

Cover Page

The First 1000 Days ECEY4005

For this assessment I have submitted the following:

A digital scrapbook

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The First 1000 Days



What is The First 1,000 days of life ?



(Green Wellness, 2023)

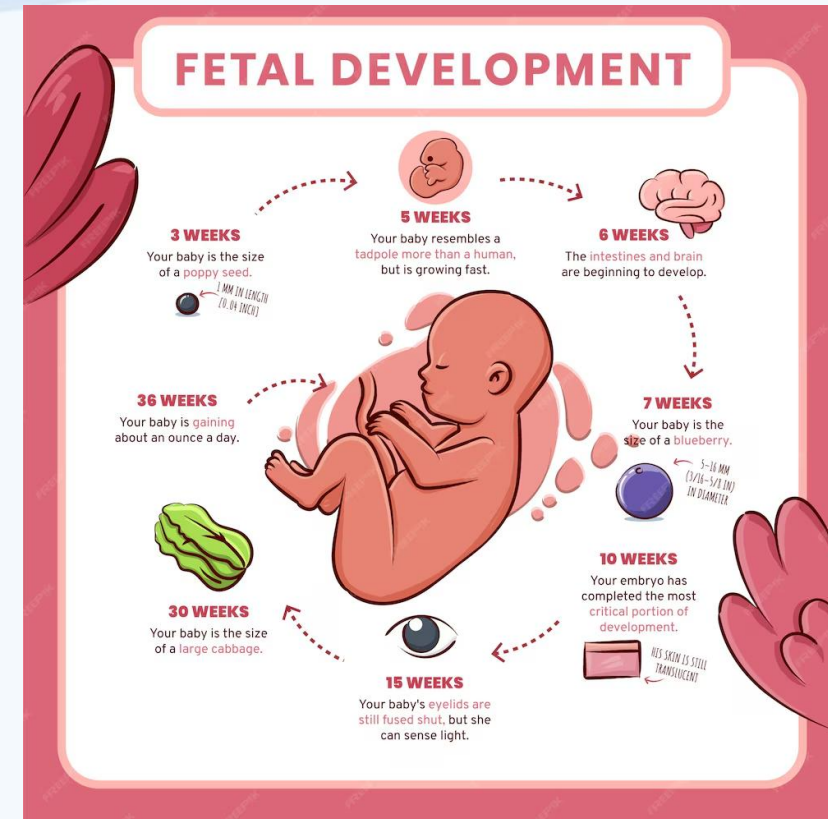


This video shows challenges and support for the First 1000 days.

Research into early childhood development, biology and neuroscience provide evidence to show the first 1,000 days, from conception to two years, is an important part of development. During these days a child's brain will grow and develop. It demonstrates that environments, health, nutrition and relationships in those first 1000 days can impact future outcomes. (Thousand Days, 2018).

Health and Nutrition

From day 1 of conception, the development of a human begins. The healthy development of the baby during pregnancy, relies on the mother taking good care of herself.

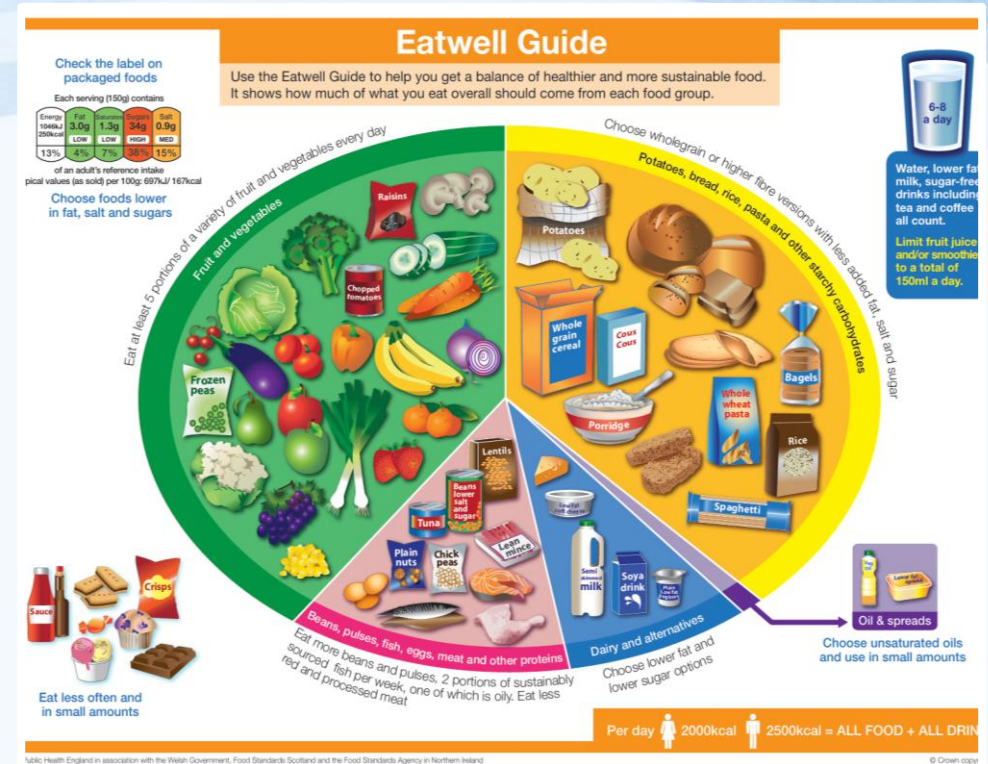


Freepix.com

“At the 4th week of pregnancy, the brain has an estimated 10,000 cells—by the 24th week, it contains 10 billion.” – 1000 days (n.d)

Mothers are advised to eat a healthy, variety of foods and recommended to take folic acid to support baby's development during the first weeks of pregnancy. (NHS, 2020).

