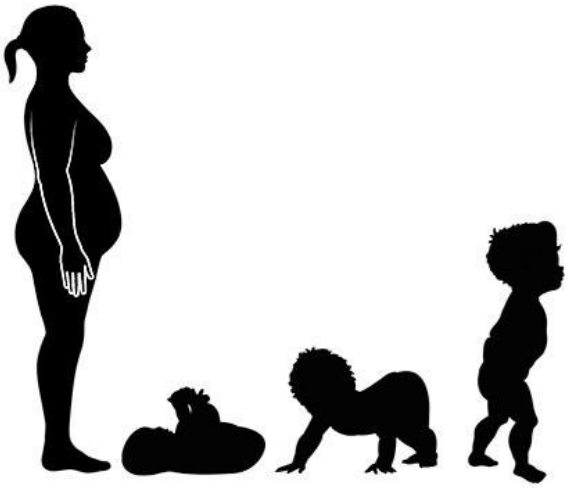


The First 1000 Days

Hayley Sims Student ID 2109693 ECEY4005 Word count: 3177

Introduction



The First 1000 Days.

From conception to a child's second birthday is a crucial time of development and growth for the baby.

There are many factors which can have an impact on this time of rapid growth. These can be dietary, environmental, hormonal, as well as other stressful factors. These will all have significant and lasting effects on the baby and their outcomes for many years ahead. Around the world, measures are being taken to support a family with the major life change of having a new baby by supporting them to understand the importance of this crucial time and give their baby the best start in life.

A parents health can influence the baby's health and development. According to The Best Start in Life Report (2021), parents who are healthy at the beginning of pregnancy have healthier babies. The Department of Health and Social care states to give every child the best start in life, intervention must begin before conception and continue throughout childhood. As pregnancy to two years has been proven to shape the rest of a baby's life, a big part of this is nutrition. During pregnancy, the babies' brain rapidly forms. Thousand Days describes the neural tube forms just 16 days after conception, and by the time the child is seven months old the child's brain resembles an adult. The diet of a pregnant mother therefore has a profound impact on a child's ability to grow, learn and thrive. Poor nutrition during these first days can cause irreversible damage to a child's brain for learning and development as well as causing further health problems. In early pregnancy and throughout childhood good nutrition supports children cognitive ability, motor skills and social – emotional development. Poor nutrition and neglect can cause toxic stress that comes with hunger, food insecurity causing damage which can be profound and irreversible.

Smoking

Smoking during pregnancy is the main cause of preventable illness and early death. It is harmful to both mothers and unborn babies and can lead to longer health term health problems. Some of these problems are congenital abnormalities, still birth, low birth weight and can impact the babies future outcomes.

Maternity care in Wales has published a 5-year plan (Welsh Government, July 2019). This vision is to ensure that children in Wales have the best start in life, and services have been developed for families to help them prepare for parenthood, ensuring it's a positive experience responding to their social emotional and physical needs.

How a parent responds to a child when born is vital for a child's brain development. A baby goes through significant development during this time with connections forming twice as fast as an adults brain. Therefore, positive interactions and responses helps shape their brain for the future life outcomes (Early Relationships Matter, 2020).

What is Exceptional Care?









Exceptional care is a setting with high qualified practitioners who have knowledge and experience of child development theories, and the reasons why we refer to them. Qualifications are key to high quality early years education, every child deserves excellent education and care, and every parent sh ould feel confident that their child is getting the best (Department for Education, 2012). Practitioners are aware of the importance of working with parents, other professionals supporting families, and signposting them to relevant services. Parents are children's first and most important educators. When parents and practitioners work together, this has a positive impact on children's development and learning (Thornton and Brunton, 2010, p.17).

The setting is planned appropriately to be inclusive of all children. All areas of learning are incorporated with an inviting, exciting environment that every child can explore, learn, and thrive in. Practitioners are

attentive, responsive, and always understanding. Each child has a keyworker who treats them as if they were their own.

The key person builds on Bowlby's attachment theory. Building on attachment and having a special relationship helps a child regulate their feelings giving them a safe and secure environment and opportunity for meaningful interactions (Hunter and Glazebrook, 2020). The keyworker has an excellent relationship with parents and families. The practitioners in setting take the time to learn about the children and families, culture, and background. If English is an additional language (EAL) the practitioners learn key words spoken by the family to make them feel welcome and included. Written communication with the families is also given in their home language if needed. Children will have the opportunity to make choices of play
and practitioners will facilitate play and step back when needed and not hinder it.

