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BA (Hons) Early Years Education and Care

The First 1000 Days
ECEY4005

Word Count:

One Part: Create a digital scrapbook (3000 words) to convey what the Student feels exceptional care could look like.

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

What are the first 1000 days?







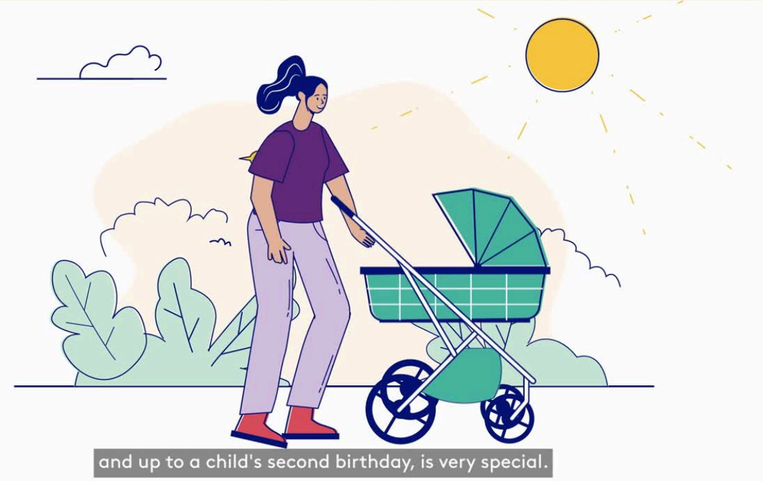


Source A: https://www.bountyparents.com.au/expert-advice/first-1000-days/

The first 1000 days are outlined by the UK parliament (House of Commons, Health and Social Care Committee, 2019,) as the time from conception to age two.

These days are "widely recognised as a critical period for child development shaping long-term health, well-being, and life outcomes. " (UK Parliament 2025) and they are being more closely reviewed by government due to their significance. The recent development in their renewed focus supports the idea that these day are vital in paving the foundations of later childhood and even adulthood.

This video from Public Health Wales (the NHS, N.D) talks more about the first 1000 days and outlines the importance of these days, how they lay the foundation, and the difficulties during this time for parents around Wales. This type of video is accessible to all parents in and out of the UK, and provides an empathetic viewpoint which many parents can relate to; this could also lead to parents feeling more comfortable reaching out if they need help - ultimately benefitting children. Although this video provides knowledge many people may not already hold, it does not provide any clear information on what to do to support development in these times, meaning families will have to do further research which can often feel like too much work, especially in families where there are challenges.



Source B: Public Health Wales, N.D, texthttps://vimeo.com/872473651?share=copy

Karakochuk, Whitfield, Green, and Kraemer (2018) looked at the vitality of healthcare during the first 1000 days, describing them as a “critical window in terms of mortality risk and other health outcomes.”

This book also looks at nutrition for the maternal figure during pregnancy, conducting studies on the effects of supplements, and looking at the micronutrients and supplements advised for mothers, their effects and the benefits like iodine deficiency and the harm to neurological development of the baby in the womb.

In the UK the first 1000 days are hailed as paving foundations for a child’s development, shaping them in ways that carry into adulthood, however in some parts of the world this is not the case. In Lao PDR the first 1000 days are not handled the same way that they are in the UK for example. Access to adequate healthcare is not automatically provided or easily accessible and children often fall victim to malnutrition. (UNICEF, N.D)

