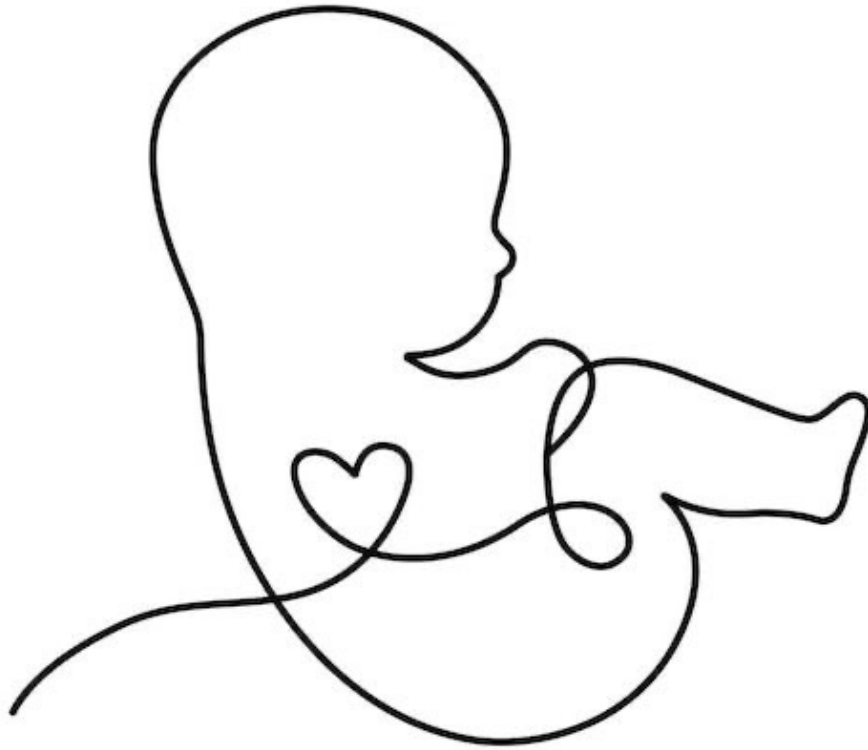




Source: Free Pik, No date.

ECEY4005 - The First 1,000 Days

MUM TO BE NUTRITION

IMPORTANT NUTRITION ELEMENTS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

DAILY VALUE

VITAMIN D - 5 MCD
TO INCREASE CALSIUM ABSORPTION



10 SLICES OF CHEDDAR CHEESE

IRON - 27 MG
TO REDUCE RISK OF DIETARY IRON DEFICIENCY



5 SERVES OF BEEF STEAK

IODINE - 220 MCG
TO PROMOTE HEALTHY BRAIN AND NERVE DEVELOPMENT



22 CANS OF TUNA

CALCIUM - 1 000 MG
TO PROMOTE BONE DEVELOPMENT

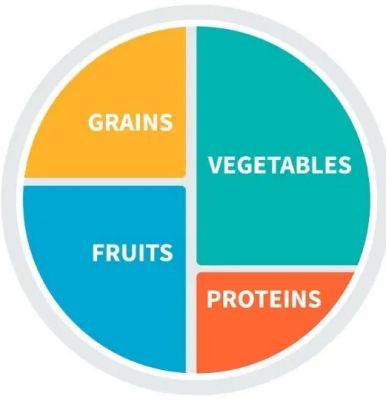


375 ALMONDS

FOLIC ACID - 800 MCG
CAN REDUCE RISK OF SPINA BIFIDA



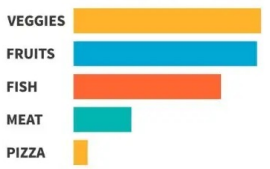
18 CUPS OF SPINACH



SUGGESTED DAILY INTAKE

DAIRY	3 CUPS
FRUIT	2 CUPS
GRAINS	6 OZ
PROTEIN	5 OZ
VEGETABLES	2 CUPS

TOP HEALTHY FOOD FOR PREGNANT WOMEN



DOCTORS SUGGEST PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD EAT 5 TIMES A DAY



