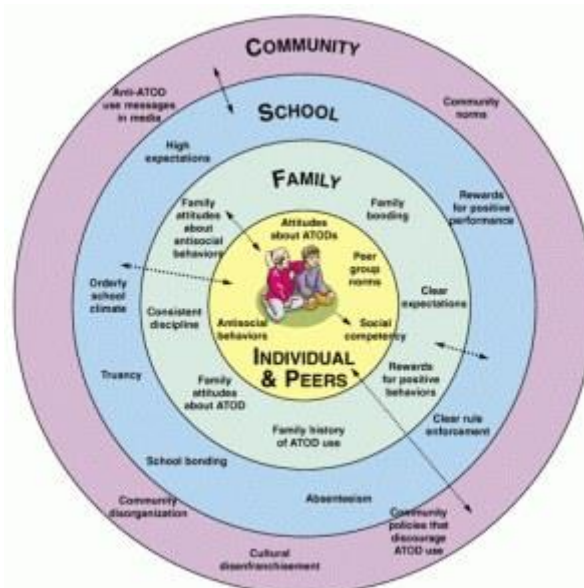
Integrating inclusive practises into a holistic pedagogical approach allows all children to have the opportunity to experience a strong sense of belonging and representation in the setting environment. This is essential in making the children feel confident and to thrive. By valuing and

promoting diversity of the children and their families, inclusive practises make certain they are treated fairly and have access to opportunities and respect (Cologon, 2014).

The environment and the practitioners that surrounds the child influences learning. Children learn from what they hear and see around them. This can have a positive and sometimes a negative impact on what actions they learn from them. A positive influence is promoted in the setting by being inclusive and all the areas of learning is accessible to all the children, this influences positive child's development. The environment should also provide authentically diversified resources that represents gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability. Any barriers should be removed as this could impact on participation and resources offered should not be gender specific, allowing all children to be involved. Practitioner reflecting regularly on the Equal Opportunity Policy of the setting is good practice, any issues or problems that staff or children have experienced can be investigated and improved (Welsh Government, 2022).

Professional Partnership / Relationships

Building positive personal and professional relationships from birth is important. This is demonstrated in Bronfenbrenner Ecological System Theory, where the child is at the centre of its own environment and any relationships that the child is involved with. These relationships start with the child and family, siblings, extended family and a day care setting, these relationships develops when the child starts a new setting, primary school, after school clubs, extended family, new friendships then as the child grows its Comprehensive school, college, University, workplace, the community, Laws (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022).



8 - Bronfenbrenner Ecological System

The Every Child Matters Policy led the way to developing a framework to maximise opportunities available to all children by building services around their needs. A child may attend more than one setting for example, school in the morning and a childcare setting in the afternoon. There should be continuity between the two by sharing relevant information and helping with transitions. Any information shared can improve communication between parents, carers, and school. This

information may help to identify any learning needs and allowing a quick response to any learning difficulties by referring the child to the relevant professionals for advice and assessments, giving the child the best possible opportunities to develop with extra support. These can be social services, speech and language therapists or paediatricians. When there is a breakdown in a professional relationships and partnerships some of the barriers are lack of communication, understanding, funding, qualified staff, time and a lack of leadership or support from management (Blandford and Knowles, 2016).

Respectful Care and Meaningful Learning



Attachments formed during the first two years of a child's life can have a detrimental effect on future attachments. A positive attachment to a practitioner or an adult increases positiveness, confidence and encourages play and exploration with peers. When a child is away from parents and shows emotions such as fear, sadness, anger and despair the practitioner must stand in for the parent. Bowlby and Ainsworth (1969) Attachment theory claims that if an adult dismisses or ignores a child the child may see this as rejection and the Ethic-of-care theory proposed by Nel Noddings (1984) encourages thought and feelings, these underpin the notion of professional love. Practitioners need to be patient as attachments may take many different forms and could take some children longer than others. Children learn to be independent and strong through positive relationships and attachments.

There are many meaningful learning experiences in babies' daily routine that as practitioner can facilitate professional love and form attachments. These may include leaving the child to explore their food by feeding themselves but the practitioner being close by if they are needed. The child learns to feel and touch and get to experience different textures and taste. This gives them the opportunity to decide what they like and dislike and encourages decision making. There is an opportunity to encourage language development during nappy changing, making the most of the child's full attention by chatting, singing and counting.

Nappy changing can settle a child if they do not feel happy, but it can also raise some issues surrounding safeguarding and child protection. Practitioners can be made to feel that the child is suspicious of them and the procedure, therefore professional love, care and intimacy in a setting has to be done with care which meets each child's needs while being careful and respectful by not leaving themselves open to false accusations of any wrong doing.

Practitioners need to be confident in everyday practice, knowing how to follow theory, guidelines and practice and know what is appropriate and inappropriate. Training and guidance are needed to overcome these challenges and the dilemmas of professional love. The main aim for a practitioner is for all children to develop and thrive independently and also that the children know if they are unhappy they can come and have a cuddle and be reassured (Page, 2017, 387-399).



International Approaches

International approaches play an important part in underpinning some approaches here in the United Kingdom. Forest Schools originated in Sweden in the 1950s then spread to Denmark and it is from here they flourished around the world. They offer an inspirational learning and play

experiences to children in nature. It is a holistic, multi-sensory approach to learning and development, it involves exciting and engaging challenges. It is a child-led approach and an approach which allows to build on a child's interests and ideas to create exiting play and learning opportunities

The 8 principals of a Forest school curriculum have been adapted and expanded to match the needs of different countries. These are:

1. Outdoor play in nature
2. Risk taking but not completely risk free
3. Children spend a prolonged periods of time outdoors
4. Learning occurs in all weather conditions
5. Trust between the children and the teacher
6. Learning is play based, child initiated and child-led
7. Ceremonial events to end the session
8. Specially trained staff

These principals contribute to improve the children's knowledge about the outdoor environment around them, increase confidence, developing motor skills. learning to evaluate risks, developing resilience, learn about the weather, spontaneity and encouraging creativity also includes creative use of the environment.