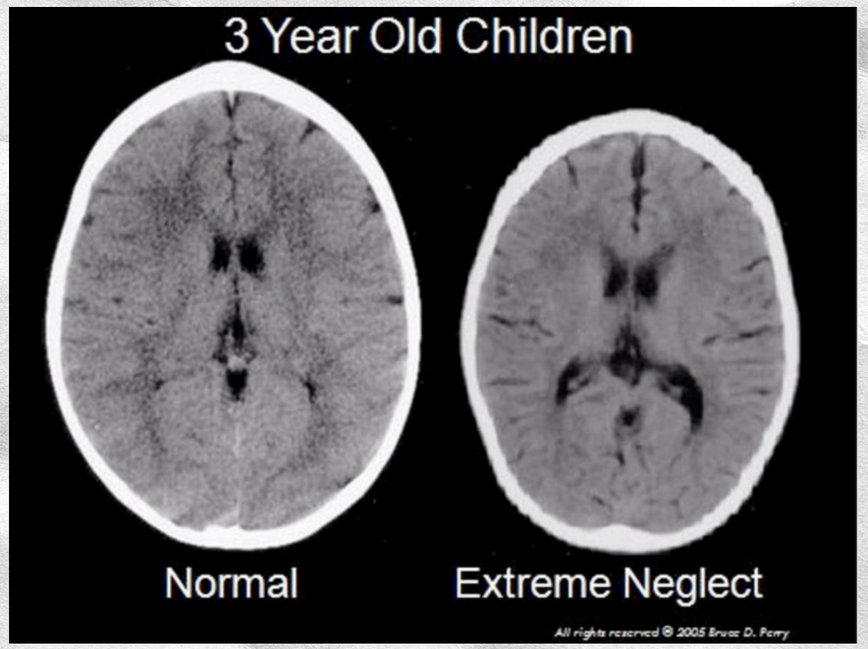
With further development and research, alongside economic support and widespread access to healthcare things could change massively. It is only a fairly recent concept that the first 1000 days is vital in the UK.



Source C: Public Health Wales, (The NHS, N.D)

Public Health Wales (The NHS, N.D) highlights the importance of providing the best start in life, love care and attention, strengthening families, reducing pressures, acting early and creating the conditions for all families to flourish. Their infographics and videos are directly targeted for parents, this provides accessible, easy to understand information to all on the value of the first 1000 days. The Welsh Government have created a holistic and accessible approach to harbouring growth in children in the first 1000 days, clearly outlining needs, highlighting challenges and trying to make adaptations supporting those with challenges. They look at a variety of ways development can be hindered/helped, providing a wide rang of information for parents/caregivers.

An article published in 2020 by Darling *et al* outlined the variety of impacts experiences in the first 1000 days has on children longer term. Looking at cases of neglect and the physical impacts of that on brain size; as well as comparing the obesity levels of low income families.The article highlights the detrimental impact of experiences from conception to the second birthday, supported by a variety of previous study such as the ACES (Adverse Chgildhood Experieinces), a lancet series, and a case study into government funding. Although the image is of the three year olds brain scan, the neglect would have occurred prior to the scan and due to the fact that it is “extreme” neglect it supports the idea of long-term neglect.



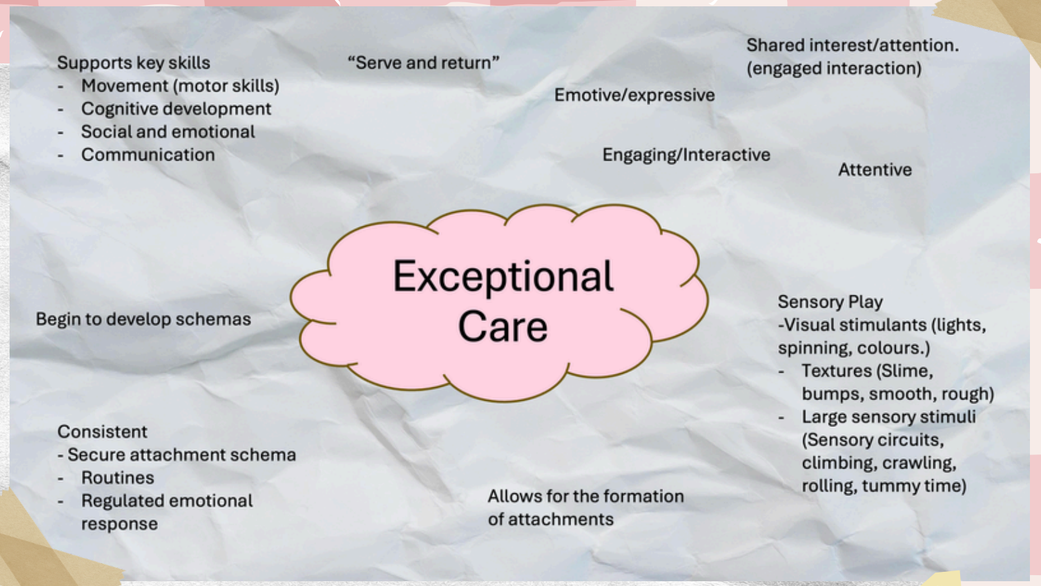
Source D: The First Thousand Days: early, integrated and evidence-based approaches to improving child health: coming to a population near you?, (2020)

