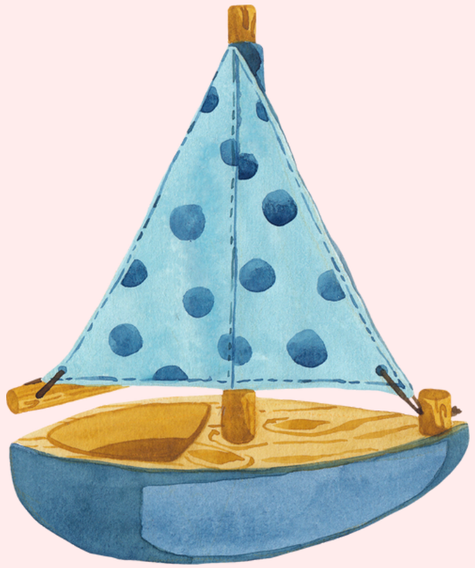




the First 1000 Days ECEY4005





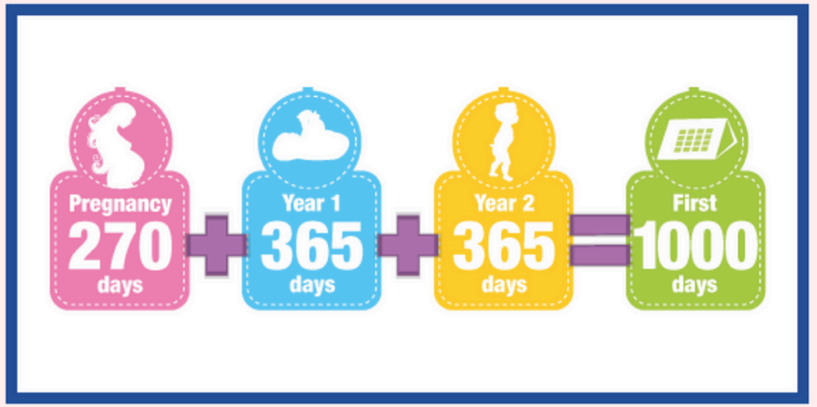
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Word Count: 2708

What is the First 1000 Days?

The first 1000 days of a child's development starts on the day of conception. It includes the entire length of the mother's pregnancy, during foetal growth through birth and all the way to the second year of a child's life. This period of time is when a child's development across all areas is at its most rapid, laying the foundations for future health, well-being and learning (UNICEF).



Indrio, *et al* (2023) breaks down the key periods through the first 1000 days in accordance to needs, care and support given (Diagram A). It is clear from the timeline how different the needs and care changes throughout the first 1000 days. The care given during the first trimester stage such as pre-natal clinics, promoting healthy lifestyle and needing supplements is vastly different than the needs and support for the child approaching their second birthday, who would require developmental support through engaging experiences, expanding social environments such as nursery and offering immunisations.

First 1.000-day clinics: preventive, protective, and curative interventions for the child, parents, and the community.

PRE-CONCEPTION AND CONCEPTIONAL PERIOD	• Promote a healthy lifestyle • Avoid overweight/obesity • Avoid smoking and drugs • Taking 0.4 mg/day of folic acid and adequate iodine intake • Avoiding alcoholic beverages, foods with methylmercury and excessive vit. A • Identify risk factors for genetic diseases • If chronic diseases plan treatment program • Research risk factors for postpartum depression • Assess woman's immune status • Prevent sexually transmitted infections
FIRST TRIMESTER OF PREGNANCY	• First gynecologic visit within the first 10 weeks • Inform the couple about appropriate lifestyles and behaviors during this stage • NHS services, tests to be performed, vaccinations possible in pregnancy • Promote courses to accompany the birth • Support parents on the management of any problems • Reassure the woman about the physical and emotional changes of pregnancy • Supplementation with folic acid until the end of the third month of pregnancy
SECOND AND THIRD TRIMESTERS OF PREGNANCY	• Monitoring maternal weight and macronutrient intake • Additional requirements of 350 kcal/day for the second trimester and 460 kcal/day for the third trimester • Ensure minimal medical standard interventions for the second and third trimesters • Bi-test or Duo-test and nuchal translucency • Morphologic ultrasound • Regulatory protections for pregnancy and maternity
LABOR AND DELIVERY-BIRTH	• Welcoming areas geared toward individualized personal care • Obstetric and neonatal care • Consideration of cesarean section if evidence-based criteria • Skin-to-skin practice • Begin breastfeeding early • Encourage rooming in • Neonatal screening between 48 and 72 h of life
FIRST MONTH OF LIFE	• Promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life • Assess signs of postpartum depression in the woman and paternity • Search for neonatal malformations • Supine position in the crib for prevention of SIDS
FIRST YEAR OF LIFE	• Assess language and psychomotor development • Visits scheduled by pediatrician • Promote breastfeeding • Recommend appropriate nutritional formulas and correct feeding styles
SECOND YEAR OF LIFE	• Encourage exploration and development of the child • Expanded social networks and nurseries • Identification of neurodevelopmental disorders • Varied and balanced diet • Continuing the immunization program • Recognizing forms of physical violence and psycho-social distress

Diagram A - Indrio, et al (2023)



Why are the first 1000 days important?



Stead (2024) states that during this period a child brain has the potential to develop at a rate quicker than any other time of the child's life. developing neural connections at a rate of millions a second when stimulated and nurtured through interaction. This speed of development and amount of growth during this period will impact on the rest of a child's life. However, The Health and Social Care committee (2019) raises concerns that this period of time as much as the appropriate stimulation and nurture can support growth and development, the lack of these can be more detrimental at this crucial time than later on in a child's life. Which is also why the Health and Social Care Committee emphasises the necessity of early intervention.