Nutrients including zinc, iodine, fatty acids and protein are 'vital' in supporting baby's brain development during pregnancy, it suggests that without these, it may risk birth defects, cognitive defects or developmental delays. (1000 days, n.d).



(Public health England, 2016)



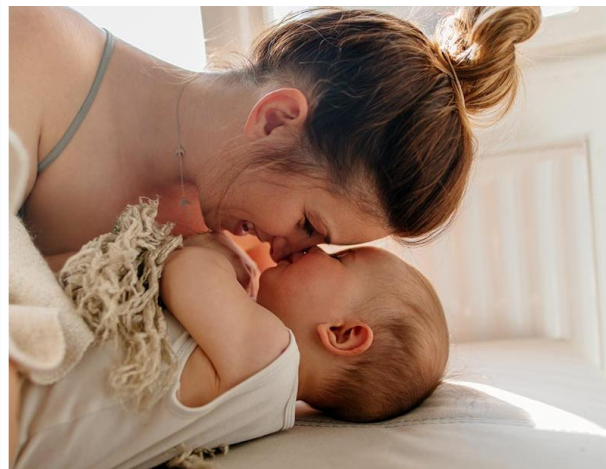


Breastfeeding is seen as a way to build close attachment between mother and baby whilst showing positive health benefits. UNICEF (2022) states breastfeeding in the UK has some of the lowest numbers across world, with 8 out of 10 women stopping breast feeding before they are ready. It believes that breastfeeding can have a positive impact on a child's life, decreasing their chance of suffering common illnesses, such as chest, ear and gut infections.

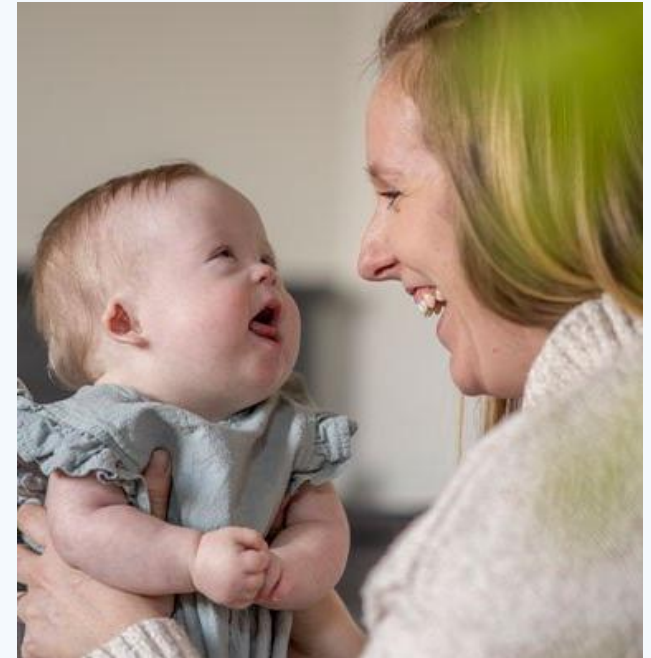
From birth, babies show an interest in the sights and sounds of their environment. Although, unable to talk, babies can communicate with people around them, through cries, babble and gestures for feeding with their mouths. Early interactions and building positive, caring relationships helps develop connections in the baby's brain, supporting healthy growth. Positive, early relationships allow the baby to develop a confidence in themselves to explore and engage in the word around them. For some parents, the bonding process with baby can be easy, however some may find it more challenging and may need more time and support. (Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, 2025.)



(emmasdiary.co.uk, n.d.)



(emmasdiary, 2022.)



(nhswebsite, 2024)

Environment

In baby's second year of life, they are reacting more to the environment and are eager to explore. They have begun to move around independently and start to use first words. Every child should have the opportunity to grow in a safe and secure environment, however, for millions of children this is not the case. Due to factors such as poverty, children are growing up in unsafe environments, causing them to miss out on the care and nourishment needed to develop their brains and bodies. (1000 days, n.d.)



(Welsh Government News, 2022)

Welsh Government recognise the importance of the first 1000 days and provide support to those in the most disadvantaged areas. Flying Start was developed to support babies and children in the early years, offering parent support classes, 2.5 hours free childcare for children aged 2-3 and support for speech, language and communication. (Welsh Government, 2024.) These services enable early intervention if needed and give babies and toddlers an opportunity to reach their full potential in a safe, secure environment.