What is Exceptional Care?

The “Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan in Wales“ (Welsh Government 2024) document provides a well-rounded concept of promoting development. It provides holistic concepts of caring for children as a parents and caregivers. They outline the child's right to play, the importance of smooth transitions, early identification of additional learning needs, and many more core aims for Wales.



At the beginning of the module I completed a quick mind-map on my basic ideas of exceptional care - prior to research being completed to provide a simple visual to show a providers idea of exceptional care.



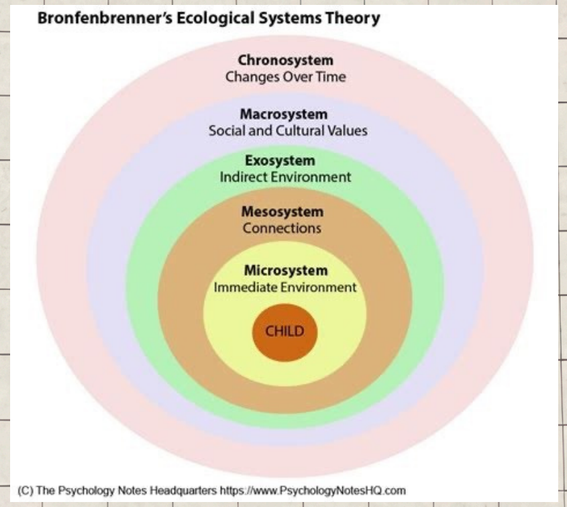
The Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University (N.D) created research on the importance of “Serve and Return”, they highlight the importance of responsive, attentive, caring adults and how it supports building a strong foundation for a childs brain architecture. They also provide informative videos on Serve and return to show parents/caregivers how to support this method of development -

Harvard University also quickly touches on the idea of naming - naming what a child is doing, seeing or feeling which allows them to make links with words and objects/actions to create language connections/links beore words can be formed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNrnZag17Ek&t=8s -

Nelson et al (2002) created the Clinical Microsystems Theory (CMT), this theory utilised Bronfenbrennars Ecological Theory to deeper expand thought into exceptional care Although Nelson et al explored the CMT in a medical sense, the concept of thinking of care as its own ecological system works well will Early Years, for example:

Microsystem=relationship with child,
Mesosystem=the settings room environment,
Exosystem= The systems environment as a whole,
Macrosystem= policies, county guidelines,
Chronosystem= legalities, national guidelines



Source E: Simply Psychology - Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory: 5 Levels Explained with Real Examples, (2026) https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/

Infants who actively participate in their daily care and are emotionally balanced are also active and full of initiative beyond the care situation (Emmi Pikler, N.D)

Theorist Emmi Pikler (N.D) produced a document on the competency of an infant, looking specifically about the inane ability infants and toddler's have, she criticises the previous idea that infants and toddlers are "helpless creatures" and explores how smaller actions of these babies/toddlers are often undisclosed as they appear small but show a significant amount of inseen thinking. She also discussed how infants can present autonomy and the importance of having an aware caregiver. The consideration to a babies reaction such as crying at a baths temperature or continuing to suck on a drink or spoon when fed something shows a like/dislike reaction and listening and reacting to these cueues support a child's autonomy even when thy cannot verbal express their wants/needs.

The Froebel Trust created a document which outlined Froebelian principles of early years. Froebels viewpoints can be considred to be an exacmple of exceptional care as his concepts go above and beyond a sinmplistic view of general care.

