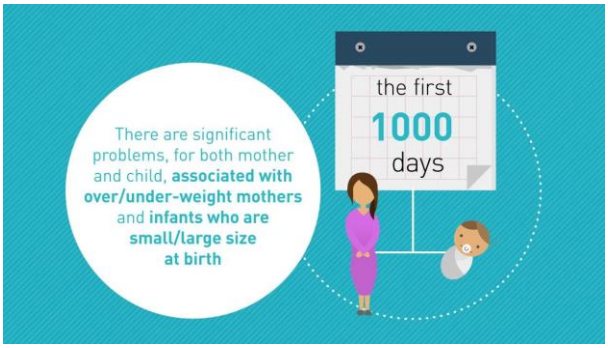
Exceptional care in the first 1000 days

Within this scrapbook we will be addressing the first 1000 days, explaining what it means and why it is important. Also addressing the current challenges, and discussing activity ideas on treasure baskets and messy play on how they are important towards a babies development. Furthermore, we will be discussing the importance of environments, being inclusive, professional partnerships/relationships, respectful care and meaningful learning and international approaches.

The 1000 first days of life is the nearly two year period beginning at conception and ending at the second birthday. This is a special time when the groundwork for good health, development, and neuro-development over the duration of the lifespan is formed (Unicef, 2013). It is important as there is compelling evidence that the first 1,000 days of life are critical, and it is a crucial stage for brain development, influencing a child's emotional and social resilience later in life, and ensuring that children enter school prepared to learn (gov,2019). As a result in the infant's first year of life, more than one million new connections in the brain are created every second. This is the most advanced stage of brain development (HM government, 2021). For this reason, gov (2019) implies that the change to parenthood is an important time to educate and support adults about the significance of the child's first months and years.

Exceptional care is acknowledging that the function is crucial to the growth of every child and is particularly significant during this early learning stage, and that we should encourage and assist children's natural curiosity and set an example of how to study joyfully. Also, that we have an obligation to establish close ties with the child's family and that being dependable in our care and setting an example of compassion and kindness can help to improve the wellbeing of children (Education wales, 2022).

Exceptional care is important because a lovable, safe, and dependable relationship with a parent or carer promotes a child's emotional health, brain growth, language development, and learning ability, as well as the potential to form and build positive relationships with others. Furthermore, pregnancy and the early years of childhood have an impact on physical and emotional health into adulthood (Calderdale, 2017). Additionally, the health of a mother and her child are strongly intertwined during the first 1,000 days (Thousand days, no date).



1 - within this video, it explains the importance of the first 1000 days starting from conception.

Current challenges

According to Anna Freud (2021) it is estimated that around 364,400 childcare professionals in the UK work with approximately 1.7 million children each year, where nursery staff face numerous challenges on a daily basis, which included a lack of training and support. In a study of nursery employees, 69% of nursery practitioners reported having experience working with infants or children who had experienced trauma or abuse, and more than half claimed they had only gotten their standard training (Anna Freud, 2021). However the curriculum for funded non - maintained nursery settings (2022) explains that they are aware that providing children with high-quality early education is crucial to their development, and that the curriculum acknowledges the individuality of every child in their setting and the fact that between birth and age five, a child's growth progresses rapidly. By keeping children's developmental needs at the forefront of their educational practise, it promotes holistic development (Nursery settings, 2022). Holistic development means, even if you can divide something into different parts, being holistic involves treating it as a whole. Every aspect of learning, development, and growth is intertwined in holistic child development. It is significant because learning, development, and advancement are exploding in all directions. Additionally, it is crucial for their language and communication development, physical growth, and psychological, social, and emotional growth. However, an infant or child's holistic development should always be viewed as requiring high-quality relationships with children (Brodie, 2018).

