



**Exceptional care in the 1st 1000 days.**

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## Introduction.



It is within the first 1000 days (from conception to 2 years old) which is a vital role for early childhood development and healthy growth. It is within this timeframe where a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development and health is determined. This is where a child will be most vulnerable and dependent on a healthy, enabling environment and parental care (Gawar, 2021, p.34).

Wave trust (2013) believe that there are many important factors to take into consideration that help promote positive development and critical care to a baby whilst inside the mother's womb:

- **No alcohol/smoking or drug misuse.**
- **Not suffering from anxiety or stress.**
- **Eating a balanced diet.**
- **No domestic violence within the home.**
- **Being supported throughout the pregnancy and birth.**

Langsdon and Abbot (2006) believe that the care and well-being of babies and young children from birth to 3 years old have never been held at a high regard before now, however now children and babies are now considered as the centre of care and education to have the best possible chance at a healthy development.

As the UNCRC (2017) states in article 28, all children are entitled to an education and those teaching the children must always respect their rights and dignity. Whilst all children develop at their own pace, all babies and children hold huge potential within them.

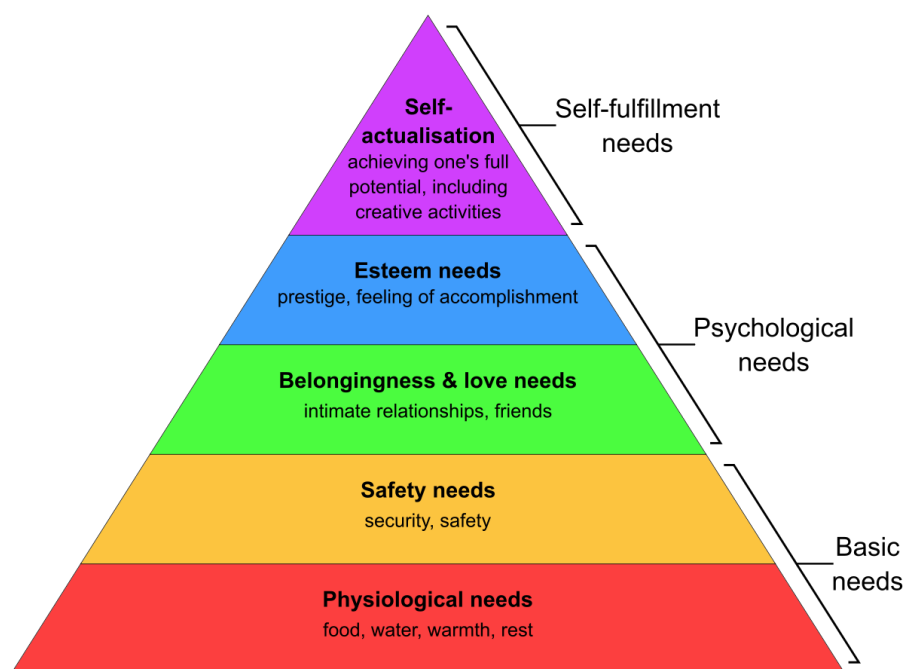
A baby's development within the first 1000 days can be extremely rapid and can be heavily influenced by their environment and those adults that they depend on, which is why there is now a vast amount of support to help scaffold learning for all children to ensure that they are receiving nothing but the best possible care (Hyson and Biggar Tomlinson, 2014).

According to Leicestershire County council (2022) it is within the first 1000 days that is most important and influential time in a child's life, and they believe this time to be a window of opportunity to help develop a child's brain and healthy growth.

Torbay council (N.D) suggests that babies are able to communicate with their primary caregiver through displaying behaviours such as crying, laughing, and non-verbal communication such as tensing and jerking movements. Torbay council (N.D) states that Maslow believes that a baby cannot thrive and develop unless their basic needs such as food, water, warmth, and sleep are being met.

The Cambridge Dictionary (2022) states that Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory (1954) is a theory about why human beings do certain things, it is also described as a human's motivation. Maslow believes that until a human's basic needs are met other needs will not be satisfied.