MUM TO BE FAVORITE FOOD



25 POUNDS

AVERAGE WOMEN GAIN DURING PREGNANCY



2 400 CALORIES

IS NORMAL AVERAGE INTAKE OF WOMEN DURING PREGNANCY

68% WOMEN

NOTICE APPETITE CHANGE DURING PREGNANCY



The first 1,000 days is a critical period from when a child is conceived until they turn two years old. During this time frame, the baseline of a child's development is being laid; however, a range of factors can impact the child's ability to thrive, grow and learn in the future. Factors that can affect the development are the mother's nutrition, secure relationships, positive environments, and opportunities for physical development (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2024)

Research shows that infant and mother nutrition is vital in promoting an infant's holistic development in the future. 1,000 Days (No Date) talks about the importance of good nutrition during the three stages of the first 1,000 days – pregnancy, infancy and being a toddler and how it can enable the infant to learn, develop, and grow to their full potential. During pregnancy, if the mother is not fueling her body with nutritional foods, it can have long-lasting effects on her infant's brain development. However, suppose her body is being well fueled with the correct nutrients. In that case, it will support the infant's brain development throughout pregnancy, hopefully allowing for brain development to reach its full potential. Critical nutrients for an infant's brain development are zinc, iron, protein, copper, folate, iodine, and specific fats (1,000 Days, No Date).

The environment and social background the infant is brought up in can also impact their later development. The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, 2018 states that 'Right from conception, the foetus uses cues provided by the mother's physical and mental state to 'predict' the sort of world that it will be born into and starts to adapt its bodily systems to meet the anticipated demands of the world'.

During pregnancy, if the mother is experiencing harm or living in poverty, it can influence the development and growth of the foetus in utero. Mama Care (2021) discusses how maternal stress and anxieties can impact overall growth and development. This means that if a mother is experiencing poverty and becoming stressed over the position that they are in, it can affect the foetus and potentially stunt their growth, maybe leading to development sitting on a lower percentile than expected.

Exceptional Care in the Early Years



Source: Asgar Era, A (2023) (b)

All early years workers are a part of the caring profession, meaning that they should be continually caring for the children as a part of their daily duties. A child's general care is just as important as the provision provided within the setting, as it impacts their overall growth and development just as much.

Care covers various areas in the early years, particularly physical interactions, relationships between the children/parents and the key workers and a child's emotional development. To be an early years worker, it is vital that they can notice any minor change in a child and have concerns for these changes if they are abnormal, be able to love and care for the children, engage positively with the child, and encourage development where needed, these are just some of the key qualities. To ensure that exceptional care is being provided in the setting, practitioners should reflect upon their daily practice and uncover any area that can be improved to further the care already being provided (Birth to 5 Matters, 2020).

Childcare settings that strive to provide exceptional care to all children who attend should ensure that inspection reports are available for parents to view, either within the setting or online. This way, parents and carers can view the reports over the years. Practitioners should ensure children are praised for achievements, such as successfully using the potty/toilet or trying their best to participate in an activity. The setting should ensure that they provide the children with plenty of good quality resources and toys for them to explore. These resources should be made accessible both indoors and outdoors; it is essential that children have access to outdoor learning and play, for example, messy play or forest school. When mealtimes are provided to the children, the setting should establish they are nutritious. If settings need support to provide nutritious meals, they can receive support or apply for the Welsh Networks of Healthy Schools Scheme Awards (Pacey, 2024).

Additionally, within childcare settings, if the children are continually provided with exceptional care, it will encourage them to discover what they can do and understand. If the child is being positively praised for trying new things, it will encourage them to feel secure and create an attachment with that key worker. If the key worker understands the child and their needs and responds appropriately, it can help the child develop within areas of their self-esteem and self-image (CHILD, 2023).