Activity Ideas

*2 - **treasure baskets***

A treasure basket is a mixture from everyday products aimed at appealing towards every sense. It is one strategy to offer non-moving infants, beginning at the age of six months and when they start to crawl, a range of encounters as well as the opportunity to independently investigate and choosing which playthings to use (North Yorkshire county council, 2017). Treasure baskets are important as it provides the chance to awaken the baby's five senses which are, touch, taste, sound, smell, and sight. However, the treasure basket also offers multiple options for schema development where Jean Piaget was the theorist who first explained how children learn through schemas. North Yorkshire county council (2017) explains that a schema is defined as a recurrent pattern of related behaviours that children use to understand the world around them. Furthermore, Jean Piaget (1962) quoted that action schemas are coordinated systems of movement and perception that form any fundamental behaviour that can be repeated and applied to different contexts, such as gripping, moving, or shaking an object (the education people, 2021).

3 - here is a video of babies exploring a treasure basket.

4 - Messy Play

Gascoyne (2018) suggests that messy play is where children participate by engaging all of their senses, particularly touch. While exploring they are given many opportunities to shape and manipulate objects, and they are not focused on creating or producing anything. According to Play Matters (2022) messy play is important as it aids children in developing their fine and gross motor abilities by allowing them to pick up objects and manipulate different textures and materials with their hands and fingers. Also, messy play helps with their hand-eye coordination where they observe how their hands are moving using their eyesight, also helps with their spatial awareness where it is the capacity of a child to comprehend their location in relation to items or their location in reference to other structures or objects. And lastly it helps with their body control and balance where it is the capacity to understand their body's location in three dimensions. However, children instinctively investigate their surroundings with their senses. There are more internal senses, such as balance, position, and movement (play matters, 2022).

Great Pedagogical Thinkers (no date) mentions that John Dewey's approach was that doing is how we learn, and that our universe is a dynamic, real-world environment that can only be understood through experience. Furthermore he implies that children are not listening creatures but are firstly primarily engaged in movement, communication, world exploration, building, and aesthetic expression (great pedagogical thinkers, no date). According to Jean Piaget, early language development and a range of children's activities, attractions, and events are all strongly tied to touch, hear, see, feel, and smell in children. However, Vygotsky argues that the culture and community in which children live have a significant impact on their cognitive and language development (Indryani, 2016, p. 279). Additionally, for children's development there is the curiosity approach which is putting the child at the centre of their own growth and education, the Curiosity Approach seeks to build "thinkers & doers" (day nurseries,2021). The Reggio Emilia approach, Te Whriki, Montessori, Pikler, and Steiner are just a few of the early years education philosophies that the Curiosity Approach borrows from. The theory is based on the inherent curiosity that each of us has from birth. Children may solve problems on their own if they are given a relaxed, stress-free atmosphere with accessible, open-ended resources (day nurseries, 2021).

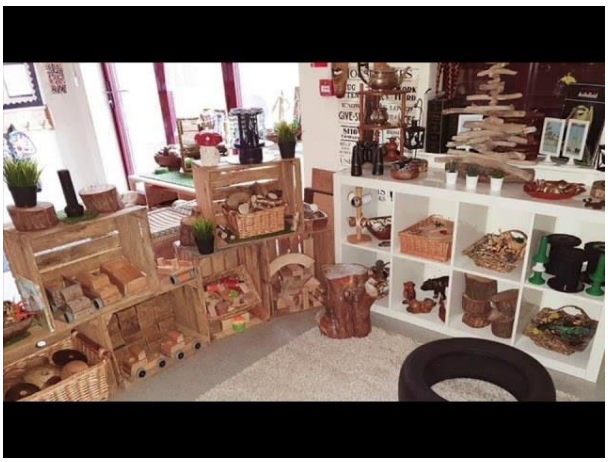
Environments

The enabling environment is important as children's learning and development are greatly supported by an enabling environment. It is well acknowledged that children learn and grow the most in nurturing, encouraging settings that cater to their particular needs while allowing them to engage and explore (Pacey, 2003). According to the Education wales (2022), the curriculum maintains that children's real-world experiences should be centred on the environment we build in our setting, both inside and outside. Because of this, we must constantly evaluate the environment's efficacy and make the necessary improvements. Also the exploration of the surroundings during the early years is a major factor in growth. Through a search of their immediate environment, children start to create a sense of themselves and appreciate the environment in which they live (Education wales, 2022).