Mcleod (2018) suggests that the order of needs within Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory can be flexible, and they may be based on different circumstances and each individuals' unique needs.







Enabling environments.



The environment that babies and children are subjected to in the first 1000 days plays a vital role in nurturing and developing the child as a whole. To help babies and children develop well within their environments practitioners should support transitioning for babies within settings such as child minders or nurseries, it is also wise to ensure the space that is provided is a safe, relaxed space that can mimic the home environment, as when children feel secure and supported emotionally this is when they feel able to explore their surroundings and when experiential learning begins to take place (Early years matters, 2022).

The department for education (2021) believes that every child is unique and should have the opportunity to develop and thrive within enriching environments with enabling adults who are able to respond to each child's individual needs and interests. This framework advises practitioners that enabling environments must help promote children's enthusiasm for learning and encourage natural curiosity.

PACEY (N.D) suggests that when creating an enabling environment that help to care and nurture babies and children there are many factors that must be taken into consideration:

- **Indoor space.**
- **Outdoor space.**
- **Ensuring babies and children feel safe in their surroundings.**
- **Importance of the emotional environment.**

They believe that if practitioners and caregivers ensure all these factors are met and are working effectively then children and babies will thrive within these settings, giving them a positive outlook on education and support their physical and emotional development.

Page, Clare and Nutbrown (2013) suggest that in order to create an enabling environment and create a space that is enriched for their unique ways of learning then practitioners must first take the time to observe each child to help them understand what it is that excites them and sparks their curiosity. Dr Maria Montessori (1906) developed a child-centred method which is based around child-led activities. Montessori believed that children learned and developed better when they have the opportunity to choose what they are learning about and learning from their peers of various ages (Rasmussen university, 2019). Feez (2010) believes that a Montessori environment should be a space that looks attractive and inviting to children and babies.

- **Spaces should be divided into different areas for learning.**
- **Each area should have open shelving where resources are accessible.**
- **Everything should be at the child/baby's level.**
- **The environment should have experienced Montessori trained adults.**

The Scots College (2017) believe that the Reggio approach values children, their resilience, and their capabilities. This approach encourages children to explore their curiosities and helps them understand who they are in the world around them. The Scots College (2017) believe that there is a "third teacher" when it comes to The Reggio Approach, and that is the environment. This environment should be free flowing to help promote and sustain uninterrupted play and

exploration. It is also desirable for the children to have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor area with ease.

Hodgman (2011) suggests that a child's environment is key to supporting a child's development and should help:

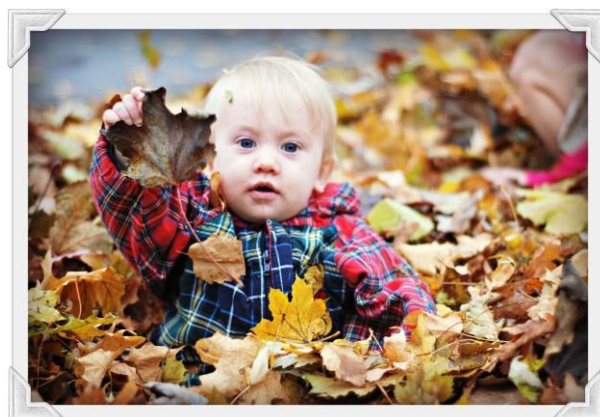
- **Challenge and stimulate the child.**
- **Offer quiet spaces for time to reflect as well as offer time and space for busy play.**
- **Help understand how to communicate with others and also learn how to follow rules.**
- **Help support learning in line with the new curriculum.**
- **Provide emotional stability and support.**

According to Clare (2012) Babies and children are unable to learn and thrive in environments they don't feel safe in. As adults are aware that when they feel stressed or anxious, they do not work with the same enthusiasm as when they feel happy and safe. Clare (2012) also suggests that babies are able to form multiple attachments not only to their primary caregiver such as mothers, but also to caregivers outside the family home, such as key workers and child minders, there for to have a positive impact on the child's development, ensuring the emotional environment is safe and stable to allow for secure attachments to take place.