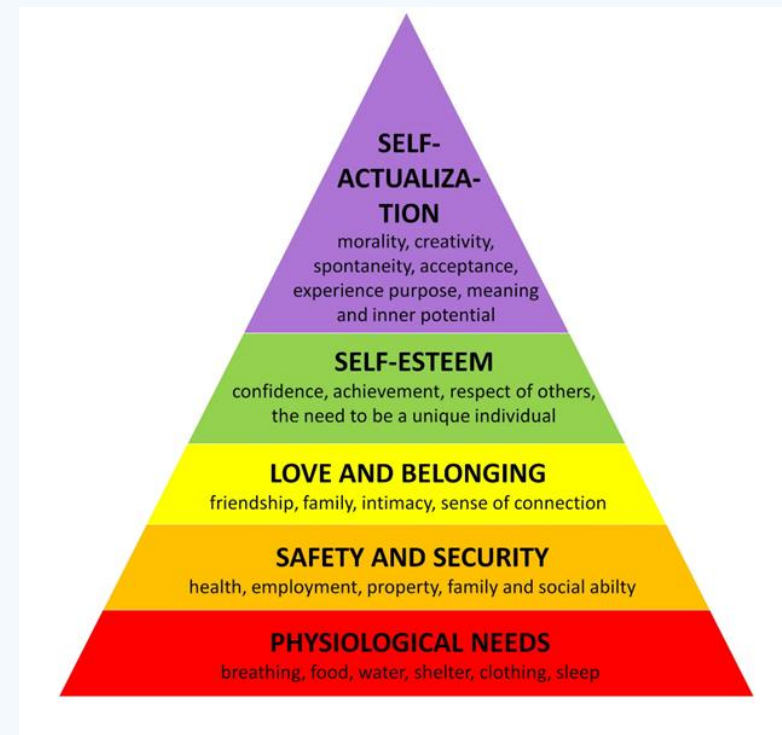
Caregiving



What does exceptional care look like?

Nutrition

As shared in Maslow's findings, food and health is required before anything else to support development. They are essential needs, which are greater than the need for self-esteem or belonging. (Pichère and Cadiat, 2015.) Therefore, focusing on health and nutrition is important for exceptional care.

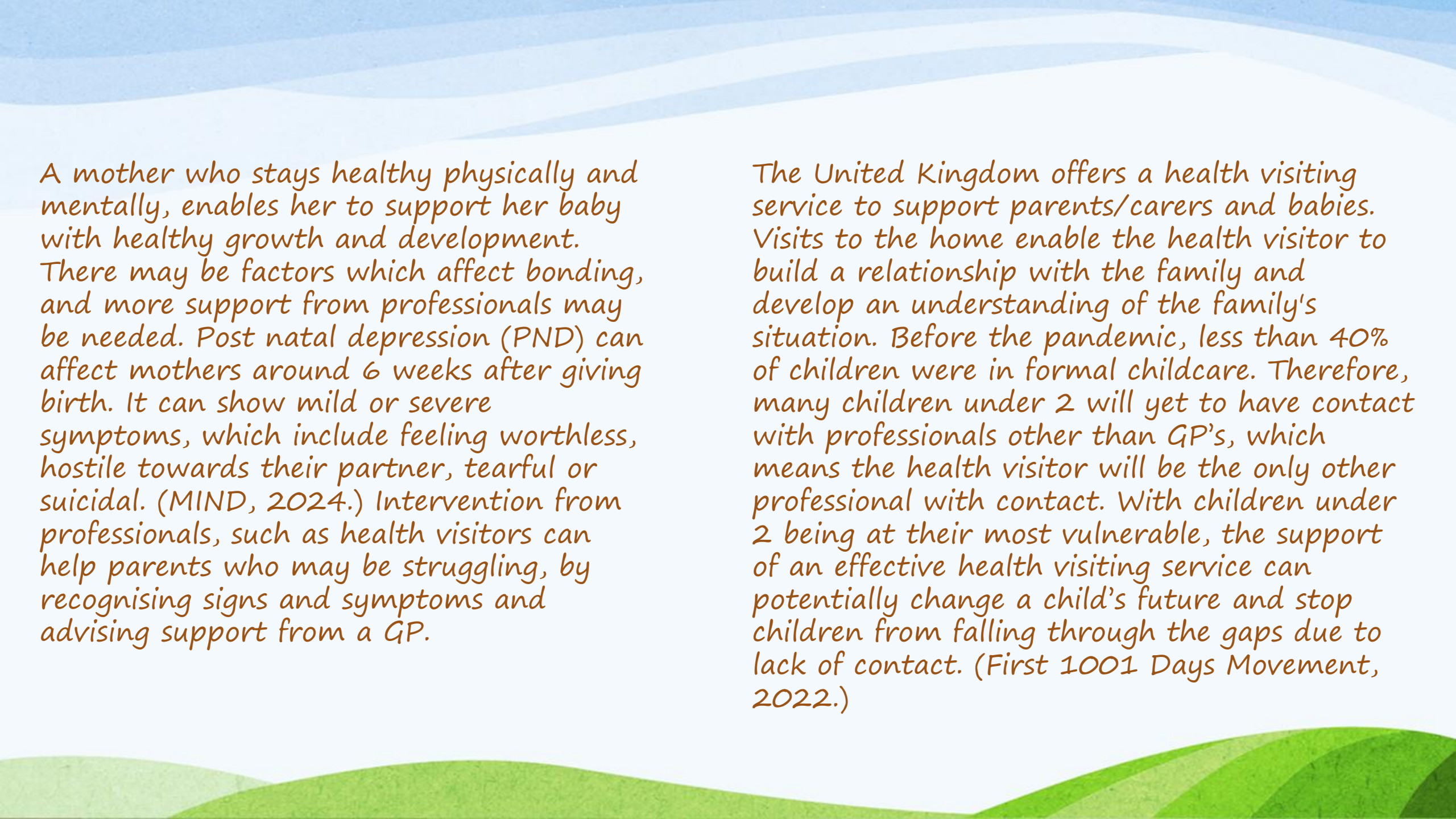


(McLeod, 2025)



(Earlystartnutrition.com, 2026)

Welsh Government support Maslow's ideas, supporting parents through the Healthy Start Scheme. The scheme offers women, who are more than 10 weeks pregnant or have children under 4 years, a card which provides healthy foods, milk, vitamins for pregnancy and breastfeeding and vitamin drops for birth to 4. (National Health Service, 2024). This scheme, however, is for those on certain benefits. It can be argued that the government need to do more to ensure all children are given equal as some families may be suffering from poverty who do not qualify for benefits.