Practitioners use good role model behaviour, rich language which encourages children's confidence and extends vocabulary. Children have the opportunity to play by themselves or with others. The outdoors is an extension of indoors with an open door policy for children to explore all weathers. Children are able to be messy, loud or have quieter areas to access should they need it. The children are seen as individuals they are respected. Likes and dislikes are noticed and used for future planning. Children are observed in social, playful situations to provide evidence of learning and interests and this then shapes future learning experiences (Brodie and Savage, 2015)





The Curriculum for Wales framework 'Enabling Pathways' has been devised as a guidance to practitioner's schools and settings. It promotes that all children and learners follow the four purposes of the curriculum to become

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical informed citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy confident individuals

The environment plays a significant role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. It is therefore essential babies and children are welcomed with a high-quality environment to allow them to develop through play. According to Early Years Matters (2022), the space needs children to feel safe and secure for a child to feel confident to explore as children who do feel insecure play and explore less. A safe environment encourages exploration and good play behaviours. The warm nurturing environment that promotes the learning and development of the whole child allows them to have a voice and make choices. Separation from a parent or care giver can have an impact on the child. To get the environment right, practitioners need to know the background of the children in their care. This links to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model which puts the child at the centre, and the influences they have around them. His approach suggests that everything within a child and everything in a child's environment affects development and growth (Aubrey and Riley 2019).

The environment must allow the children to play and learn physically, creatively, and imaginatively creativity is the freest form of self-expression. It allows a child to express themselves openly and can reflect then nurture emotional health. This is because being creative allows a child to express and cope with their feelings. A child's creativity can show practitioners how they are feeling (The Whole Child, no date).

National minimum standards (NMS) state that children should have a range of experiences including freely chosen, unstructured and self-directed play that contributes to all areas of a child's learning. This enables holistic development. In practice we offer the child the opportunity to select what they want to play and offer them lots of opportunities to make choices and decisions and build on skills of social and emotional development.

Susan Isaacs was an invaluable pioneer for early years. Believing that the early years setting is not a substitute for child development at home but an extension to enhance it. Isaacs theory was to mirror

the warmth welcoming feeling of a family home which can be seen in early years practice today. NMS standard 7.3 requires children to have the opportunity to rest in quiet areas is provided to allow the children to have the time and peace to do this. The environment is also carefully planned out, so the quiet area is not next to the busier noisier areas. For example, book corner next to construction.

Children should have the opportunities to play and learn outdoors (NMS 7.4). In early years it is seen as an extension of the indoors and just as important for children's development. Being outdoors allows them to be bigger, move around with fewer restrictions of being inside. Spatial awareness can be limited indoors. Outside children can feel nature and learn about the world. The McMillan sisters believed that children should be given the opportunity to look after plants or animals as this was a way of instilling values of caring for themselves and others (Gray and Macblain 2012). In practice, children learn that the weather is different outside they may need to put on their coats or wellies if it is raining. They can learn about the world around them looking after plants and investigating nature. They also learn about space and how they can freely move, explore but also look out for others. Theorists Froebel, Rousseau and Pestalozzi introduced the idea that the outside had a positive role in the education of children. Nature and the natural environment can stimulate all a child's senses and allow for exploring, risk taking, fine and gross motor skills all are which important for development.

Outside play is critical for cognitive development of babies and infants. During the first few years they are trying to make sense of this new world around them. They experience every sight, smell and sound (Cobb, No date). Outdoor experiences are critical for an infant's physical development. This is because the window of opportunity for a child developing basic motor movements is pre-natal to five years. During this time the brain gathers, stores information and foundation for movement is built (Gabbard 1998)