Education for Wales (2022) advise settings to be welcoming and warm and should support diversity and show inclusivity. Children should have the opportunities to follow their own learning pathways by being creative all whilst maintaining safety. Environments should ensure children's development are scaffolded and should encourage risk taking and challenge to help build resilience, confidence and independence.



1 - (Source: Family.org, N.D)







2 - (Source: Ysgol yr Hendy, 2022)



## Activities.



According to Kolb (2014) experiential learning is a form of learning that is holistic and helps identify unique learning styles of babies and children, and also differentiates their needs. Experiential learning has now more than quadrupled all around the world.

UNICEF (2018) suggests that in the first 1000 days a baby's brain can form one thousand neural connections per second with effective stimulation, however by having a playful and responsive caregiver who can provide rich environments with plenty of adequate activities that will challenge and stimulate the child, connections can reach up to one million per second.

There are many theorists such as Piaget (1962) and Froebel (1836) that believe babies and children learn better through a play-based curriculum, as play helps develop the whole child and enhances their experiences. Play does not only develop the child academically but also socially, emotionally

and they being to form an understanding of self- awareness as they become aware of their likes and dislikes (Shin and Partyka, 2016, p127-142.)



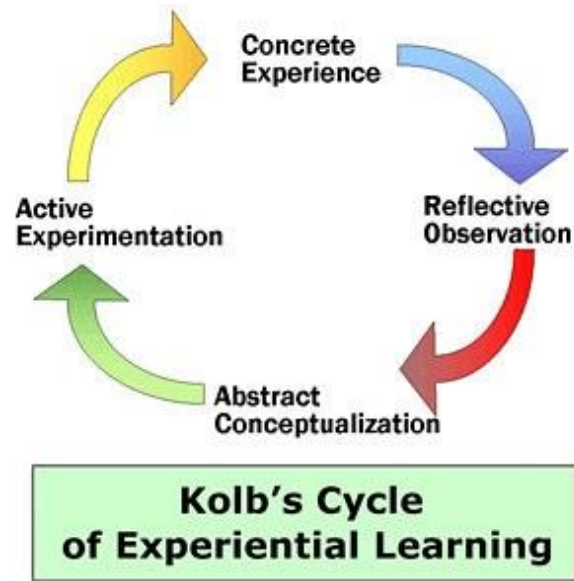
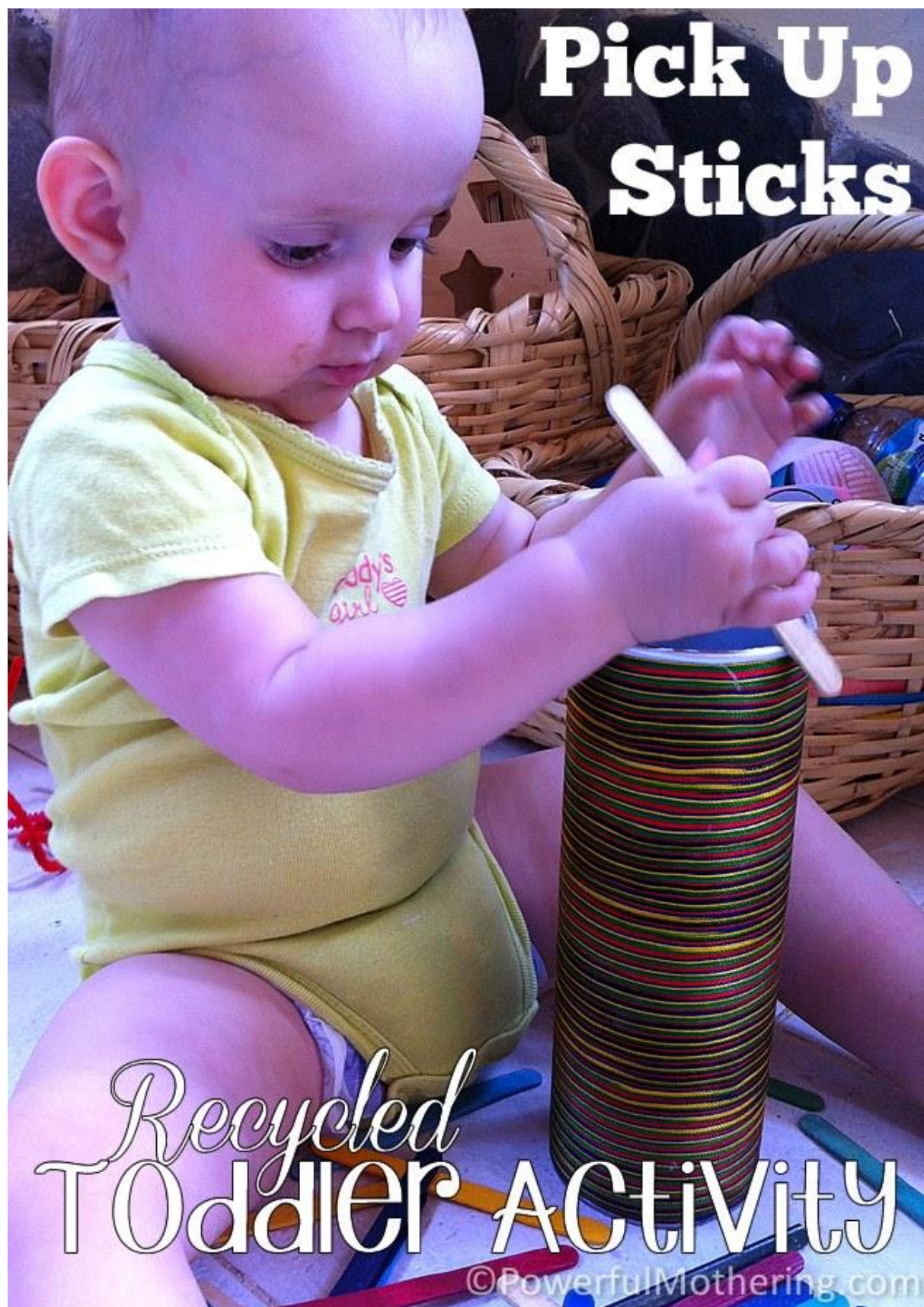


