



The first 1000 days

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What are the first 1000 days? Why is it important?

Evidently, the first 1000 days start from conception, up until the age of 2. This is stated by The nursery management show (2024), as well as a newborn having 100 billion cells.

However, during the first 100 days, exceptional care is crucial, as there are no connections between the cells at this age. Any interaction that a baby has leads to connections being made between the cells. This includes environmental surroundings, physical connection, and

so on. (Capitani, E. Et al., 2023) reinforces this point by expressing to the audience that children from pregnancy till 3 years old are most 'susceptible' to environmental influences, further emphasising the importance of the first 1000 days due to the child having the most brain cells it will throughout their whole life. Making this stage of development the most important, as it largely impacts how an individual will develop further in the future.

The same source also argues that any children who do not obtain the appropriate care during the first 2 years are more likely to have development issues during education. These include learning difficulties, physical and mental impairments, and so on. Consequently, this impacts an individual's capabilities in adulthood. I.e., the ability to obtain a degree, get a job, and have independent living. Likhar, K. (2022) adds onto this by stating how reversing any negative effects on a child past the age of 2 is extremely difficult, making the first 2 years of development essential. One of the most important considerations of this is the presence of the first 1000 days appearing in government and NHS websites, demonstrating how essential the first 1000 days are. The use of government websites illustrates that there are factors within a child's first 1000 days that can not simply be ignored. According to the National Health Service [NHS], (2023), Public Health Wales created the first 1000 Days Programme due to the evidence displaying just how important development is, from birth until the age of 2. As a result, the article describes the approach by Public Health Wales to support parents during the first 1000 days. The article talks in depth about the mother's health being linked with the child's before and after birth. The mental health, diet, physical ability, and financial stability of a mother or father are shown to have one of the largest impacts on an individual's development. If a mother has suffered with pre- or post-natal depression, there has been a link to show that it can result in mental instability both when the child develops and reaches adulthood. The diet of a mother during pregnancy is also largely covered due to the need for a foetus to obtain all of the vitamins and nutrients for healthy development. A journal article by Indrio (2023) maintains the importance of the impact that many different nutrients and vitamins have on a child's development during and after pregnancy. It is strongly advised that folic acid, iodine, and many more vitamins are taken in the early stages of pregnancy, due to the increased ability for a baby to develop in the womb. This allows for connections within the brain to be made more efficiently and for physical and mental development to be obtained at a healthy pace.

The importance is further displayed through DeeDee Yates on a TED Talk expressing all that has been mentioned above and more.



1 - DeeDee Yates (2015).

Exceptional care.



What is exceptional care, and why is it important to be promoted?

(Neocare, 2023) describes Exceptional care as high-quality care that includes safety, efficiency, effectiveness, and much more. This would be considered as being an enabling adult, which results in the child's development and is argued to be one of the most vital roles to play as part of a child's development.

many aspects of exceptional care are also described by Neocare, including patient-centred care. This describes adjusting to the needs of each individual. In child care circumstances, this could mean many things, including a child's diet, nap times, eating times, and additional learning needs. Without a care practitioner being able to adjust to these needs, a child's diet may decline, or the support that one needs may not be obtained. All of these possibilities result in a lack of exceptional care and will result in an individual's development declining.

The Crown Database. (2011). Published a childcare act in 2006, which meant that all professional practitioners had to support every individual depending on their own needs. This meant that the local authorities have to make sure all childcare environments are suitable and safe for any children, further expressing the importance of exceptional care.

The following link describes the importance of communication in a childcare setting exceptionally. This is specifically spoken about within the first video to appear.