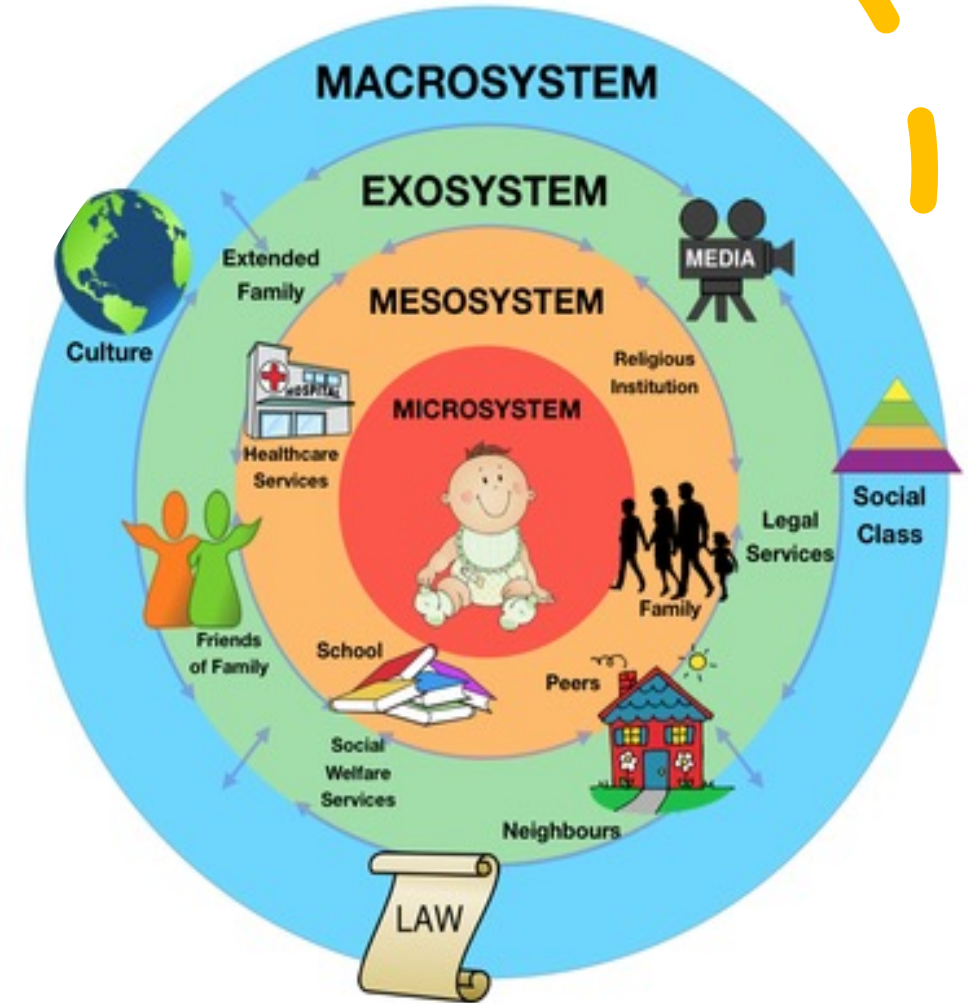
Asgar Era, A (2023) (a) talks about the importance of all settings to make sure that they are providing the exceptional care that they should; make sure that the setting is continually inclusive for children of all abilities, supporting the children and their families, creating a positive environment for the children to experience, understanding the needs of all children attending, and to continually make sure that the children are learning and growing through a range of positive and stimulating experiences.

Professional Partnerships

Partnership working is an important part of the job role of an Early Years Practitioner. Not only do they work with external agencies, but they also work closely with the families of the children in their care. Working in partnership allows for the needs of the children to be met individually and as a whole, allowing for the appropriate support and access to relevant resources to be made available to the families. Practitioners and families can work together to enable children to thrive throughout education, growth, and development; all children and young people will have different needs and abilities; hence, it is important to ensure professional partnerships are continually taking place (Grasper, M. 2009, pp. 2).

Grasper, M. 2009, pp. 8 states the main benefits of partnership working in the early years are that it can be more efficient when it comes to the children's needs being more likely to be met and earlier identified, any needs can be dealt with holistically and support given to the family where necessary. Also, being effective in the family and the child's needs and concerns have been valued, allowing for confidence to grow that the child's needs are being met.