image by Karin Kirk

Loose Parts play.



**Pick Up  
Sticks**

*Recycled*  
**Toddler Activity**

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When practitioners think of loose parts, initially they believe them to be small items unsuitable for babies and young children, however there are many loose parts items that are suitable for babies to play with, such as drain pipes, sand, guttering, cardboard tubes and boxes.

Children that have the opportunity and freedom to play and experiment with loose parts in laboratory style environments, are children that build confidence and resilience and who will engage in imaginary play and begin to ignite their curiosity. Whilst playing with these loose parts they are also using their whole bodies to manipulate these resources (The Curiosity Approach, 2019)

According to Lyons Early Childhood School (N.D) Simon Nicholson (1972) who was an architect developed a theory in which enabled children to be able to move and manipulate materials, giving them the opportunities to design and create things as opposed to static learning.

By providing babies and children with the free play and chance to explore loose parts then it is to be believed that children are more engaged with physical activities, playtime is extended, and results are longer lasting (Play Wales, 2020)

According to Gascoyne (2012) treasure baskets, a simple sensory-riched resource created by Elinor Goldshmeid (1989) to promote play for babies aged 7-12 months. Treasure baskets are filled with natural, everyday items that help children develop by using their five senses. Gascoyne (2012) believes that children and babies must be given enough space and time so that play and learning can naturally evolve.

Loose parts play can help encourage and support a child's natural schema. A schema is a natural repetitive behaviour then helps children understand the concept of something, they are directly linked to how their brains grow and develop. Whilst they are repeating these movements, they are deepening connections within their brains and modifying them to enable them to make changes (Early years Wales, 2020).







Sensory play.



Shin (2019, p. 2116) believes that babies develop and learn about the world around them through the following multi senses:

- Smell
- Touch
- Sight
- Taste
- Mouthing

Shin (2019, p. 2116) also suggests that as babies develop and begin to understand things in this way then it is crucial to ensure that they have access to sensory-riched play.