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Enabling experiences



Enabling experiences

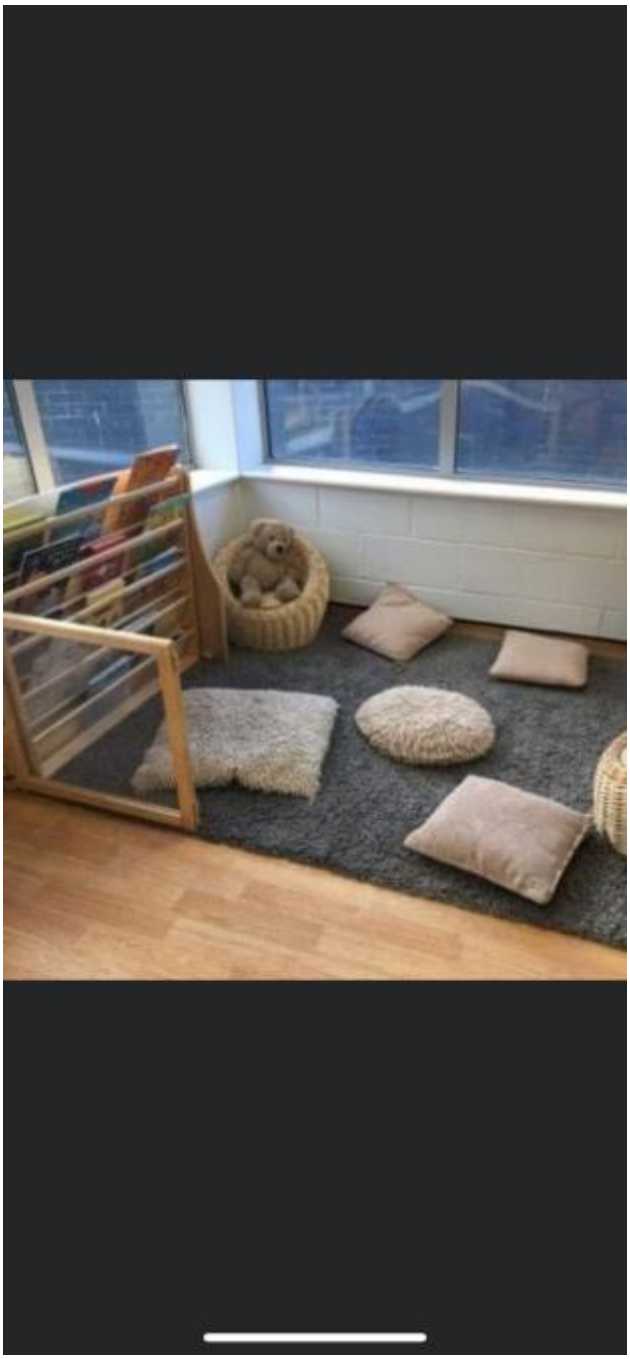
Every part of a baby's life is important, but the experiences they have help them for how they will cope with future experiences and life itself. Bronfenbrenner's theory is that babies and young children are most influenced by their family and their culture. When working with children, practitioners should provide valuable experiences to give them the best start in life and teach them about others and the world around them.

The first years of life are critical opportunity to encourage healthy, resilient, children (Burton, 2015 p32). The experiences planned for children should promote independence, in practice this is offered through many learning experiences and having choices.

