



# The First 1000 Days

## Introduction



During this presentation I will discuss the first 1000 days of a child's life. Starting at conception to the age of two years the foundation of development is laid making this a critical phase. Life chances are improved if a child's brain and body develop correctly giving the child the best start in life. During this period, should adversity or stress play a part then it could result in hindering a child's learning and development setting them apart from their peers. Should this happen and not be addressed it would have a detrimental effect on the child and their adulthood, even being passed on to the next generation. Adverse Childhood Experiences ACE are caused by this and should a child experience four or more of these experiences then poor health and well-being is at a higher risk. By actively intervening at the start of a child's life then you are giving the child the best possible start. Another great factor to consider is the misuse of alcohol and drugs during pregnancy. This can have an adverse effect on the baby developing and can cause serious complications to the baby's development both mentally and physically. Services should be enhanced to give support to parents

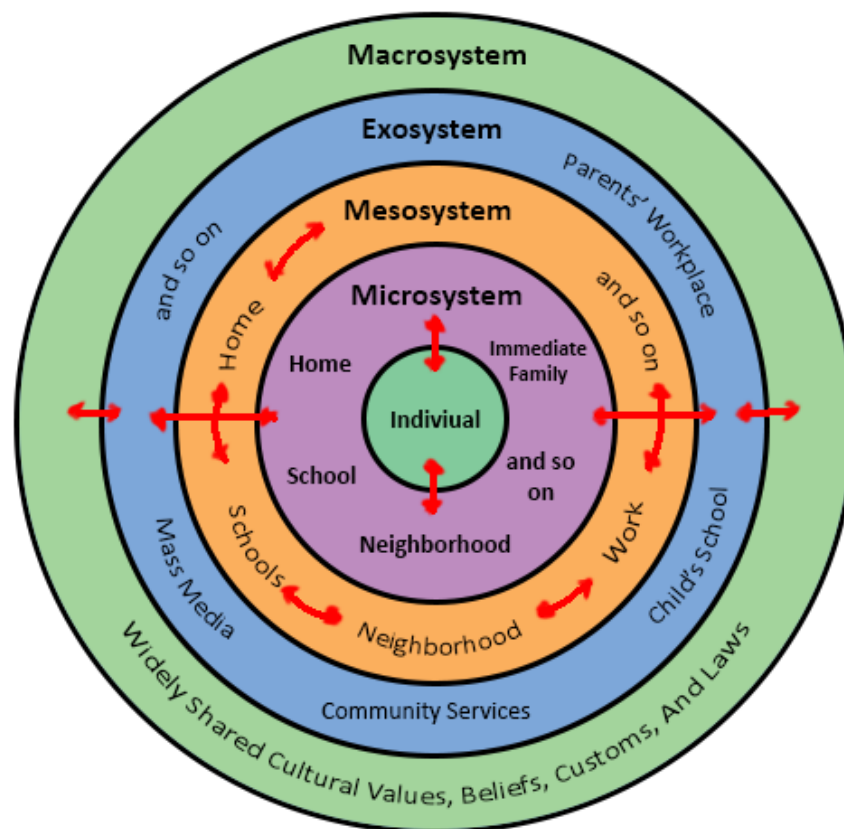
to help them with supporting their child's development. Social stress such as unstable employment, poverty and poor housing can deprive the child of their development and hinder the parents' ability to meet their child's needs. The Government are developing a long-term plan for improving support for parents, children, and their families. Local services should be provided at the highest quality and should be based on six principles. Community partnerships, prevention and early intervention, evidence-based provision, a focus on meeting the needs of marginalised groups, proportionate universalism so services are available to all but targeted in proportion to the level of need, greater integration and better multi-agency working. Local authorities should work closely with the local NHS and with the communities to improve and provide efficient support to all families. Babies are reliant on adults to look after them and see them as playmates. They need to be held and given toys like a rattle to help them with the physical development to reach out and grasp. By adults engaging with babies and allowing them to explore their movements like placing them in a baby gym, babies can learn to control their large movements. When a child turns one, they enjoy being mobile and although they enjoy playing with adults, they also spend time exploring and playing by themselves but stay close to the adults. From 18 months children will make sounds and talk whilst engaging in play. They will develop better coordination and become more physical by climbing and throwing objects. Repetitive movements make their play more characterised and will find movements fascinating like dropping a ball, picking it up, and repeating this motion. Although children seem to enjoy watching others play, they won't join in and play in a cooperative way until they are almost 3 years old. Lindon (2016)