A mother who stays healthy physically and mentally, enables her to support her baby with healthy growth and development. There may be factors which affect bonding, and more support from professionals may be needed. Post natal depression (PND) can affect mothers around 6 weeks after giving birth. It can show mild or severe symptoms, which include feeling worthless, hostile towards their partner, tearful or suicidal. (MIND, 2024.) Intervention from professionals, such as health visitors can help parents who may be struggling, by recognising signs and symptoms and advising support from a GP.

The United Kingdom offers a health visiting service to support parents/carers and babies. Visits to the home enable the health visitor to build a relationship with the family and develop an understanding of the family's situation. Before the pandemic, less than 40% of children were in formal childcare. Therefore, many children under 2 will yet to have contact with professionals other than GP's, which means the health visitor will be the only other professional with contact. With children under 2 being at their most vulnerable, the support of an effective health visiting service can potentially change a child's future and stop children from falling through the gaps due to lack of contact. (First 1001 Days Movement, 2022.)

Safety and Security

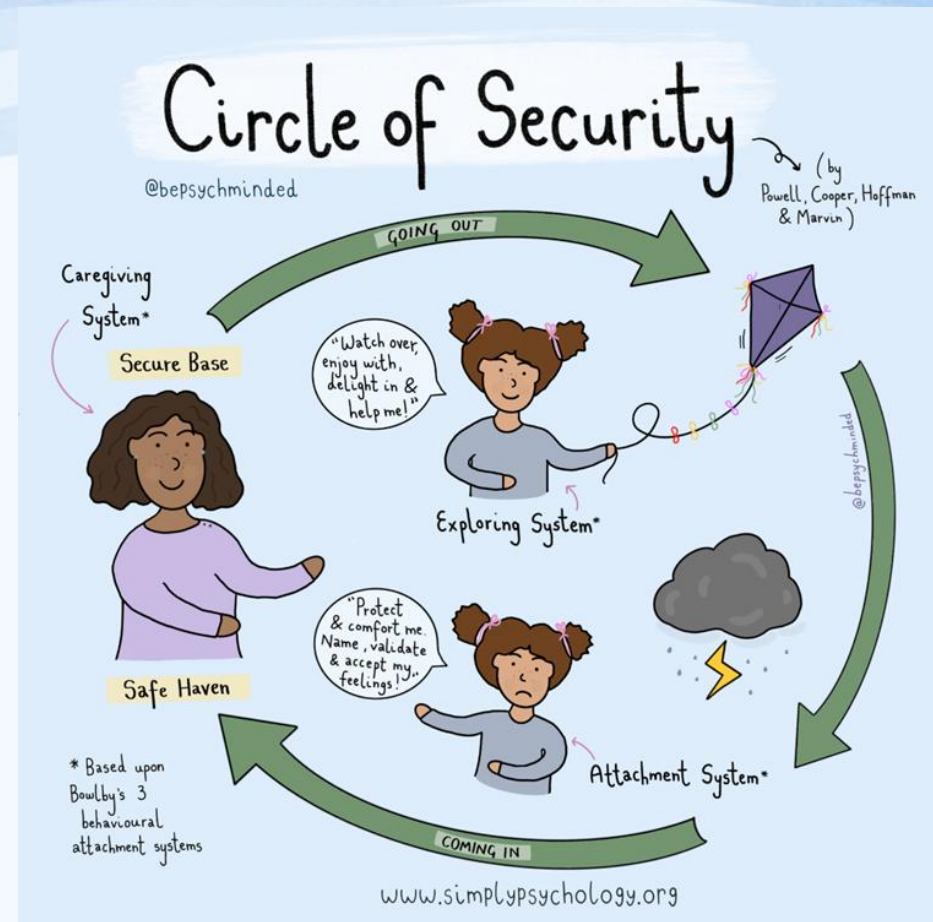
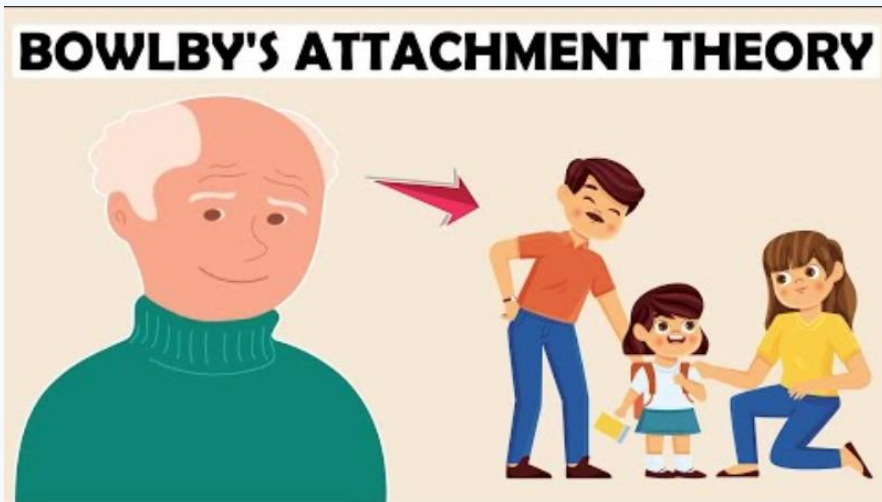
By listening to baby and responding, the mother is building a safe and secure environment for her baby. During the first 1000 days the baby's nervous system is being developed and formed by experience. How the baby's parents or caregivers behave can impact how the baby may react and manage their emotions as they grow. (Gerhardt, 2014.) It is in these first days the baby begins to develop trust that their parent or caregiver will respond to them when needing food, comfort and interaction.