[A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings]

According to Unicef (2018), one of the most crucial methods for young children to acquire key knowledge and abilities is through play. Because of this, the foundation of successful pre-primary programmes is play opportunities and environments that encourage play, exploration, and hands-on learning. Additionally, giving children activities that are fun, interesting, and hands-on can encourage and improve learning (Unicef, 2018). NHS Greater Glasglow and Clyde (2017) maintains that, children embrace play to learn about the world and that they discover the world and the impact they can have on the surroundings through exploratory play. This kind of play is one of the first forms that children engage in and begins very early in a child's life (NHS greater Glasglow and Clyde, 2017). furthermore, the curiosity approach thoroughly benefits children as the theory is based on a child's natural desire to discover new things and develop their innate curiosity. This is by giving children access to real, natural resources that are at their eye level encourages them to engage with their surroundings and use their five senses more (kids play, 2022).

Equally, Montessori environments are developed to fulfil the requirements of children in a particular age range. The Montessori educational approach is centred on self-directed activity, experiential learning, and group play, where young people strive to attain their full potential while exploring the world both individually and in groups. Each element in a Montessori classroom promotes a different area of a child's development, matching the child's natural interests with the activities that are accessible. And where children can learn at their own pace and through their own experiences. They may instantly respond to the innate interests that are present in all people and lay the groundwork for lifelong learning (Montessori North west, no date). Children's learning is supported in Montessori classrooms from birth through middle school by giving the child a nurturing, fun, and safe atmosphere. As a result, The serene, joyful environments of a Montessori classroom are created to suit the developmental needs of every child at every stage of development (Montessori North west, no date).



being inclusive

Being inclusive is that childcare providers must ensure that every child in their care is included. It is not about treating all children exactly the same way, instead, it's about treating each child equally and taking into account their distinct interests and needs. Every child is unique and will develop at their own speed (Pacey, 2023). According to Early years alliance, (2019) effective inclusive practises ensures that all children have access to opportunities and support during the most formative years of their learning and development. It also enables children to have self-assurance about who they are and what they want for the future. However, it is especially crucial that we work with children and families to try to make our society more inclusive because this is often not the case. Therefore, it is essential that we foster a welcoming, inclusive, and equal atmosphere (Nursery world, 2014). A challenge would be ensuring that every child's needs are completely fulfilled, even if this means spending more time initially with a child who is unfamiliar with the environment or whose behaviour is concerning (Early years matters, 2008).

Professional partnerships/ relationships

Professional partnerships/ relationships means that early childhood specialists can collaborate, plan freely, and operate in ways that enhance young children's learning and development through partnerships with other professions. Also, common objectives for children's learning and development that take into account each child's needs, culture, and traits create the foundation of successful partnerships (The University of Melbourne, 2012).

This means that we as practitioners are aware of how crucial our contribution is to the development of every child, especially during the formative years of learning. However, by encouraging emotionally secure environments that motivate children to begin managing and expressing their emotions and behaviours in healthy ways, we can set the bar for learning. Inspiring and supporting children's natural curiosity is important, and we should make the most of instructional moments that arise naturally while we watch or participate in their play. However, it is our duty to establish close ties with the child's family and neighbourhood in order to enhance their sense of belonging by embracing both the past and the present (Education wales, 2021).

Although there may be certain challenges that come with partnerships and relationships in the early years, such as communication with families and peers, or possibly feeling unsupported, there are ways to improve partnerships and relationships. However, it is crucial to establish positive relationships with family carers if you want to deliver the greatest results for the individual in your care. As a result, you can attain better equity, respect for one another, mutual satisfaction, and more effective use of everyone's time through increasing partnership working. With everyone collaborating to achieve the same objectives, you can develop a partnership that is constructive, empowering, and encouraging (Challenging behaviour foundation, 2022).