The Voice of Early Childhood, 2024. Discusses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory and the importance of positive relationships being formed between parents and practitioners and how factors, for instance, school, family, culture, and community, can have long-term effects on a child's development. If there is a positive relationship between parents and practitioners, there will be regular interaction, allowing for key information to be passed on and for there to be sufficient support at home. An example of this is if a child is struggling with phonics development, intervention can be put into place in school, such as a 5–10-minute personal phonics session in the morning. Also, a phonic sound booklet could be sent home with the child correlating with sounds in their weekly reading books. This could be communicated with the parent and supported at home; if the parent-practitioner relationship is positive, it is more likely to be followed through.



An early year’s worker plays a crucial role in developing a foetus into a young child whilst also supporting the families of the children. Early years workers help families understand their children better and help them support their children to achieve their best abilities.

Maternal factors can also impact their child’s development, especially within the first 1000 days. A child’s development can be put at risk if their mother or someone in their family is struggling with their mental health. It is often that even if parents are struggling with their mental health, they can continue providing a loving home for their children. However, this is not always the case; support may often be needed.

Freud, A. (b) (No Date) talks about the importance of supporting parents if there are concerns about mental health difficulties. The parents should be offered a safe space to communicate their problems and ask if they would accept a referral to a well-being team, the appropriate resourceful team, or if they will accept leaflets for where they can search for help. Some childcare settings have well-being on site that can support families and staff that are in need.

A child’s development is at risk if their parents are struggling with their mental health, meaning that the child is not getting the support that they need at home. The National Library of Medicine (2004) states that ‘An infant of a depressed mother is at risk for developing an insecure attachment, negative affect and dysregulated attention’.

AVOIDANT-INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE

DEFINITION

This attachment style is a pattern of interpersonal relationships characterized by a discomfort with closeness and a desire to maintain emotional distance. Individuals with this attachment style often find it difficult to trust others and may avoid intimate relationships to protect themselves from potential rejection or pain.

EXAMPLES

- **Hesitation in Commitment:** An individual might avoid or delay making long-term commitments in relationships, fearing vulnerability.
- **Dismissing Feelings:** When a partner expresses feelings or concerns, a person with avoidant attachment might minimize or dismiss them.

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Source: Cornell, D (2024)

If a child is experiencing an insecure attachment within their home environment due to their parents struggling with mental health, it can harm a child’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. Further down the line, this can impact the child and their behavioural patterns, meaning that they might uncontrollably lash out and be unable to regulate themselves; this could be due to witnessing an unhealthy environment at home and reenacting what they have seen at home. This then may affect the child's not wanting to go home at the end of the day, as they do not feel as safe as they do at home when key workers and friends surround them. If key workers notice this, it should be reported on MyConcern or to a safeguarding officer as soon as possible to help support and/or protect the child from harm at home. (Freud, A (c), No Date). Children who experience an insecure attachment can impact their ability to create friendships when they are older. This would be because previous experiences in life have taught them not to trust everyone who surrounds them in their life (NSPCC, 2021).

Challenges within the Early Years

Working in the early years proves that there are a lot of challenges that workers will face daily. Challenges can make some days a lot more challenging than others, meaning there can be other areas of the day somewhat impacted by these. Challenges that early years workers can experience range from effective communication with other staff, following EYFP Frameworks, and adopting positive relationships with parents and families, to making sure that the setting is continuously inclusive for all children that attend.

Early years workers shape children's and young people's lives right from the very start. It is vital that early years workers can provide stimulating environments that cater for children of all abilities, as no two children are the same. Providing these environments for children will help to enhance the overall growth, learning and development of the children who attend (Nursery Story, 2023).



Source: Svetikd (2014)