Children learn about the special connections of their homeland for example, Australian Forest School Association are based on the Forest School philosophy, but they embrace the Australian unique elements, these include immersion regularly in nature, connections with the country, natural learning and free play, Accessibility and being inclusive, mentoring practices, environmental and sustainable practice (Australian Forest School Association, 2023)



Froebel principals and theory is aligned with Forest Schools. His principals put the child at the centre of the learning experience, children engaging with the outdoors through play and increasing creativity and able to express themselves freely, being free to explore, experiment in different environment and encourage the use of all senses (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022).

Te Whariki curriculum names Vygotsky as a key underpinning social cultural theorist to influence the principles of their curriculum. They both state that language and communication encourages children to understand and develop in the world around them. Empowerment, holistic growth, family, community, and connections are among Te Whariki's guiding principles. This is described as a 'woven mat, with every principle interconnecting. These include well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration.

There is a strong focus on how children behave to ensure their own well-being is met and for the practitioner it is creating a safe and caring environment that nurtures development. This is achieved by ensuring consistency and continuity as children transition from one learning area to another. One aim the practitioner has is to ensure children feel a sense of belonging in the classroom through interacting socially with peers, their teachers, and the community. The cultural heritage of any child should be brought into the school, embraced and supported, making it inclusive. Age appropriate equipment and tools are provided for the children to explore through play encouraging the children to become confident and competent learners (NZ Ministry of Education, 2017).

(Lee, W. *et al* 2013) states that underpinning the Te Whariki curriculum is Bronfenbrenner's theory as it emphasises the importance of families, teachers, the community and society in supporting children's development. The people who provide positive relationships and closest to the child, provides the biggest influences on the child's development.

Reference List

Australian Forest School Association (2023) *AFSA guiding Principles*. Available at: <https://australiaforestschoolassociation.org> (Accessed on 16th January 2023)

Babies in Lockdown (2020) *Listening to parents to build back better – Best beginnings, Home-Start UK, and the Parent-Infant Foundation*. Available at: [Course: Y 1000 diwrnod cyntaf/The first 1000 days \(ECEY4005/C\) \(uwtsd.ac.uk\)](https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/course/Y1000diwrnodcyntaf/Thefirst1000days(ECEY4005/C)) (Accessed 3rd January 2023)

Blandford, S. and Knowles, C. (2016) *Developing professional practice, 0-7*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge. (Accessed 4th January 2023)

Bradbury, A. and Swailes, R. (2022) *Early Childhood Theories Today*. London: SAGE (Accessed 15th January 2023)

Cologon, K. (2014) *Inclusive Education in The Early Years: Right from the start*. Australia: Oxford University press. (Accessed 18th January 2023)

Day Nurseries.co.uk (2023) Available at: <https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/advice/the-curiosity-approach-to-early-years-learning?faq=5> (Accessed 5th January 2023)

Forest School Association (no date) *An Introduction to Forest School*. [YouTube] Available at: <https://youtu.be/5qCN0JHeR-Y> (Accessed on 15th January 2023)

Forest School Association (no date) Available at: <https://forestschoolassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/> (Accessed 15th January 2023)

Gradovski, M, *et al*. (2020) *The First 1000 Days of Early Childhood: Becoming*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. (Accessed 3rd January 2023)

HM Government (2021) *The Best Start for Life. A vision for the 1001 Critical Days. The Early Years Healthy Development, Review Report*. (Accessed 3rd January 2023) - moodle

Jools, P. (2017) 'Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood'. *Reframing infant-toddler pedagogy through a lens of professional love: Exploring narratives of professional practice in early childhood settings in England*. Volume: 18(4) pp.387-399. (Accessed 18th January 2023)

Karakochuk, Crystal D. *et al.* (2018) *The biology of the first 1,000 days*. Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis. (Accessed 4th January 2023)

Lee, W. *et al* (2013) Understanding the Te Whariki approach: *Early years education in practice*. New Zealand: Routledge. (Accessed 14th January 2023)

Mooney, C.G. (2013) *Theories of childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget & Vygotsky*. 2nd edn. United States of America: Readleaf Press. (Accessed 9th January 2023)

New Zealand Ministry of Education (2017). Te Whariki early childhood curriculum. Available at: <https://education.govt.nz/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf> (Accessed 14th January 2023)

Researchgate (2021) The Journal of EFL Education and Research: *The Universal Grammar Theory: Noam Chomsky's Contribution to Second Language (SL) Education*. Available at: https://reseachgate.net/publication/353637839_The_Universal_Grammar_Theory_Noam_Chomsky's_Contribution_to_Second_Language_SL_Education. (Accessed 9th January 2023)

University of Washington (2013) *While in womb, babies begin learning language from their mothers*. Available at: <https://www.washington.edu/news/2013/01/02/while-in-womb-babies-begin-learning-language-from-their-mother/> (Accessed 4th January 2023)

VAMOS, J. (2015) FREE TO MOVE, FREE TO BE*. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*. Volume: 75(1), pp. 65-75. (Accessed 5th January 2023)

Welsh Government (2022) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery setting*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed on 18th January 2023)

Module code: ECEY4005

Eira Mainwaring

Student Number: 2216696

Word count: 3054