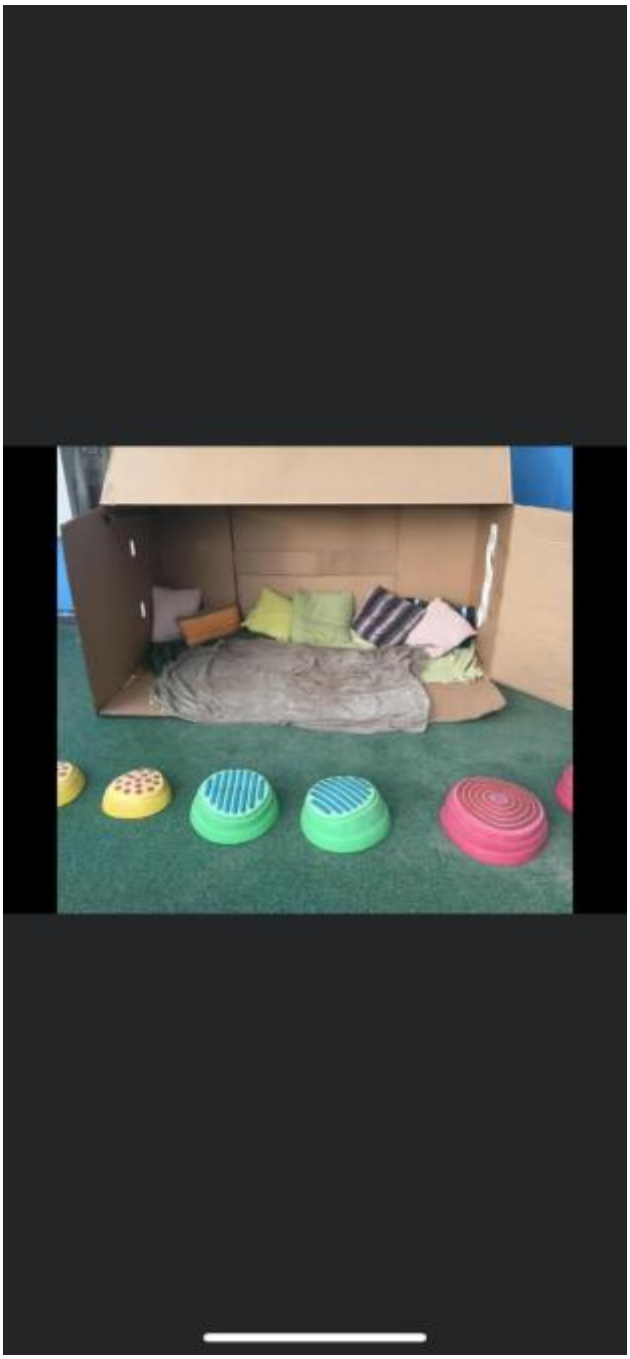
Enabling experiences with babies will develop awareness of their bodies. With babies some ideas could be mark making in shaving foam, popping bubbles



*1 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*2 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*3 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*4 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*5 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*6 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***



*7 - **Fledglings Nursery (2020)***


Peekaboo!
Make and Do



Treasure Baskets

A treasure basket is one opportunity for babies to play and be in charge of their own learning (Forbes 2004)

First created in the 1940's by childcare pioneer Elinor Goldschmied, treasure baskets support holistic learning and development by stimulating all five senses. Best suited to babies who can sit independently and grasp objects, this activity allows for curiosity, decision making, experimenting, the skill of beginning to choose, developing likes and dislikes and brain development, to name a few.

Through touch, taste, smell, sound and visual simulation objects are placed in the basket to stimulate interest in babies. Everyday objects can be used, for example: metal cooking utensils, brushes, shells, pinecones, feathers and wooden items.

More information and ideas can be found at

https://earlyimpactlearning.com/16-benefits-of-using-treasure-baskets-with-babies.

What is a treasure basket? A guide to making and using a treasure basket (graspandgather.co.uk)



Tap Tap Box

A tap tap box is an activity for babies and toddlers to develop their vocabulary. In addition to this, to learn important social skills of waiting, listening and turn taking. Using an empty box fill it with objects or items that can relate to a nursery rhyme or an action song. You can wrap the box to make it more inevitable and decorate it with fairy lights.

Take turns to tap the box before opening it singing: tap tap box what's in the box?

Some examples are a sheep for baa baa black sheep, a teddy bear for round and round the garden, a duck for five little ducks, a toy spider for incey wincey spider and so on.

Rhymes and rhythm help children to remember words and develop memory skills. It can also build confidence, fine motor skills and co-ordination.

Nursery Rhymes for babies and children



Children love rhymes and songs. Music is great for their language skills and learning songs helps brain development. Singing with a baby is great for bonding and building positive attachments. Eye contact and smiling help the baby learn emotion awareness and feel secure.

Singing songs repetitively can help fine and gross motor skills. It also allows babies and children to develop their thinking skills and hand eye coordination. Singing songs can be good for children to learn routines.

A great site to explore is

Nursery rhymes for babies - BBC Tiny Happy People

Tummy Time with babies (from 10 weeks to 7 months)





Putting babies on their front is key for neck strength and trunk control. It builds up core stability which is needed for children to have secure arm and leg movements.

The National Health Service Baby start for life campaign recommends tummy time to build muscles that a baby will eventually need for sitting and crawling. Lots of tummy time stimulates the pelvic area which supports toliet training later.

A great link for the importance of tummy time

[What is tummy time and how do you do it? - BBC Tiny Happy People]

Education and care interwine. If a child does not feel safe, secure they are unlikely to learn (Davis 2021).