"By thinking carefully about all aspects of the child's environment and how they link – including access to resources, indoor and outdoor spaces, the natural world, knowledgeable and nurturing educators and the local community – educators can create inclusive settings which value and nurture the whole child." (Adams and Short, N.D)

Proffessional Partnerships in the First 1000 Days

Cumbria County Council (2006) created a document for practitioners to view to display the significance of professional partnerships, how to foster positive relationships with families to promote healthy, ongoing communication and partnership, the effects on the child, the importance of observation; it also supports the idea of parents being the core educators and that parenting prior to attending nursery is vital on a childs development ad ability to learn in nursery - ‘Parents are children’s first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in early
years settings, the results have a positive impact on children’s development and learning.’ (Cumbria County, N.D)

Be aware of the support available for families in the local area and share this with families,

Where opportunities are provided for parents to meet with staff, offer them at different times of the
day for example in the morning, afternoon and evening.

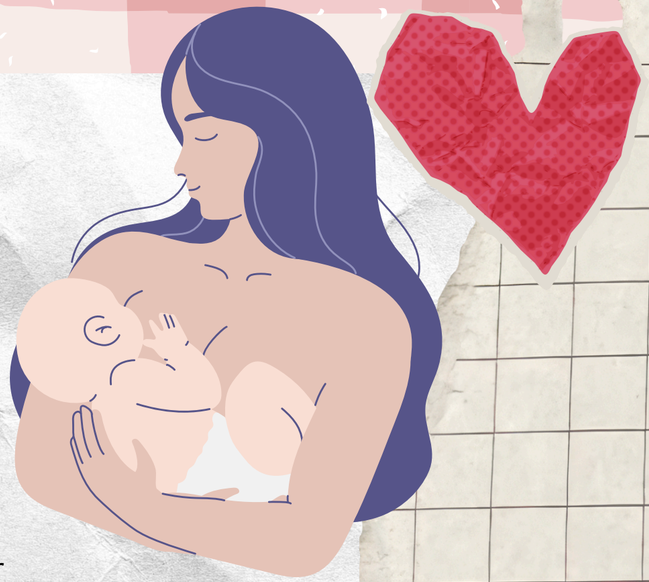
The setting is a welcoming place with space for parents and clear indications that they are welcome
and valued. For example a parent’s room or welcome poster in a variety of languages.

Plan social events that will appeal to all families.

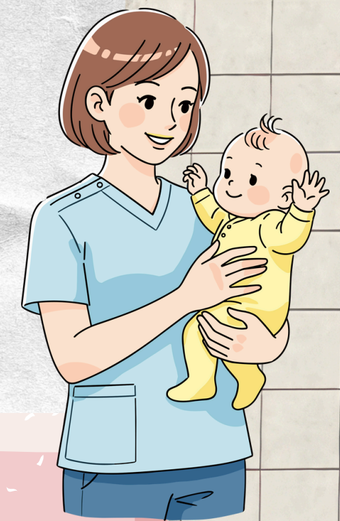




The advancements in technology also provide a method to develop professional partnerships between providers and families by giving an insight into a child's day, the activities completed, updates on events, and even allowing families to contact the setting with questions/updates without having to wait for handovers at the start/end of the day. A paper published by Megan Smith (2023) on “Virtual connections for parental engagement: What do digital spaces offer?” looked at the positives of technology and how it has promoted interaction, it also specifically looks at the app “seesaw” and how it has allowed for the collation of a higher volume of resources/evidence of learning than in previous years. The inclusion of “Seesaw” is also viewed as a positive tool in promoting partnerships in an research paper from S. Catherine University in 2018. (Kurnava and Sellhorn 2018)



As proposed by John Bowlby, (1969) parents (specifically mothers), create the beginning of attachments for children, providing them with an attachment style which has future effects on adult life; subsequently there is also an effect on a child's ability to form attachments when commencing their time in a setting. Without secure attachments being formed with the primary caregiver, children are less likely to possess the ability to form secure attachments to key workers, other children in the setting. Bowlby looks at the effects of a secure attachment style on a child in relation to involvement, reaction, and behaviour towards caregiver and strangers. The positive reactions from babies with secure attachment styles promotes the idea that these children are more confident from their secure attachment.