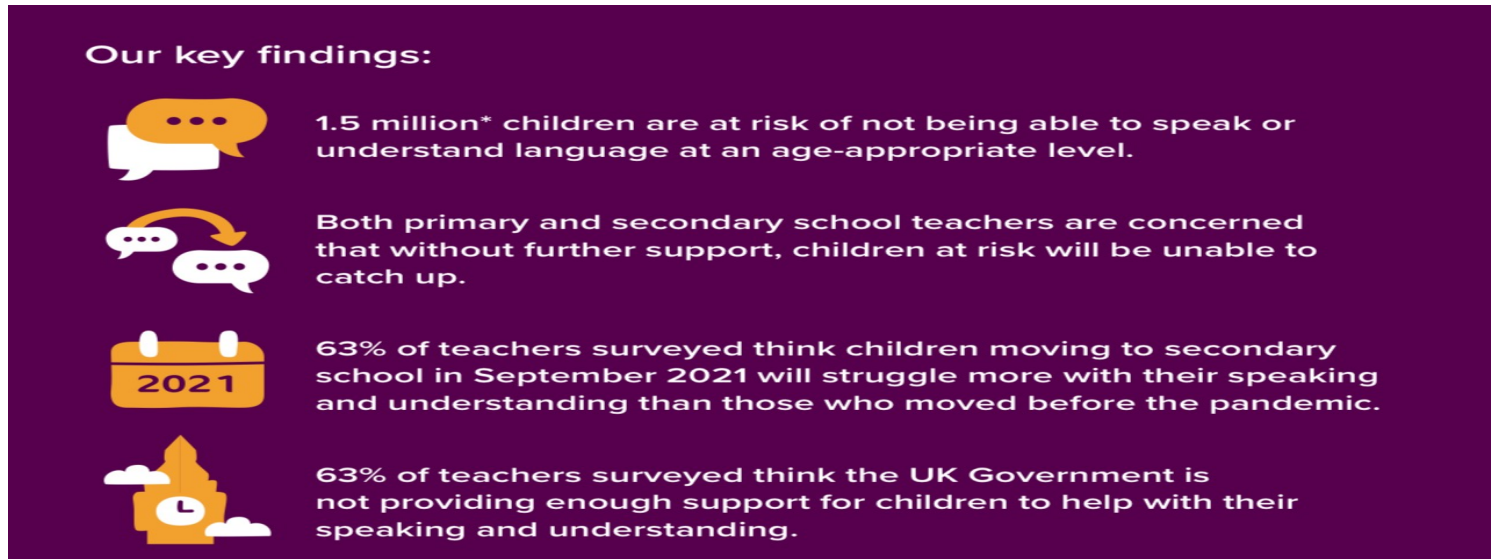
In all childcare settings, children will be paired with a key worker. A key worker is paired with a child to help meet their individual needs and support holistic development and a child's physical needs. Not only will the children have a bond with the key worker, but so will the parents and families of the children. However, when a child is old enough to progress to new rooms or classrooms, this will mean that the child will be paired with a new key worker and that a bond will have to be formed all over again. This can impact the child and cause regression in steps of coming to the setting and not wanting to leave their parents. It will also mean that the parents must form a new bond with the key worker; this can be hard on the families as they must put a lot of trust into these relationships as they revolve around their child. This happens not only in early years settings but also in schools. A child might be paired with a Teaching Assistant to support the child with intervention. That child will learn to trust and feel comfortable with that member of staff, but then when they move from the Foundation Phase into Key Stage 2, they will be paired with a different member of staff, meaning that this bond will have to be formed over again (Early Years Matter, 2023).

COVID-19 has had a massive impact on the early years and the education system, affecting it in more ways than one. House of Lords Library (2023) states that the pandemic massively impacted children in several ways, including School readiness, physical development, mental health, and social, emotional, and behavioural development. Also, stating that communication and language development has and continues to be affected, meaning that early years providers must put more interventions into place to help support children with their language and communication development.

I CAN (2022) research into the impact of speech and language on children due to COVID-19 has discovered that around 1.5 million children are at risk of lacking understanding or the ability to speak English at an age-appropriate level. I CAN (2022) believe that this is due to a lack of communication-rich environments, activities, and experiences during the COVID period, including a lack of social interactions and increased use of technologies. This research solidifies the importance of early years educators understanding their role in supporting children's language and understanding of the world around them; furthermore, the significance of positive relationships with families of the children so they can work together to support the child and include external agencies where needed.



Source: Murphy, H. (2021)



Source: ICAN (2022)



Activities

Learning for children should be dynamic and never static. Ausubel & Robinson (1969) state that ‘learning would be more permanent when an individual makes sense of a new perception by relating with the knowledge learned and accumulated in long term memory.’ Meaningful learning is more effective when children can connect a new experience or something learned to the knowledge they have retained.