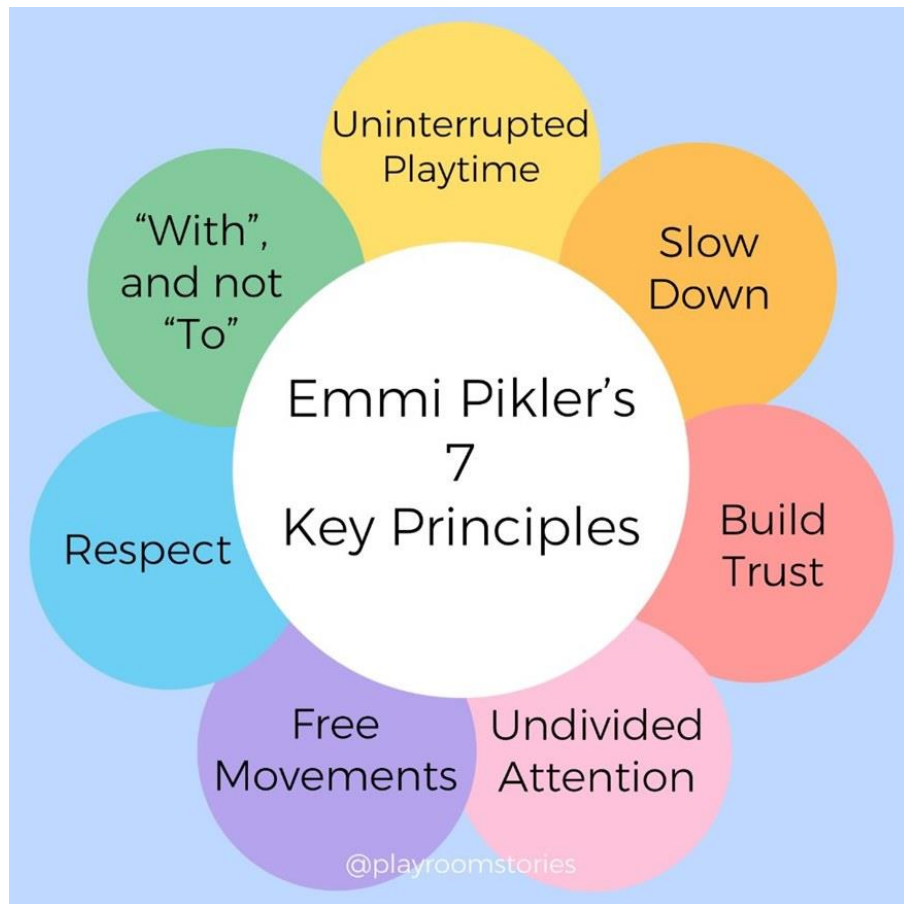
<https://www.do-bemindful.com/our-stories/>

Aspiring Beginnings talks about a famous paediatrician, known as Emmi Pikler, who had 7 principles to becoming an enabling adult. These 7 principles included uninterrupted playtime, slowing down, building trust, undivided attention, free movements, respect, and 'with' and not 'to.' This refers to parents who are doing chores and so on while they should be playing with their child. As care practitioners, it is vital that all of our attention is with the child while they are playing, as they see the adult as a role model. This shows love and affection as well as stops the child from getting overwhelmed.

As stated by Aspiring beginnings, the ability to slow down is important to remember due to children within the early years still developing and learning. Consequently, adults surrounding the child must try to take their time, as this could cause stress to the child and affect their ability to develop. If this is not achieved, it would also allow the child to be overstimulated. Care practitioners should enable a child to develop at their own pace and not feel rushed, which is why a calm, slow, and relaxed environment is so vital at this age. Building trust can occur during naptime, bathing, dressing, feeding, and much more. Like the second and first principles, doing general activities with a child does not have to be a chore, one can interact with the child regardless of what activity is happening. This allows for the child to gain a bond with the parent or child practitioner. As a result of this, the baby will learn and know your intentions. Without trust and relationship, a baby will struggle to develop, as one has not given them the time or a chance to become independent.

Pikler also emphasises the use of communication within childcare. For example, when a child has told you they have finished eating their food and no longer want to eat, telling a child to have 'one more spoon' is teaching them that their opinion is not valued, which can break down communication with the child.

It is also important to mention giving a child the freedom they need to explore and not putting them in areas they are unable to leave. While baby chairs and door jumpers may be useful for busy parents, they are not recommended, as the child can not get themselves out of this situation to explore and improve their gross motor skills. Considering physical development is one of the most important within early years, restricting a child's movement is likely not the best idea, not just because of lack of physical development but also because it can cause the child added stress as well.