Elenor Goldschmied developed on Bowlby's concept of attachment and suggested that children can form attachments with people other than their mother. She looked closely at key workers - specific members of staff that work closely with certain children, this alloows the child to create a solid bond/attachment with their key worker, allowing them to have a 'safe person' that they can rely on to provide comfort. Goldschmied (2012) discussed the idea of a setting being a "home away from home" there is also a comment from a toddler room leader stating they feel like a "second mum" to the children; Goldshmied reinforces this idea and praises it for its high level of care provided and obvious love for the children. This provides the children with a feeling of support when away from their primary caregiver and home environment and assists them in acclimating with the setting and staff member.

Challenges Faced in the First 1000 Days

There are a variety of challenges that parents, caregivers and educators can face when trying to provide high quality care, whether it be in the home or in a setting. .

Parents can face challenges such as financial challenges, this can mean there is a strain on being able to provide quality equipment, especially large equipment for gross motor skills; it can also mean that some families may be restricted to a small house with a lack of space or no garden for children to experience nature in a safe and secure environment. The effects of financial hardships is summarised by The Human Safety Net (2021),

“Parents facing difficulties to manage their resources or experiencing financial constraints can reduce their ability to spend, save or invest resources in learning opportunities, good health, and appropriate nutrition. All of these aspects influence parental behaviors and, consequently, the development of their children.” This supports the idea of the first 1000 days being a foundation for adult life but also supports the idea that personal challenges, especially financial ones can effect a variety of areas under the umbrella of development.

Cardiff Council have also produced a document outlining care for children and they highlight the employment of flying starts and directly state that they have been created to tackle poverty; allowing all children to access high quality care means that the gap for development in poverty levels will be reduced as lack of family resources will have a lessened impact on development. https://cardifffamilies.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Approaches-and-Interventions-English.pdf



Settings also face significant challenges caused by financial strain, with a lack of funding for equipment, staff, staff training, space, classroom developments, external providers (forest school, trips, educators/entertainers) and a multitude of other components. A recent article states that over half of Englands maintained nurseries are struggling to cover core costs as of 2025. (Early Education The British Association for Early Childhood Education, 2025)

In more rural areas caregivers may not be able to access transport, whether it be from a lack of money to afford a car/driving lessons or even affording public transport, the lack of reliability in public transport can also reduce a parents desire to take a child to nursery/playgroup/experiences in general. It could also limit social interaction for parents and children leading to mental health issues for the caregiver due to isolation.

The UK Government created a document looking deeper into barriers of best practice in relation to parental engagement, one issue that is continuously noted is transport. (Department of Education, N.D (Pre-2010)



Lack of understanding for importance for academic background and significant knowledge of development for the youngest children in care, the caregivers/providers for babies/infants are usually seen as the leats capable/competent, and are often “palmed off” onto the babies as due to their lack of autonomy they are seen as “easier”.

This issue is being discussed on “The Baby Room Blog”, holding discussions about the inadequate qualifications of those in charge of leading a baby room, “Compassionate Baby Practice” is a learning resource created by County Durham to “bridge the gap” in what formal qualifications, especially those at a level 3, may accidentally omit (The Baby Room Blog N.D)



Previous family experience with education/care providers can create a reluctance for cooperative working even when it supports the child. This is typically from a parents previous experience or misinformation shared about caregiving or negative experiences in the news/social media. this can cause a “gap” between providers and parents meaning that partnership working isn’t happening as fluidly as desired.

Activities and Pedagogies in the first 1000 Days

Treasure Baskets - Elinor Goldschmied

A multi-sensory activity designed for young children once they are able to sit up comfortably, but before they are able to crawl. This period of growth can be very frustrating for a child, the treasure basket sets out to counter boredom that comes from not being able to move themselves around.