(Founder, 2021)

To feel attached is to
feel safe and secure. –
Holmes, 2014

John Bowlby, known for his theory of attachment, shares the idea of a child's need for attachment to their parent or carer to support healthy development. He believed that, just like the rhesus monkeys in Harlow's wire mother theory (1958), a baby is not only reliant on food, but for the love and interaction from their caregiver. He suggests, when with their caregiver, a child feels calm and relaxed but becomes sad or anxious when they are separated. A secure attachment would enable the child to feel safe enough to explore, knowing their caregiver would be there to go back to. (Holmes, 2014.)



The image demonstrates the circle of security based on Bowlby's theory of attachment.

The caregiver is the safe, secure base which encourages and supports the child to venture and explore. She is also the safe space for the child to run back to when upset, in order to feel validated in their feelings, comforted and supported. Once comforted the child feels safe to venture and play again. (Hayes, O'toole, Halpenny, 2017.)

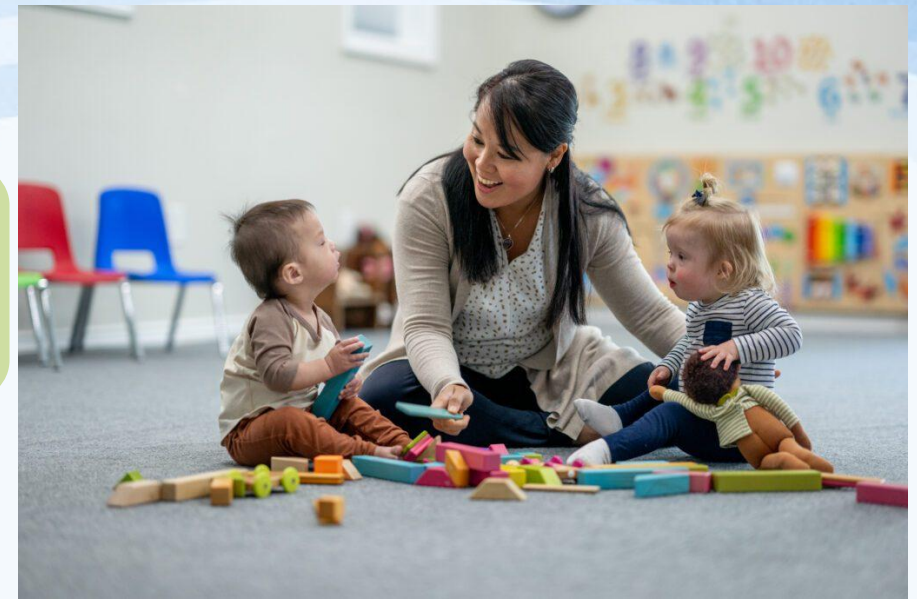
Professional Partnerships



The Early Years Practitioner

“The early years play a significant role in childhood as well as in shaping our futures.” – (Meithrin, 2023).

The role of the Early Years Practitioner (EYP) is to provide a safe, stimulating environment to support babies and young children's development through play. Welsh Government suggest, research has shown, high-quality childcare, provided by highly-skilled, knowledgeable staff can have an impact on future life. Particularly for children who have additional learning needs, are disabled or who live in disadvantaged areas, where they have seen significant benefits. (Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan, 2017.)

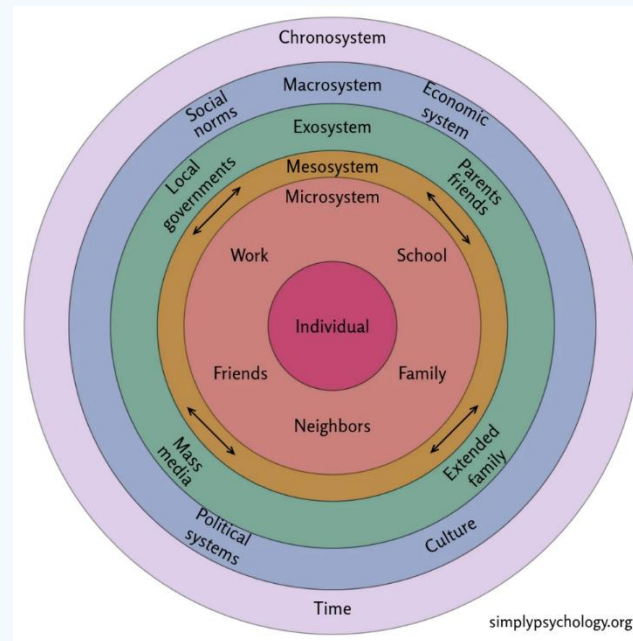


Teaching Strategies. (n.d.).

Although there is research to prove the benefits of the 1000 days and the impact the EYP can have on a child's life, there is still a public view of working in childcare being seen as 'lesser' job. Working in childcare requires the EYP to take on many, changing roles, environments and job titles. The job role can be seen as more of a 'mothering', caring role, compared to teaching which is viewed more highly. (Solvason and Webb, 2023.)