Bronfenbrenner believed that everything in a child's surroundings had an impact on how they evolved. In his theory the environment is divided into five different levels (Health research funding,

2023). The Microsystem, the Mesosystem, the Exosystem, the Macrosystem, and the Chronosystem. It is important to recognise each of these environments as one or all of these settings can have an impact on how a child interacts with others (health research funding, 2023).

5 - This is a video clip explaining Bronfenbrenner's ecological system.

Respectful care and meaningful learning

To provide respectful care, respectable interactions are required. When providing respectful care, a cooperative partnership is formed between the practitioner and the child, who is seen as a free and equal human being. Everything is done "with" the child as opposed to "to" the child, turning care activities into collaborative conversations where the child feels capable, recognised, and appreciated as a person. Remember that now is the perfect time for professionals to build trusting relationships with children and to actively support their developing sense of self (Birth to 5 matters, no date). This can be accomplished by observing the child's body language, voice tone, touch, and gesture, keeping in mind the messages they will express and the feelings they will imply. Also by, paying close attention to the child, taking note of all their signals, listening to them, and acting on their cues.

However, being an early years practitioner entails being a member of a compassionate profession, which has as its central focus the care of and concern for infants and young children from birth to age 5 and beyond. Although, according to this notion of care, all early childhood educators must pay close attention to what they do and act in each child's best interests (Birth to 5 matters, no date).

Interactions are important as babies are keen to interact and desire to connect with others from the moment they are born. For instance, infants might kick their legs in preparation for a game of peekaboo. Adults should be aware of and supportive of these crucial components of an interaction. According to research, effective adult-child interactions have a significant impact on how well children's language and communication skills develop (Gov, no date).

We are aware that strong brain development depends on children and carers having positive relationships. Through serve-and-return interactions, a responsive child-caregiver attachment establishes a solid basis for development beginning with newborns. However, by making an effort to engage in conversation through eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, babbling, or touch, the child "serves." By responding, playing peek-a-boo, passing a toy or a laugh, or speaking back, a responsive carer will "return the serve." (family wellness, 2023). Additionally all children should engage in serve and return interactions, but young children are especially vital. It is impossible to overstate the importance of serve and return interactions over the first 1000 days. However, how often and how effectively teachers and carers can participate in uninterrupted, relationally responsive rallies with infants and toddlers presents a big challenge for serve and return (the education hub, 2020).

International approaches

Forest school- Forest Schools provide a distinctive educational experience by embracing the forest's natural setting as a classroom (Forest research, 2023). According to Massey (2018) the emphasis on learning outside of the conventional classroom, the flexibility to explore the constantly changing environment, taking chances, and the ability to evaluate danger for themselves are what distinguish forest schools from other educational settings. The benefits of forest school's include, confidence, social skills, communication, motivation, physical skills, knowledge and understanding (forest research, 2023). A regular attendance at Forest School provides opportunities for holistic growth and is a process of inspired learning that is centred on the needs of the child (Forest school association, no date).

Te whariki- Te Whriki adopts a comprehensive definition of curriculum, including all direct and indirect experiences, activities, and events that take place in the early learning environment. It offers a framework of values, strands, objectives, and learning outcomes that prioritises the mana of the

child and places an emphasis on interactions that are respectful, mutual, and responsive. Empowerment, holistic growth, family and community, and relationships are Te Whriki's four guiding concepts (parents education, 2022).

Reggio Emilia- The Reggio Emilia method emphasises on asking children about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings while also assisting them in making sense of their surroundings. Therefore, inquiry can be flexible and responsive to children's motives, interests, and circumstances as well as what is important to them in their daily lives. Similar to Te Whriki, it emphasises the notion of the child as imaginative and clever, capable of independent exploration and discovery, and with both the aim and the right to generate meaning in a variety of ways. This occurs in a setting with a variety of connections to other people and resources (The education hub, 2020).

Furthermore, forest school, te whariki and reggio emilia approaches are all centred on the needs of the child and the holistic development. these approaches all help towards children's development.

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