Enabling adults

The role of the adult is to provide a stimulating environment to allow for learning, development and support language communication. The practitioners can scaffold a child's learning encouraging language development by commenting on what they are doing, modelling how to play, and expanding on any language a child has. It is important to provide provision that helps children think for themselves, to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through observation, the practitioner can decide whether to respond appropriately or continue observing. The practitioner should model a joyful approach to learning. Having excellent role model behaviour at all times is in line with Bandura social learning theory that children learn what they see (Aubrey And Riley, 2019). Frobel has a huge influence on much of the excellent practice of today, believing children learn best through creative imaginative play. Along with this, Montessori's real world experiences children now get to decide what they would like to do and learn firsthand about the world around them. In practice today, real experiences are provided for children to explore. Some examples of this are real fruit and vegetables for children to explore and chop up in home corner, shoes to try on and learn how to do it for themselves in role play, a real hammer and nails in construction, and a whole fish to paint and print in creative activity.

Opportunities provided for all children's interests and stages of development. As a key worker, it is their responsibility to ensure that individual children are cared for. Montessori, a huge influential figure, places the practitioner as the guardian of the environment. Through practitioners creating the environment and supporting learning, the children are free to explore and develop at their own pace allowing individual creativity (Gray and Macblain, 2012).

The adult's aim is to support a child's learning and not to hinder it. It is important to allow children to develop independent skills and routines of helping themselves. It is vital the practitioner allows children to do things for themselves where possible and be available to respond should they seek support and help.

Practitioners are key workers to a certain number of children within the setting. This is good practice, and Bowlby and his attachment theory suggests that with a sense of security from a familiar adult a child can learn self-regulation and control as they have a secure base from to explore. When children feel safe and secure they will enjoy and be involved in all experiences offered to them (Brodie, 2018). When practitioners and parents have a close connection, Frobel believed that children thrived. He therefore believed that respectful partnerships with parents were essential. In practice today this important fact has been recognised by National Minimum Standards as all settings have to follow (NMS 14.5). Every child is allocated a key worker this key worker is responsible for the child's wellbeing and

ensures information is handed over to the parent. This key worker is also responsible for observing the child and planning for development accordingly which is individual to each child's needs.

The importance of working with families also comes from the Reggio approach which has influenced our early years' practice. The approach identified that's although parents are the first educator's effective relationships with parents can have lasting beneficial effects on a child's wellbeing. Warm trusting relationships support children learning more than any number of resources (Thornton and Brunton, 2010).

Respectful care is vital for a child. Routines allow the child to understand what is going on and what is going to happen next. It is vital the practitioner verbally informs the child of what is going to happen, for example nappy time. According to Heale (no date) consistent loving care fires brain growth. It is important to realise that if a child does not have loving relationships this can result in them having physical, mental and emotional problems in childhood. It is important for children to have good relationships with the people who take care of them.

Wales comparison to international approaches

In Wales, the importance of the first 1000 days has been recognised. There are many support services in place, such as Flying Start. Unfortunately, this service is not available to every family and every child and only to certain areas which are classed as disadvantaged but can have the same street included one side eligible and one side not. Working with children and families has identified that every family need guidance and support at some point from pregnancy onwards. Having a child is a life-changing event and so support should be available to everyone regardless of where you live, family set up or background.

In Holland, a child worker helps a parent for eight hours a day. Showing them how to respond to their baby and organise their home (Morreau 2016).

Wales has been inspired by the approaches used internationally.



One approach is Te Whariki in New Zealand. This approach is one curriculum used by all from birth to age 6. It focuses on meeting the needs of the learners and the culture, developing relationships with families and communities. The approach reflects the heritage of New Zealand.

[te whariki - Bing]



Another approach that Wales has been influenced can be seen in Scandinavia. Their motto is 'no such thing as inappropriate weather, only inappropriate clothing'. Children spend most of their time learning outdoors. They want to raise healthy, resilient, confident, kids.

Both Montessori and Reggio approach (Italy) is also used although there are a few differences between them. Montessori was created for parents whilst Reggio has no head teacher and was created by parents. Montessori has development stages where as Reggio is against this. Montessori is based on observation, freedom of choice and Reggio is based on documentation, communication, and relationships.

All approaches have vital strengths on helping children's learning wellbeing and development.

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