Children in the early years should be provided with various activities they can learn from, for instance, loose parts, forest schooling, Montessori Learning and more. Loose parts is a pedagogical approach to learning where children can take control of their learning and play with everyday objects other than toys bought from supermarkets. This approach to learning was conceptualised by Simon Nicholson in 1972, who believed that children learn best in an environment where they can enjoy, experiment, and learn for themselves (PACEY, 2019).

Any setting can involve loose parts play. To support this, providing resources as follows can be used: random household objects (perfume bottles, sunglasses, buttons or old China kitchen sets), natural resources (pinecones, mud, hay), scrap materials (unused guttering, old tyres or tarpaulin) or even natural occurring resources that can be found indoors and outdoors. Loose parts play can occur both indoors and outdoors; the more space and resources the children can be provided, the better experience the children can have (Play Scotland, No Date).

MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Learning new things is easier for kids when the new part connects to something they already know a little bit about. When kids can connect their own experiences and interests, they are able to build a bridge between what they know and the new ideas and concepts, which gives the new learning meaning. This also makes learning feel like a small stretch, instead of a huge leap!

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INTRODUCING NEW SENSORY EXPERIENCES

Incorporate elements of your kids' environment into their play, like snow, water, and mud. Because your kids have seen these elements before, they are more likely to touch and manipulate them, and learn from the different ways they look, feel, and even taste!





LETTING THEIR INTERESTS LEAD

What are your kids' favorite animals? Maybe they saw a lion at the zoo and couldn't stop talking about it after. This is a great opportunity to find a book to read together about lions and learn about where they come from, which may lead to learning about habitats and Africa, and then you could locate Africa on a map together, and then the learning goes on from there!



ENCOURAGING CONFIDENCE

Cook together! When you allow your kids to independently stir, scoop, mix, and pour, you're showing confidence in their abilities. When you show you trust them, your kids learn to trust themselves as they try something new, which gives them confidence as they continue to learn and grow.

Adapted from Wyoming's Coherent Path to Quality



Nicholson (1972), including Maria Montessori, were advocates for children needing real-life experiences within the early years; giving children the opportunity to play with loose parts supports these approaches (Play Scotland, No Date).

Rockingham Montessori School (2022) states that within a Montessori setting, children are free to move around and choose the activities they want to participate in. The classrooms are fully accessible for the children, allowing the children to explore materials and activities with ease. This allows the children to be able to learn at their own pace, where they are not rushed or pressured by other children or key workers. Children become more engaged in the activities provided, meaning that they become self-motivated and can develop a sense of direction in their learning.

Loose parts play and Montessori Theory allows children to gain meaningful learning experiences. This can be demonstrated through children taking part in loose part play and demonstrating something they will have experienced at home, for instance, playing with a china kitchen set and having a tea party with their friends or finding buttons and sewing them onto materials as they may have seen their grandparents doing this. This shows that children are learning from experiences that they have seen or taken part in, leading back to them being a meaningful learning experience. Montessori learning allows children to learn through experiences that they want to experience and are not forced to (Ausubel, D. P. & Robinson F. G., 1969).

There are international approaches to activities and learning for children in the early years, for example, Forest School and Reggio Emilia.

Forest School Association (No Date) explains Forest School as a child-centred approach to learning that offers opportunities for holistic development and growth. It is a resource that supports play, guided risk-taking and exploration of the outdoors, allowing for a child's confidence and independence to grow. Forest school is a meaningful learning experience as it allows the children to learn from real-life experiences and how to solve them efficiently, helping them for future experiences.

Nido Early School (2022) describes the Reggio Emilia approach as a curriculum where children guide themselves, allowing the children to express themselves in their own way. This is done through activities such as sculpting, drawing, painting, and language. These are all meaningful learning experiences that children can experience daily in all settings; if Reggio Emilia is implemented into most childcare settings in some ways, it'll help prepare them to transfer from early years settings into school.



Source: Outdoors Group (2021)



Source: Parry, C (2021)

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