Pathways (2023) believe that there are many age-appropriate sensory activities that can help promote and nourish babies development.

### **0-3 months**

- Colourful mobiles over cots.
- Skin to skin contact.
- Playing or singing songs to help develop listening skills.

### **4-6 months**

- Touch different fabrics such as wool/velvet.
- Teach babies how to roll, bounce and drop balls of different textures.
- Lifting up and down, playing in different positions to help enhance balance and movement.

### **7-9 months**

- Turning pages of chunky books.
- Exploring sizes, shapes and textures of toys.
- Different weights of toys to help baby experiment with forces needed to pick up.

### **10-18 months.**

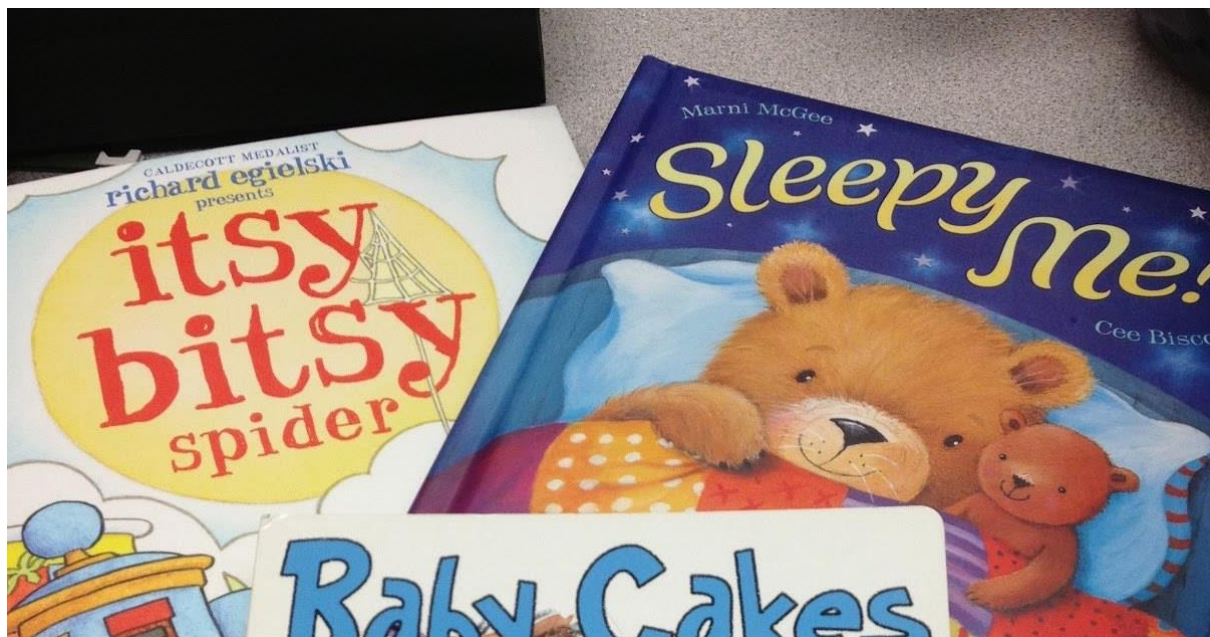
- Playing peek-a-boo.
- Bubble blowing.
- Play trays with safe edible sensory food such as yoghurt/squirty cream, ensure babies have access to different utensils such as spoons and spatulas to play with food.







Story and Song time.



Towell, Bartram, Morrow and Brown (2019, pp. 321–337) suggest that reading out loud to children of any age helps enhance their love for reading and builds upon their vocabulary. They also believe that while reading with babies and young children it can be beneficial to lap read to help develop a stronger bond between child and caregiver.