The Childcare Act 2006 set out to improve the lives of children, giving local councils in England and Wales the power and duty to ensure children and parents are supported by quality provision, regulated by inspection. The act states, services must work together to ensure children and families are able to access the provisions available. (GOV.UK, 2006) It is therefore the role of the EYP to make certain they are working with other agencies to provide the best care for children and families. This is supported by the findings of Bronfenbrenner.

Bronfenbrenner focused on the microsystem that surrounds a child as they develop. In his research he talked of Head Start and childcare programs within the community. He believed parents had an important role to play in the child's life, wanting parents to be involved with childcare centres and programs. He felt that the centres should have a whole community approach. (Tudge et al, 2021) Bronfenbrenner's ideas support that of the UK Government, looking at a holistic approach to childcare and multiagency working.



The image shows Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of development. Bronfenbrenner puts the child at the centre, with the surrounding environments, such as family, media and culture all impacting on the child's life. (Hayes, O'toole, Halpenny, 2017.)

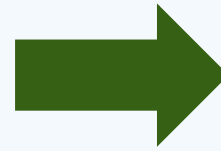
Multi-agency Working

Multi-agency working requires the EYP, agencies and organisations to work together to meet the needs of babies and children. By involving everyone, including parents, professionals are taking a child centred approach which lead to better outcomes for the child. When working effectively, multiagency working can create many benefits for the child. However, if professionals fail to communicate it can add risk to the child and miss key opportunities to support the child. To achieve good practice Welsh Government set out the National multi-agency practice framework for children's services, with the aim to encourage consistent working and combine good practice. (Welsh Government, 2025.)



There are times, when Multi-Agency working can be challenging for the EYP and agencies involved.

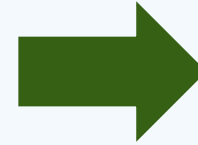
Scenario 1: an EYP may put in a referral for a child, feeling strongly that support from social services is needed. However, the social worker may disagree with this and put forward, for a common assessment from the EYP. The social worker may be considering the amount of paperwork and extra work involved, effecting how they see the child's situation. This decision could impact relations between the Early Years setting and the social worker and could cause mistrust from the setting further effecting future occurrences. (Walker, 2021.)



The two agencies have shown disagreement in what is best for the child. The decision made by the social worker could potentially put the child at risk of serious harm but has also potentially impacted other children in the future.

Although there are challenges, there are many benefits to Professional partnerships. Flying Start, works in partnership with other early years agencies, such as families first to ensure families and children can access all the groups and support available with an aim to use funding effectively to support those most vulnerable in the community. (GOV.WALES, 2024.)

Scenario 2: A health visitor visits the home of a mother who is concerned for her child's development. The health visitor refers the child to the Flying Start Playgroup. The child is assessed during play by the Additional Learning Needs co-ordinator and referred to for more support from the ALN team. The teams work together to create a development plan for the child.



The support from the agencies working collaboratively has enabled the child and parent to access the support needed. Early intervention could result in better outcomes for the child's future.

Both scenarios support Bronfenbrenner's theory of the impacts of those surrounding the child can have on their future.

Challenges



Childcare Costs and Funding

Welsh Government offer 30 free hours childcare for 48 weeks of the year combining nursery education and childcare funding. The aim is to relieve parents of the high costs of childcare. The Government claim they have helped parents across Wales to increase their hours and get back into work from taking up the 30 hours offer. (GOV.WALES, n.d.)



(Argile, 2025).



Childcare providers argue the level of funding provided does not cover the costs of running their settings, particularly with the rising costs of food, energy bills and staff wages. With only 20% of providers feeling they could sustain the model for two years, there is a call for an annual review of the hourly rate of funding. (Senedd.wales, 2025.) If childcare providers are unable to afford the costs, it could lead to setting closures, job losses and eventually lead to lack of childcare settings within the community.

Whilst the funding is welcomed by parents, it could be argued that the support does not go far enough. The funding rates for the childcare offer in Wales were last reviewed in 2022, whilst the operating costs have continued to rise dramatically. Therefore, childcare fees continue to rise due to providers having to raise prices to meet the losses they are making from Government funding. (Argile, 2025.) The increase in fees, topped with rising house bills could potentially leave parents struggling to provide essentials, such as food and clothing for their children.

65% of working parents in the UK, have had to take on more work and spend less on food for their children to meet the demands of childcare costs. (Theirworld, 2023.)





(Clybiau Plant Cymru, 2024.)

November 2024 Dawn Bowden MS, Minister for Children and Social Care released a statement sharing Welsh Government's commitment to supporting the Early Years. From listening to Early Years Providers, an agreement has been made to take annual reviews and make 100% rates relief for childcare settings. (Bowden MS, 2024). This support, once fully in effect, could improve the lives and financial stability for families and children.

Maintaining Staff

Recruitment and retainment within the childcare sector are currently facing challenges. Issues such as, low pay, poor staff wellbeing and testing working conditions are pushing staff to leave the profession.

Poor staff retainment can have an impact on the children within the setting. Young children require consistency, particularly with their keyworker, whom they have built a relationship. Poor staff management can result in children being missed, including vulnerable children who may need extra support. (Owston, Jones, and Stanley, 2024.)



(Smith, 2024.)

There is feeling within the Early Years that Educators are viewed more highly, particularly by the UK Government who put emphasis on the value of nurseries being opened in schools. Early Years Practitioners are often viewed as babysitters and wish to be shown more respect for the specialist knowledge and skills required for the role. (Pite, 2025).