Treasure baskets are usually made out of household items, derived from a babies interest in the kitchen cupboards. Using objects that are already within the house, and items a child may already have shown an interest in.



Source F: My Treasure Toys (N.D) https://www.mytreasuretoys.co.uk/collections/create-your-own-treasure-basket

Goldschmied discussed how babies use their full bodies to explore. Putting items in their mouths or against their feet, showing that babies actively seek that sensory experience.

Elinor Goldschmied, 2004

Loose Parts - Simon Nicholson

Nicholson looked at the importance of having the correct environment for playing with loose parts, children need space where they can make a mess, he looked mostly at loose parts outside.

Nicholson also discussed the utilisation of water in ‘loose parts’ and how it invokes the same curiosity as loose parts. It allows children to explore and make a mess, find out cause and effect, learn social boundaries and team work.



Source G: Cosy Direct: (N.D) https://www.cosydirect.com/blog/loose-parts-play-creating-a-library-beg-borrow-or-steal-okmay-be-not-steal/?epik=dj0yJnU9WlRpaThfVVUzYk9SdmNwMFFIbDJEd2RfZEpRQlk1ZUUmcD0wJm49SjRucGdLbXotbngyM3AxZOJaeUVzQSZOPUFBQUFBR2x5VGpv

The inclusion of children in the creation of a loose parts is also vital in Nicholsons idea. He states children have a higher feeling of involvement and ownership over the ‘loose parts’ area and feel a stronger connection to it, leading to increased use of these areas.

Simon Nicholson, 1971

Forest School

6 Core Principles
- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, and to initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

(Forest School Association, N.D)



https://youtu.be/5qCN0JHeR-Y

Brief 5- Minute video into Forest School in the UK

Originated in Scandinavia, Forest School takes place over a variety of sessions - not completed in one session/ day, this ensures the topics covered are reinforced and children are able to grow and not 'learn' in a one off instance. It is also heavily emphasises the importance of completing this education over at least two of the four seasons.

Forest school utilises nature to help support learning in a variety of ways. Children take risks, learn social boundaries, discover cause and effect, they can develop empathy with the insects and creatures found, develop gross and fine motor skills and find their own boundaries.

(Forest School Association N.D)

Sara Knight (2013) talked about how some children were found to 'play' in bomb sites during World War Two, supporting the idea that children have a natural desire to explore uncertain and dangerous places; by supporting this natural desire to explore in the first 1000 days children learn how to manage this desire safely and learn their own limits.

Forest school Covers Activities such as...

- Toasting Mashmallows
- Climbing/exploring
- Creating art with natural resources
- Making paint
- Potion making
- Shadow art/play
- Barefoot walk
- Storytelling
- Mud kitchen

The Montessori Approach

What is Montessori?
Montessori is an approach to education that is focussed on realising each person's human potential.
(Maria Montessori Institute, N.D)

The Montessori approach is an internationally adopted approach
(Maria Montessori Institute, N.D)



Source H: Montessori in Real Life: (N.D)
https://www.montessoriinreallife.com/home/2020/2/1/choosing-a-montessori-school

This approach also considered the fact that every person has a different learning style that comes with strengths and weaknesses. This approach works with this by allowing open ended learning, allowing the child to learn in the way that fits them best
(International Montessori Schools and International Baccalaureate Secondary, N.D)

The learning environment is typically aesthetically pleasing - often following a neutral approach as to not overstimulate the child or sway them to choose a certain toy or activity because of its loud noises or flashing lights; they are also specious, clean and includes a green area.

This approach promotes independence, curiosity, exploration and purposeful play.It can extract a learning opportunity from almost anything - showing the value of ever experieince.

Maria Montessori (1912) also contemplated the practicality of classroom environments for students, especially those in the early years. She looked at having chairs and tables at the correct height, armchairs to increase comfort and most furniture at a n adequate size for the children.

In these green spaces children often have significant responsibility such as tending to. garden or in some cases live animals like chickens. This helps promote independence, confidence, team work and helps a child feel like the setting is “their setting’.



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