## Caregiving

Bruce (2010) As babies and children develop their sleep pattern will change. It is good practice to be mindful of this and make sure they are having enough sleep to help their development. Some settings will need to provide sleeping areas making sure routines are followed as much as possible. It is good to encourage parents and other caregivers to take an active role in children's play, learning and development. Early Years practitioners should work closely with parents to fulfil the aim of helping them support their child's learning and development at home. Research was conducted and studies showed that parents who read to children, sharing stories and continuously talk and integrate in play with them make a significant difference to them meeting their developmental outcomes. It is key to have a good relationship with parents and work alongside them, gaining their trust and respect. Showing a good understanding and acknowledging what they are already doing to support their child will be beneficial. Barriers do need to be considered too, such as if a parent works long hours or there is more than one child in the home so that the appropriate advice can be given with realistic suggestions. Many Early Years settings hold play groups and workshops to work alongside parents. Looking at aspects of development and sharing information and guidance with the parents. There is a statutory requirement that all Early Years settings carry out a progress check on all children between the ages of two and three. This will give a good indication of the child's development and focuses on three areas. Personal, social, and emotional development, physical development and communication and language development. By understanding how children develop relationships with different adults and how a bonding process starts, children will feel safe and secure supporting their learning and development. 'Bonding is a process which, for most parents, is very instinctive and powerful that nature has designed to ensure the survival and protection of the vulnerable new born child' (Tassoni 2014). The bond between a child and their parents begins before the child is born. From 16 weeks (about 3 and a half months) on pregnancy a mother will start to feel movements and little kicks. They will start off quite soft and as the pregnancy progresses the feeling

will get a lot stronger. Routine scans are done, and the parents can see their baby and can also be told the gender if they choose to. At around 26 weeks (about 6 months) babies can respond to their mother's voice. Once the baby is born mothers are encouraged to have skin to skin contact with the baby immediately if possible and breastfeed, if possible, too. Nature is responsible for producing hormones during birth and shortly afterwards so that mothers fall in love with their baby. There are some factors that affect early bonding such as post-natal depression which is thought to be caused by an imbalance of hormones, a traumatic birth that can affect the mother's response to the child especially if she is in pain. Premature birth sometimes leads to the parents not being able to touch or hold their baby as often as they should and babies with additional needs may not be soothed by their parents hindering the parent's confidence that will then affect the baby's responses. Lindon (2016)

## Professional Partnerships



Young children need to adapt the skill to learn and play alongside their peers and the early years practitioner can help support them and develop that skill. Even though it is recommended that children will only do this when they are 3 years of age, it is a gradual process that starts a lot earlier on in their development. Depending on each individual and their developmental stage, different strategies can be used. Playing and modelling is an effective way for babies and children to socialise with others when adults join in. It helps them learn turn taking and interaction when responding to others. It is good practice for Early Years Practitioners to acknowledge the children when they are presenting good behaviour skills and being cooperative. By planning play opportunities that are stage

appropriate and providing and enabling environment is a role of the practitioner, helping the children play alongside one another by setting up resources in a structured way. Babies 0-1 year need a relaxed and homely environment with plenty of opportunities and interaction with their key person. They need to be able to explore with their hands and mouths so something like treasure blankets can be a useful resource to have as well as a rocking chair where an adult and baby can cuddle up together. Once babies become mobile, more floor space will be needed to allow them to move freely and can pull themselves up so suitable furniture should be in place. A sleeping area is beneficial too that is safe and will let them feel emotionally secure is important. Changing the areas regularly is good practice so the children do not get bored and have access to sensory play. Toddlers 1-3 years are more active as they start to walk and spend more time moving around pushing items and carrying things around. This needs to be taken into consideration when planning and enough resources should be provided to encourage parallel play. Although role play is not fully established, props should be provided in a range of diverse ways. Mark making, construction and sensory toys should be planned into the environment and there should be opportunities for them to develop their independence skills by having access to their own coats and being encouraged to be independent where possible. Children at this stage find it hard to wait so resources should be easily available and as they have little awareness of danger, safety is a major key factor to consider when supporting children. Lindon (2006)

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977) an American Psychologist famous for his works on Ecological Systems Theory. He states, "A child's development occurs within an ecological system that contains multiple environments or systems that interact to shape the child as they grow into an adult." Bronfenbrenner's theory discusses microsystems within the environment a child is placed. It also includes the activities and other adults and children within that setting whom the child has daily contact with. Bronfenbrenner believes that microsystems are the biggest influence on a child's learning and development. Microsystems include nurseries and schools, peers and family members being the most influential. He states that there should be good connections between all microsystems calling this mesosystem. Dowling (2010) The Ecological System is modelled as a set of concentric circles with the child being in the centre.

Microsystem – the circle closest to the child that represents their immediate surroundings including family.

Mesosystem – this is the connections between the microsystems such as home and school.

Exosystem – this is the environment that the child does not have a direct experience with but will affect their development such as a parent working.

Macrosystem – culture beliefs and values that will have an impact on the child's life.

Chronosystem – the model changes that can happen over time through growth or significant life events.