Professional Partnership.



Partnership working is often described as a group of individuals working together to meet a goal.

As the CDHN (2010) suggests, there are many principles within partnership working to be considered.

The first one is to find specific solutions to certain problems that may occur. The fact that there are a wide variety of problems that can occur means that there should be a large group of people specialised in certain problems. For example, a child care setting should have access to teachers specialised in additional learning needs and social services in order to protect children from harm. Professional partnerships make identifying and solving problems within the child care setting severely important for their support and development. A breakdown of this could result in possible abuse or neglect of the child, meaning poor development or worse.

The second principle is the importance of structure. It is essential that child care professionals are able to adapt in order for structure to be maintained for the child. This could mean that when a childminder has not been able to work, someone is to take over working for that individual. A common goal must also be developed within the care setting. A result of this can mean there is communication in order to make sure there are improvements to the setting. This can include discussions on what activities happen throughout the day and what one specific individual needs as opposed to the other. Budgets are possibly one of the most vital principles within partnership working to be considered. If a situation were to occur, for example, a leak within the building or items were to break, it is important to have money saved for situations like this to be resolved fast.

In short, allowing practitioners to work together allows for sharing important knowledge, consistency, planning, engagement/support with families, learning experiences, sharing workload, and improving outcomes.

As briefly mentioned in the previous statement, engagement and support with families is vital for professional partnerships. There are many reasons for this, but arguably one of the most important reasons is due to knowing an individual's wants and needs. Many children will have different eating, napping, or playing times, and being able to communicate this with families is vital so a child can maintain structure within their life. It is even possible to allow a parent to communicate their stresses with a practitioner since a stressful environment at home can lead to a child's development declining. Allowing additional support to a parent is important. Just having someone for a parent to talk to can change the course of a child's day significantly. If a parent is struggling to afford certain toys or tools, it is important that the school communicates the items that they have that can support the development even if the parent does not have those items. Phone calls home can allow for the parents to learn what the child dislikes and likes, both for home settings and within a childcare setting.

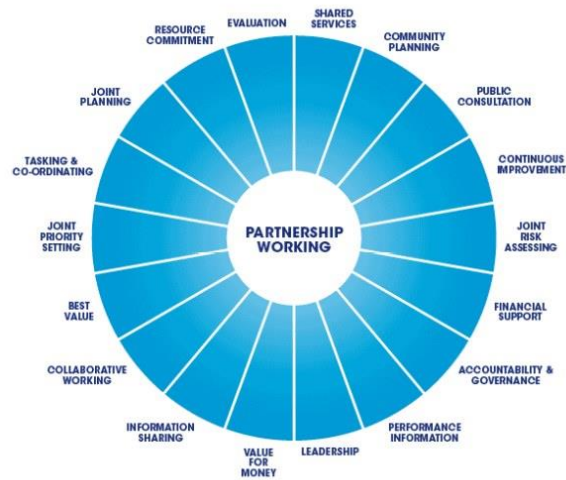
There are many more benefits to communication with parents and carers, which are described within the video attached to this section.



2 - Twinkle Early years. (2021)



3 - Education at Manchester MET. (2024)



Challenges practitioners need to overcome.



There are many challenges involving being a professional practitioner, all, if not many, of which need to be overcome in order to run an efficient care setting. Financial struggles, stress, lack of understanding, lack of staff, and health issues are just some of many that need