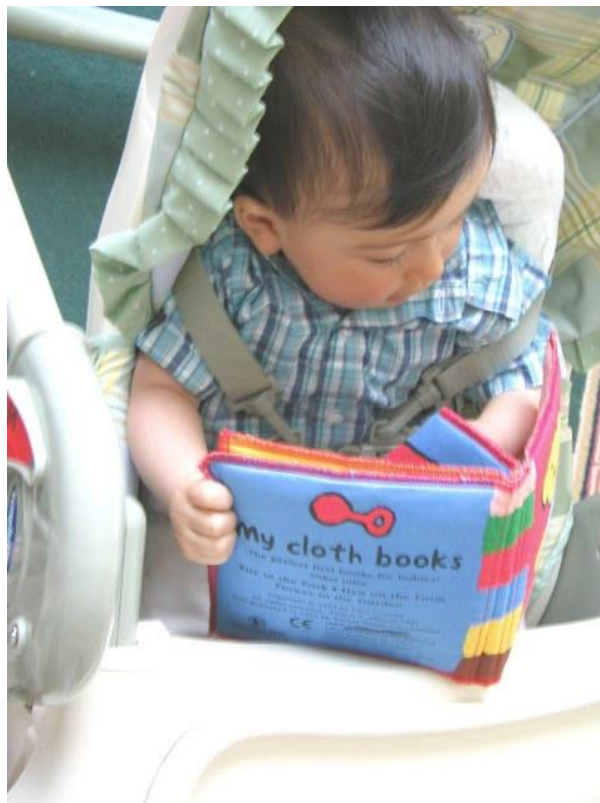
According to Tempest (2016) believes that children who experience secure attachments and feel loved, understood and respected can result in having a long-lasting positive effect on how they see the world and can help promote higher emotional resilience and increased self-esteem.

CBeebies (2023) believes that there are many factors that parents and caregivers should remember when singing with babies and children:

1. Singing releases endorphins to make you feel happy and when your sacculus (part in the inner ear) is stimulated by music that releases even more happy hormones!
2. Research proves that even though singing improves mental health, it also builds the immune system and draws extra oxygen into the body, helping to oxygenate the brain.

3. When babies and children begin to sing, they strengthen their tongue and lip muscles, helping them to speak clearly, and helps to expand and build on their vocabulary.
4. By learning rhymes and songs it helps children to develop their brains as they have to begin to remember the words and the tune of the songs.

Education Wales (2022) suggests in the new curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, children should be encouraged to develop a love for reading materials and should have the opportunity to read with small groups of other children. They should be supported to use books and also create their own reading materials.





## Role play.



Whereas Kolb's (1984) theory believes that learning occurs through the experience of it, Bandura (1977) suggests different. He believes that learning can occur when behaviour is modelled to children, he suggests that by children simply observing and witnessing certain actions and behaviours, the reactions of others are enough to ignite the learning (Berkeley, University of California, N.D)

Estyn (2022) suggests that there should be a wide range of resources within settings so that babies and children have the freedom to create, build and destroy and that they have the opportunity to act out different scenarios by having enough choice within the area.

The department of education (2013) suggests that at the age of around 2 years old children should begin to play in groups and may start to initiate in imaginary play and role-play. It is through role-play that play ideas can be elaborated and extended, and where children begin to build attachments to peers and show friendly behaviour towards others.





## International approaches to exceptional care in the 1st 1000 days.



### **Malawi**

According to Nicoli (2016) Malawian care for babies in the first 1000 days are so very different from that in the UK. Western parenting have a range of options from powdered baby milk to strollers and baby bouncers, however in countries such as Malawi mothers must breastfeed their babies and do not have such 'luxuries' as strollers and baby bouncers, therefore babies are carried in chitenje slings giving mothers the 'handsfree' method. Babies then experience everything the mother does from picking and carrying maize baskets on her head to running errands at market stalls and workshops, this therefor links in with Bandura's social learning theory where babies learn by modelling, observing and imitating behaviours

### **New Zealand.**

The Ministry of Education, New Zealand (2017) believe children are born with the most monumental potential. Their early childhood curriculum 'Te Whāriki' which translates to a woven mat, where they believe that development and learning is woven from principles and goals. They believe that children make a valued contribution within their communities and societies, and that each child's unique learning journey should be enjoyed and protected by trusted adults. Early years settings within the 'Te Whāriki' are held at a very high regard and seen as an important part of education as now almost all New Zealand children attend an early years setting for an extended period of time.