A child needs all these factors to help with their learning and development. The child is the centre, and all the circles are multiple aspects that are momentous to the impact of their development. 'Development takes place through the process of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment.' Bronfenbrenner (1995)

## Challenges



Different family structures can have an impact on the children's learning. Society has changed over the years and although there are still children brought up in a home with a mother, father, and siblings there is now a wide variety of different family structures. If a child receives love, care and attention and feels secure then it should not really make a difference whatever their family structure. However, this can still pose its own challenges and it is important that settings are made aware of the family structure to know how to best support the child. There can be other factors to be considered that stem from the family structures such as low-income households that can impact a child. If a parent is in poverty or deprivation, they might not be able to meet the child's needs, so it is important to support all caregivers and make sure they are aware of any help that is available to them. Should a child come to the setting without having breakfast they might be at a disadvantage with their learning and development. Children might have to move to different settings if a parent's job has relocation aspects. You need to support the child in the transition process and work with the caregivers and other practitioners to understand and meet the needs of the child and support their learning and development. Understanding a family structure can be beneficial to all involved and the appropriate support provided. Being empathetic should always be a key part of the role of a practitioner and working together with other agencies can support families with their hardship so that the child involved is not at a disadvantage to harbour their learning and development. Dowling (2010)

Margaret McMillan 1860-1931 and Rachel McMillan were two sisters that were social reformers that felt the need to help poor children and their families by improving their conditions. They set up many campaigns and were involved in many activities to improve social conditions and a successful campaign was launched to ensure children from poor families were entitled to free school meals. In 1914 they funded a nursery school in a deprived area of London. Although their main concern was the health of young children they were extremely interested in education and although influenced by

Montessori it was Frobel's concept that they adapted. This led to an open-air nursery being funded where most of the time was spent outdoors incorporating imaginative play as keyway of helping children develop and learn. They also felt that a nursery setting was to be an extension of home so including parents in their work. Tassoni (2014)

## Activities



There are many different theories and philosophical approaches around how children should play and the role of the adult supporting that child during play. The debate of the value of play and what the children should be playing with continues to this day.

Maria Montessori 1870-1952. Montessori trained as a doctor spending her first years working with children that processed learning difficulties. She discovered by using structured teaching resources

and having a structured approach the children were able to make progress. 1907 she was asked to visit Rome in Italy, overseeing the education of pupils on a deprived neighbourhood. The structured approach was hailed a success by implementing many of methods and techniques that she had used in her previous teaching. Montessori continued to use scientific close observations of children to refine her methods and ideas about early education continued to develop. There are many nurseries and early years settings around the world using her approach to education. She felt that any opportunity for a child to learn should not be wasted as they pick things up so quickly therefore viewed children that play just for the sake of it a waste of time. Up until a child is 6 years of age, they can learn effortlessly calling it absorbent mind. She believed that they are active learners and are more interested in practical objects rather than toys. Montessori created and developed an environment that let the children help themselves to child sized tools and objects so that they were able to gain practical skills. If children were given the correct conditions to allow them then they would be capable of independence and concentration skills development. The role of the adult should be to guide children, making sure time is not wasted completing tasks that would not further their learning or development. A one-to-one basis should be provided for the tasks to ensure appropriate stage of development. Tassoni (2014)

Friedrich Froebel 1782-1852

Germany born Froebel worked in a time where philosophical interest of the nature of childhood was quite popular. People believed that all children were born evil and that the only way they would be able to become good would be through discipline and harsh education. Froebel did not believe this, and he stated that they were born good, but it was up to the adults to provide the children with the right care and place them in an environment to protect them from becoming evil. He differed from Montessori in the way that play was important to the child's journey and that adults could support them. Objects should be given to children for them to learn and explore helping the children learn about different concepts such as a heavy ball and a light ball. He also felt music and rhymes would help the children learn about different concepts and he is thought to be responsible for the rhyme 'Round and Round the Garden'. He is also suggested that children should be immersed in nature and spend a lot of time outdoors. He put into practice his ideas by setting up Kindergarten which is German for Child's Garden and many of his ideas are used throughout the early year's settings within Germany today. Bruce (2009)

Berk (2012) Forests and many other outdoor locations within Scandinavian countries have been used for years to provide settings for early education. Due to the culture and geography of Norway and Denmark where many schools are in rural wooded areas. The significant benefits of children being able to play in natural environments have led many practitioners working in UK settings to undertake Forest School training incorporating the approach into their own settings. It offers children the ability to observe nature and geographical topics whilst learning and developing their physical skills. It has been noted that children are more creative and play differently in larger spaces with no toys present. Some settings may use the outdoors once a week where others can use the outdoors daily.

Reggio Emilia is a small area located in the north of Italy. It is renowned for its pre-school education and is collaborative with both practitioners and parents and finds by working together they can meet the needs and interests of the children. They feel that adults play a key role working with children and they can facilitate they play, reflecting on what they have learnt. By doing this they can encourage creativity and provide a varied range of resources. This is a child-centred approach and the views children capable of directing their own development and learning. It highlights the importance of adults listening to children. Tassoni (2014)

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