to be overcome. Many of these challenges can be overcome quite easily. Financial challenges can be overcome through using low-cost materials to create a fun environment for children. For example, sensory boxes can be filled with beads, paint, sand utensils, water, and so on. It is not to be forgotten that practitioners can make instruments out of beans, rice, pasta, and plastic bottles. While staff burnout is not easily solved by well-being support for staff, it is certainly a large help for them. As a result, it is often essential for well-being support to be offered to staff where possible. Lack of staffing is often a problem within childcare settings in this day and age. Staffing is considered one of the most prominent challenges that practitioners face today. An article by Leeds University in (2024) states the wide variety of issues that practitioners plan on leaving the industry, and a lot of them link to previously mentioned challenges. Income is a reason that does not just affect the utilities that a nursery has; it also has an impact on what the practitioners are getting paid, as a result making staffing an issue due to the inability to pay for staff or them leaving due to poor pay. Lack of training opportunities is another reason that people have stated for leaving that line of work. One issue that was not previously mentioned is the inability to gain sufficient care for children who have ALN (additional learning needs). Child care practitioners having to care for children with extra learning needs when they do not have the training necessary to care for said children. This can cause stress and burnout, also leading to staff leaving the job.

The suggested solutions that care practitioners provided were an increase in the funding that child care settings have in order to give both children and care practitioners the best start possible. Allowing for more training within the care setting so teachers have more opportunities was also suggested to support teachers within the setting.

Activity ideas.



There are many different activities that can promote a child's development. These being sensory, role play, outdoor experiences, science, and physical activities are just some of these. A common theme within childcare settings is using sensory baskets. These include a wide variety of objects that allow children to explore the purpose of said tools. This can also prompt a child's imagination and use a hairbrush as a microphone in order to be a famous singer, for example. Action for Children (2010) lists all of the sensory enrichments that can be provided to a child and the benefits of them. One factor that was strongly accounted for in this article was that allowing children to interact with different objects allows them to understand that their actions do in fact have an effect in the world around them. It also enables children to develop their memory and expand their problem-solving skills. Allowing children to have this level of freedom will allow them to develop their fine and motor skills.

The curiosity approach, developed and expanded by many well-known philosophers, Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Pikler, and Steiner, has been used for many years and is still well valued today. The idea behind the curiosity approach was to allow children to develop appropriately without any pressure being applied to them. Through the use of 'curiosity play,' children could still develop and not become stressed with having targets such as being able to write their name. The use of sensory play, outdoor play, and so on will allow children to develop the same skills at a faster pace than if they were to learn in a more formal environment.

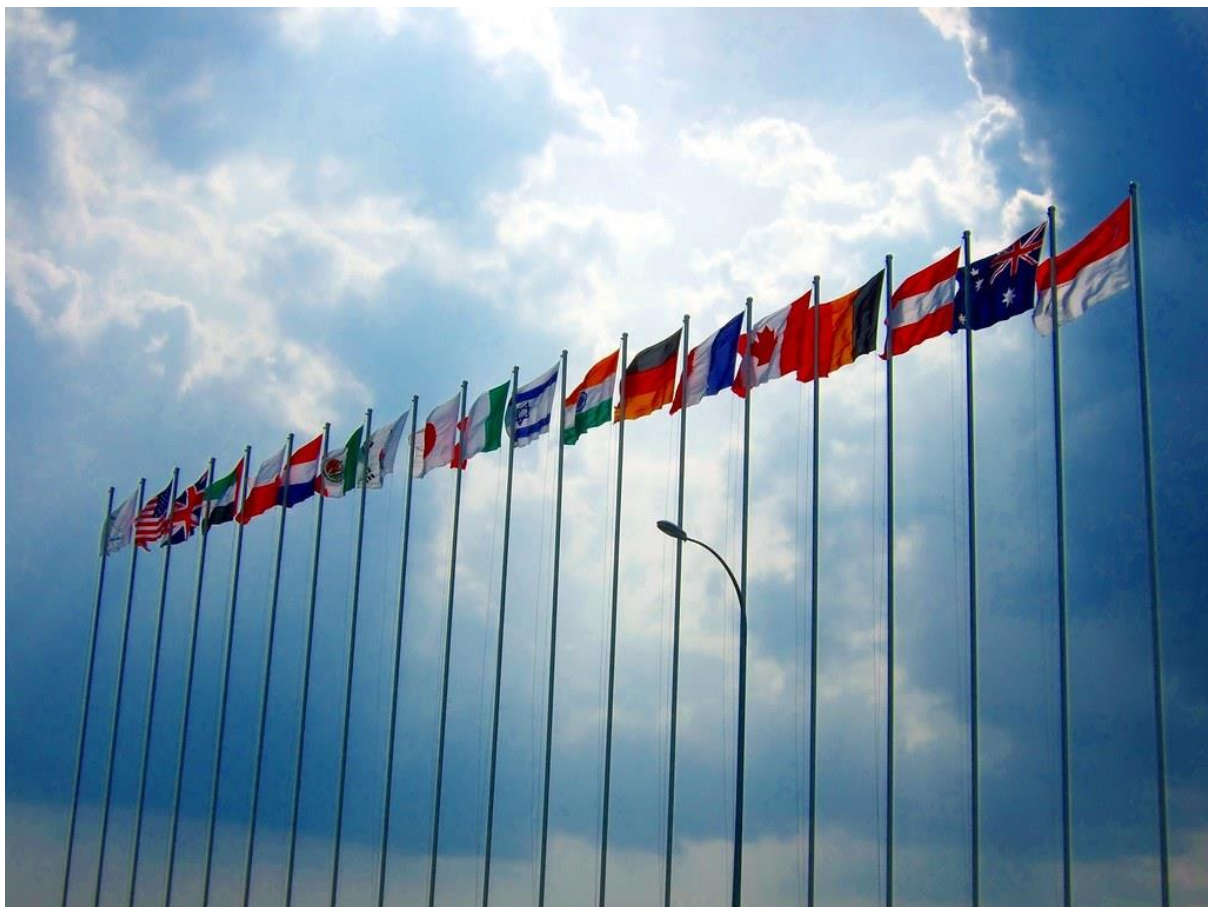
This importance of the curiosity approach is further emphasised through the use of an organisation being created through its name and meaning. The curiosity approach helps with expanding parents, teachers, and children's knowledge in order to make sure development is at the best it can possibly be.