A launch campaign has been set up by the UK Government in an attempt to recruit more staff within the early years.

The 'Do something big' campaign set out to advertise the Early Years, with the addition of trialling a £1,000 cash payment to new sign-ups of the job role. (GOV.UK, 2024). Although, the enticement of cash may be an incentive to sign up, this is a quick fix. It may not support retention as there will still be issues such as, lack of respect, a heavy workload and low pay which push staff to leave the profession.



A 'Do Something Big' campaign advert.

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in the foreground, a small tree with purple and pink foliage on the left, and blue and white wavy hills in the background.

Activities

Enabling Adults

The Curriculum for Wales sets out guidance to support practitioners in their planning and running of the early years setting. The adult plays an important role in supporting babies and children's learning. Their role is to provide a safe stimulating environment, giving consistent care, modelling kindness and compassion. To understand the child and their learning, the adult must observe and respond to a child's likes and dislikes, putting aside their own thoughts and opinions that may differ to the child. (Welsh Government, 2023). The guidance is child focused, wanting the child to lead their own learning and development with the support of the adult.



“wow!
Look! A
rainbow!”

An enabling, responsive adult will share in wonder with the child.

International Approaches

German based, Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852), was the inventor of kindergartens with a passion for early years childcare and education. Froebel believed that children should feel connected to the world around them, with the freedom to explore and learn from their own experiences. He felt that educators should be there to help children reflect on their learning and ideas and offer real life experiences. (Froebel Trust, 2022).

Welsh Government have taken Froebel's principles and used them within the curriculum. Ty Froebel, based in Cardiff, provides a space for early education students to learn more of Froebel's ideas and take part in the activities Froebel felt passionate about. (Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2021.)



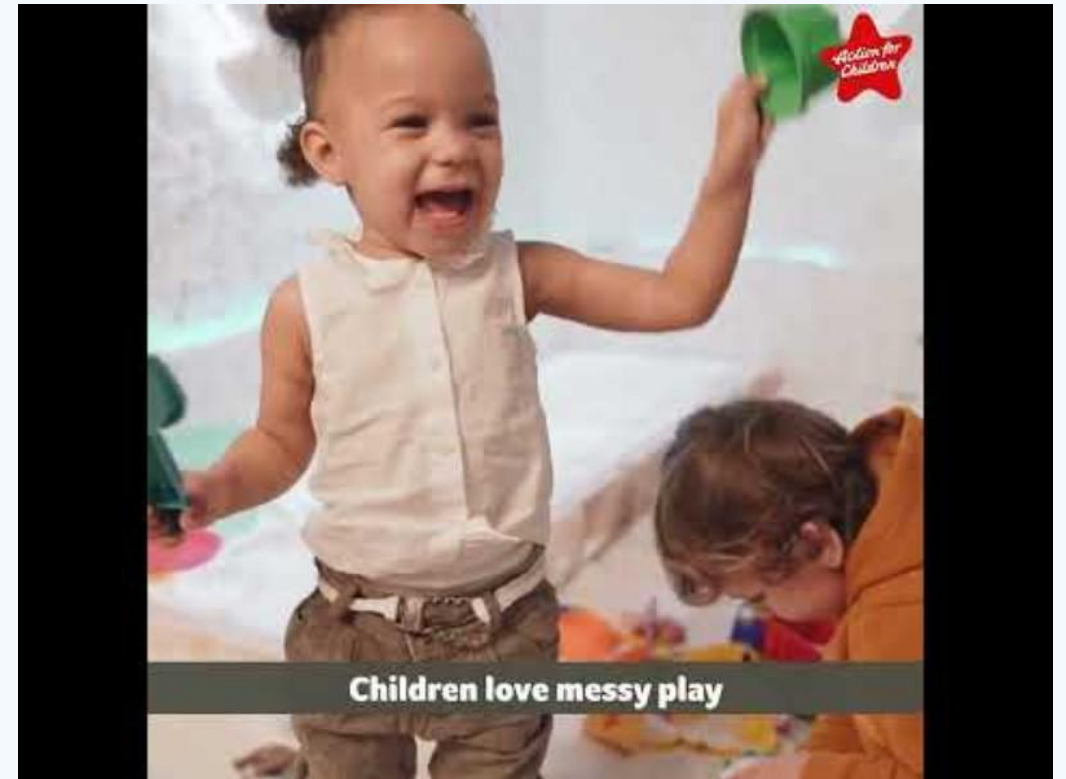


Dr Emmi Pikler shares the idea of allowing the child to explore independently and develop through their own learning. She found the babies in all social classes were led in their development by the parent, being supported to sit, stand and walk. When Pikler had her daughter, she chose to let her baby be in charge of her own development, supplying her with the space and freedom to explore movement in a caring environment. (Pikler UK Association, n.d.)

Sensory Play

Sensory play allows babies to explore the world around them using their five senses. For a baby, sensory play is fun and engaging. (Action for children, 2022.)

Giving babies access to a variety of sensory experiences supports brain development as they begin to make discoveries and links in the world around them. An adult will know every object or living thing has a name, but for a baby trying to understand the world, their discoveries need to be understood and placed into categories. (Gascoyne, 2012.) It is only from experiences that children learn meaning, such as, experiencing rain feeling wet or thunder sounding loud.