### **Sweden**

Similar to the UK, Swedish early years childcare is organised with the same structures (day cares, child minders and pre-school's) however unlike the UK where most early years providers are in the private sector, in Sweden they are financed by tax revenue and government help, therefor parents only have to fund a small amount, making exceptional care more accessible and financially possible.

Whilst the UK has a large amount of emphasis on assessing the progress of the children and their goals, Sweden is purely play-based, heavily influenced with a concern on core values and consideration towards others, which are things that cannot be assessed on an academic level (Sundelin, 2008).





Holistic needs of children.



Holistic development means the development of the whole child not just specific areas of development, It means that even though a child's development can be divided into different areas, each area of learning (whether it be physical, social or emotional) entwines with the others (Brodie, 2018).

According to article 3 of the UNCRC (2017) every child should be of the highest priorities to practitioners and their best interests must always be at the very heart of each decision or action that may affect the child.

Birth to five matters (N.D) suggest that every child has a unique way of learning, and that each day gives children an opportunity for holistic learning and development.

Education Wales (2022) believes and recognises that children and babies within our settings are all unique and develop rapidly in the early years. Similar to article 3 of the UNCRC (2017) the new curriculum also supports holistic development by ensuring the developmental needs of those within settings are at the very heart of their practice.

According to Early years Wales (2020) holistic development is now at the core of the new curriculum for Wales and connects closely with four purposes and the six areas of learning.





3 - (Source: Birth to 5 matters, N.D)

## Inclusive practices.

Birth to 5 matters (2021) suggests that all settings should be inclusive within their practice. They believe that by listening to children's voices and opinions and recognising that with babies and children these could be portrayed in many different ways (which includes non-verbal) you can help children of all backgrounds feel listened to and supported.

Nutbrown, Clough and Atherton (2013) believe that in order to be inclusive to babies to ensure exceptional care is given then caregivers must become sensitised towards their wants and needs. This can become difficult with babies and toddlers' requests constantly changing, but to ensure





## Barriers and challenges.



There are many factors that can contribute to creating barriers to providing exceptional care within the 1st 1000 days. Unicef (2013) suggest that over 200 million children are failing to meet developmental goals, with things such as poverty, malnutrition, infectious diseases and domestic violence contributing to this. It is now also becoming apparent that unbalanced diets and toxins within diets are having effects on children causing obesity and over nutrition.

Babies and children that are subjected to four or more ACE's (Adverse childhood experiences) are also at risk of detrimental effects to their health within the first one thousand days as opposed to children without ACE's. it is believed that stresses such as domestic abuse to a baby's brain and body that are left unaddressed within the first one thousand days can be passed down genetically to the next generation (House of commons, Health and social care committee, 2019)

The HM Government (2021) suggest that pregnant mothers who suffer from mental health illnesses such as depression who receive no help or support are more likely to find it difficult to form a bond with their baby, therefor creating a barrier for the child to form strong, healthy bonds as they grow and develop.



## **Adverse Childhood Experiences Plus (ACEs + )**

**ARE RISK FACTORS FOR  
CHRONIC ILLNESS**



### **Adverse Childhood Experiences & More**

- Loss of a parent (divorce, death ...)
- Accidents
- Hospitalization or surgery
- Emotional, physical, sexual abuse
- Witnessing violence
- Mental illness in a parent
- Member of household with addiction



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Adverse Childhood Experiences

## All Effects of ACEs

### ACE FACT SHEET

- addictions
- anxiety
- depression
- PTSD
- autoimmune disease & chronic illness
- fractures
- injuries, intentional & not intentional
- more marriages
- intimate partner violence
- low life satisfaction
- greater challenges with parenting
- giving birth prematurely
- smoking
- teen pregnancy
- self-harm
- violence

Free Downloadable ACEs Fact Sheet

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**A**DVERSE  
**C**HILDHOOD  
**E**XPERIENCES  
(ACEs)  
IMPACT on BRAIN, BODY  
and BEHAVIOUR



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