Examples of activity ideas in the early years can be found in the following video.



4 - PLASP child care services. (2017)

International Approaches.



The way child care is approached varies depending on the area one is in.

Te Whāriki is a child curriculum established in New Zealand in 1996. This curriculum showed that children were a valuable part of society and were capable of learning as well as being independent and deserving of an education. There are five main learnings to Te Whāriki wellbeing: Mana Atua, Belonging—Mana Whenua, Contribution—Mana Tangata, Communication—Mana Reo, and Exploration—Mana Aoturoa. The principles within Te Whāriki were intertwined with the five main learnings to be used as a metaphor for the way children are developed. It is not to be forgotten that children within the early years need a wide variety of forms of care in order to develop to one's full potential. Te Whāriki backs this up through the use of the curriculum. As displayed in the images, exceptional care within child care may stem from this, due to the in-depth description of empathy, safety, independence, and so on. Te Whāriki may be considered a large stepping stone for how children are developing in today's society due to just how in-depth the curriculum is with a child's needs. It also talks about the difference in needs depending on the age of the child, which is a severely important consideration that needs to be made. Due to how in-depth the curriculum is, it could be evident that there is no difference from this to how exceptional care is seen within the United Kingdom.

The following video talks about Te Whāriki in more depth.

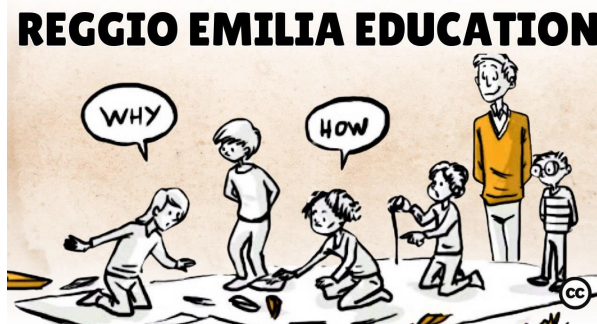
Forest schools are very common within Scandinavian countries due to the benefits of supporting children. However, this approach does differ from many other school practices. These schools teach from the age of three, and this approach allows for possibly more independence than care practitioners would use within the United Kingdom. While this may be due to health and safety regulations or staffing issues, there is no argument to say there are downsides to the use of forest schools. This teaches children safety, independence, and much more, but through their own learning, which is highly valued within child care in many countries around the world. (Mie Olsen, 2024) talks about the use of risky play and how it can be essential to a child's development. It is explained that the use of risky play strengthens their robustness, which is highly valued within a child's development. This statement displays the impact of outdoor play and how it is helpful for children's development. That being said, it is important to remember forest schools may not be for all children.