Treasure baskets are exciting for babies as they can rummage through independently, making their own choices and discovering new experiences, textures and sounds. When creating a basket, the practitioner should consider how the baby may use each item. Objects that can fit inside another, make sounds or can be stacked, may offer more opportunities than a soft toy. Including items which link to an experience also helps to support memory. (Sense, n.d.)



(Sensory Treasures, n.d.)

The image shows an example of a sensory basket. The objects are natural materials which have a range of textures and sizes. Different sounds can be discovered from the different materials when tapped together or on the floor. Some items may be familiar to a baby or young child, some new.

Messy Play

As the images show, messy play can be set out with different materials such as, sand or paint. A baby or toddler is able to explore using objects or their hands to squash and feel the textures.



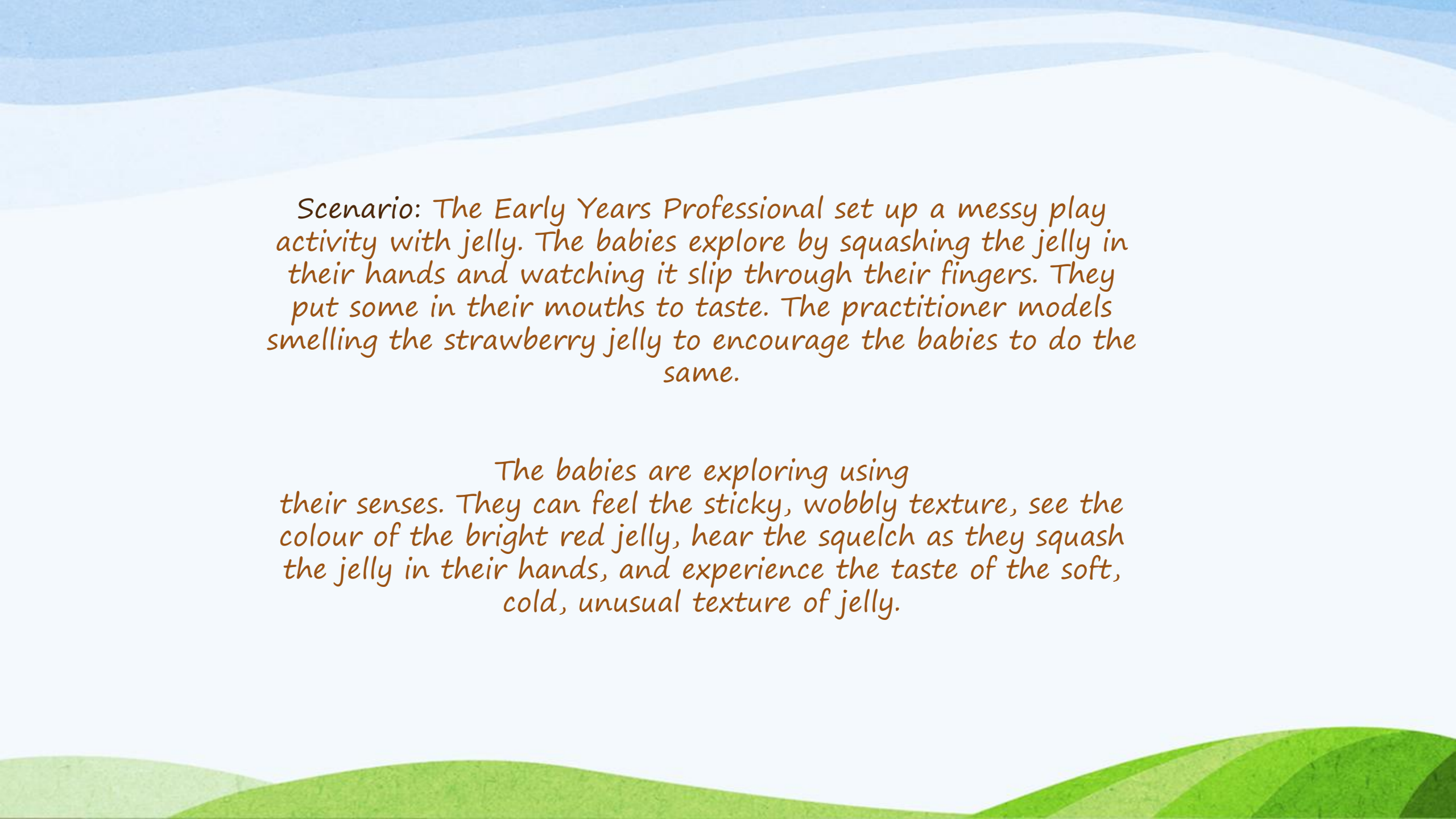
Play of the wild, 2021



(Mayhew, 2024.)



Play of the Wild, 2021



Scenario: The Early Years Professional set up a messy play activity with jelly. The babies explore by squashing the jelly in their hands and watching it slip through their fingers. They put some in their mouths to taste. The practitioner models smelling the strawberry jelly to encourage the babies to do the same.

The babies are exploring using their senses. They can feel the sticky, wobbly texture, see the colour of the bright red jelly, hear the squelch as they squash the jelly in their hands, and experience the taste of the soft, cold, unusual texture of jelly.



(WA, 2016.)

The baby is using their fine motor skills as they make marks on the tray.

Baby's personalities develop early on with an eagerness to communicate with those around them. As they grow and learn about their new environments, young children develop abstract thoughts, creating new ideas of their surroundings. With support of a creative environment, young children will feel confident in using mark making in their play to express thoughts and ideas. (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008.) Messy play assists a baby in developing their fine motor skills, preparing them to develop their future writing skills.

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