To see more on forest schools, click on the video within this section.

Similarly to forest schools, the Reggio Emilia approach is based off of the idea that children learn through their experiences more than sitting down learning at a table. By allowing children to explore and discover things on their own, they allow themselves to question the world around them and develop critical thinking. For example, if a child finds an item, they will want to know how it works, by allowing them to do this independently, a child will develop their understanding of the world as well as their independence and cognitive abilities.

Because of this concept, it was thought that there should be rich learning and play materials within a child care setting to allow children to learn and develop independently. The Reggio Emilia approach is applied widely throughout many countries, further displaying how important physical interactions with objects can allow a child to develop. There is more on Reggio Emilia within the following video.

Overall, the Reggio Emilia approach and forest schools display the importance of independent learning and have many ideas in common. Whereas the Te Whāriki approach shows an individual just how much needs to be considered to allow a child to develop to one's full potential. Where there are rules and regulations within childcare, it is likely there is Te Whāriki based within it. Where there are child care settings, more often than not, there will be Reggio Emilia and forest school-like settings. Further showing how they have impacted the way care practitioners allow children to develop today.



5 - Sprouts. (2019)



6 - NET25 News and Information. (2025)



7 - NZEI Te Riu Roa. (2016)

STRAND	GOALS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
Communication Mana reo	Children experience an environment where:	Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:
	» They develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes	» Using gesture and movement to express themselves he kōrero ā-tinana
	» They develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes	» Understanding oral language ³ and using it for a range of purposes he kōrero ā-waha
	» They experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures	» Enjoying hearing ⁴ stories and retelling and creating them he kōrero paki
	» They discover different ways to be creative and expressive	» Recognising print symbols and concepts and using them with enjoyment, meaning and purpose he kōrero tuhihūhi
Exploration Mana aotūroa	Children experience an environment where:	Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:
	» Their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised	» Playing, imagining, inventing and experimenting te whakaaro me te tūhura hura te pōtaiao
	» They gain confidence in and control of their bodies	» Moving confidently and challenging themselves physically te wero ā-tinana
	» They learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning	» Using a range of strategies for reasoning and problem solving te hiraarau hopanga
	» They develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds	» Making sense of their worlds by generating and refining working theories te rangahau me te mātauranga

³ In this document, 'oral language' encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language; this includes New Zealand Sign Language and, for children who are non-verbal, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

⁴ For children who are deaf or hard of hearing, 'hearing' includes watching.

STRAND	GOALS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
Wellbeing Mana atua	Children experience an environment where:	Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:
	» Their health is promoted	» Keeping themselves healthy and caring for themselves te oranga nui
	» Their emotional wellbeing is nurtured	» Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs te whakahua whakaaro
Belonging Mana whenua	Children and their families experience an environment where:	Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:
	» Connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended	» Making connections between people, places and things in their world te waihanga hononga
	» They know that they have a place	» Taking part in caring for this place te manaaki te taiiao
	» They feel comfortable with the routines, customs and regular events	» Understanding how things work here and adapting to change te mārama ki te āhua o ngā whakahaere me te mōhio ki te panoni
Contribution Mana tangata	Children experience an environment where:	Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:
	» There are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background	» Showing respect for kaupapa, rules and the rights of others te mahi whakaute
	» They are affirmed as individuals	» Treating others fairly and including them in play te ngākau makuru
	» They are encouraged to learn with and alongside others	» Recognising and appreciating their own ability to learn te rangatiratanga
		» Using a range of strategies and skills to play and learn with others te ngākau aroha

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