Caregiving



According to Birth to five matters (2021), the key aspects of offering exceptional care is first of all having feelings of responsibility, concern and love for all children. To be able to offer nurturing and engaging interactions offering protection, care and affection when needed. It requires practitioner to do what is in the best interest of the child and their rights.

One of the prominent points of offering exceptional care made by Birth to five Matters (2021) is during times of physical interactions or touch – How these tasks are approached can influence how a child begins to feel about and understand themselves as well begin to tell what others think about them and ultimately how much they are loved and valued. Being aware of this, practitioner should pay particular attention to their gesture, facial expressions, tone of voice and use of touch, ensuring babies and children are handled gently, sensitively and respectfully. Therefore, physical care tasks such as nappy changing, removing clothes or applying sun cream should not be rushed. Practitioner should take the opportunity of these interaction between baby/child and caregiver to promote secure trusting relationships, taking opportunity of focused attention or face to face interactions and repeated experiences. Which support overall development and learning. Ensuring these moments are being done with the child not to the child and allowing the autonomy by offering them choices, respecting their refusal, protest and preferences.

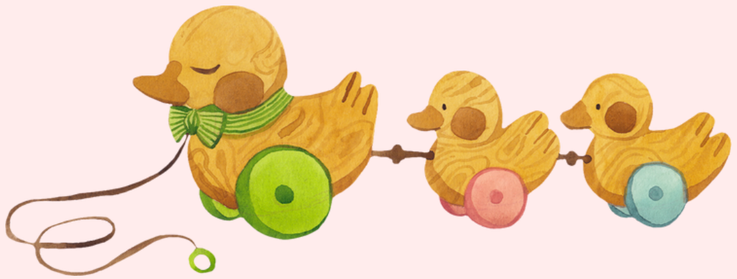


Caregiving



Forrester, *et al* (2022) describes best practice as incorporating children interests and preferences into daily practice and building from what they already know. This can be achieved by ensuring good home links and communication with the children's families. Forrester, *et al* (2022) also describe practices such as sending a particular toy home or children bringing items in to setting, encouraging families to share cultures practices and home traditions and in doing so, supporting children's comprehension of the similarities and differences between themselves and others. Stead (2024) points out that with the knowledge of how crucially important the first 1000 days are on a child's development that Early Years settings should be offering multi-sensory experiences through exploration of a range of materials. During activities and daily routines practitioners should prioritise communication and language skills through narration and new vocabulary. Practitioners should create cosy spaces that facilitate bonding between infants and caregivers.





Caregiving



Welsh Government (2024) ensure that the non-maintained curriculum insists that all settings demonstrate inclusive practice, which recognises gives value to and promotes the diversity of all the children and families associated with the setting. Inclusive practice ensures that all children and their families receive equal treatment opportunities and respect. Inclusive practise also calls for children receiving appropriate support to participate in learning and access in all provisions if needed. Implementing inclusive practice promotes a sense of belonging and allows children to feel valued, represented and celebrated.



Curriculum for funded non- maintained nurseries





Professional Parnerships

Public Health Wales (2023) demonstrates the importance of children's first 1000 days through its approach to supporting children and families. As seen in the model in diagram B, PHW have designed the framework to be child focused, putting the child and their needs at the centre. The second layer highlighting how parents can give their child the best start in life. It acknowledges that children's early experiences, interactions and environment within the first 1000 days is predominantly provided by the parents or primary caregivers.



Stead (2024) details how practitioner can improve and promote nursery to home connections through effective communications. By keeping families involved, sharing information, celebrating achievements or inviting them into setting for stay and plays sessions or parent workshops. This can give practitioners opportunities to show parents their role in their child's development and the importance of the first 1000 days, educating parents on attachment, brain development, appropriate interactions and play. This can be linked with Bronfenbrenner's theory which refers to the Mesosystem, which can be related to the relationship between home and setting. When these relationships are working well, it will have a direct impact on the development of the child.

Professional Parnerships



The Department of Education (2018) adds that research shows that involving parents in their children education and learning has a positive impact and can improve outcomes for the child's future. They also emphasis it is important acknowledge the parents or caregivers as the child's first educator and gain insight in the child's specific interests and how best to support their learning. Parents and caregivers should be given the opportunity to contribute to the whole of their child's journey in setting.

Supporting children during their first 1000 days also means supporting the parents and families. Right from the start of conception mothers are offered prenatal care and support, some of which are aimed around the importance of diet and nutrients. During pregnancy the dietary requirements and nutritional needs of the mother changes and increases, which means that even the healthiest of mothers may be lacking or deficient in essential vitamins or mineral Karakochuk. In agreement with Karakochuk, Likhar (2022) emphasises that during pregnancy a baby's brain and body can suffer from irreparable damage due to insufficient nutrients. The mother's diet, lifestyle and weight can also affect the baby's immune system, organ development and metabolism thus making early pregnancy discovery crucial to ensure the best outcome for baby and mother.

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Maternal Factors



Marcia (2021) informs that one of the biggest influences on children's health and development is nutrition H.M Government adds that during pregnancy, as the foetus is susceptible to the environment around the mother. The foetus is able to hear the environment around the mother, they are aware of the mother's stress and is reliant on what their mother consumes. A healthy mother and pregnancy support a healthy start to a baby's life. Even after birth babies are completely reliant on their caregivers to meet their needs, making bonds of attachment crucial. Babies and toddlers also rely on the interaction of additional caregivers and the environment around them for all of the experiences that support developing skills such as communication.





Challenges

From information gathered from Early Years setting and analysed, Foresster et al (2022) highlights four main areas where potential barriers to achieving best practice and highest possible care were identified by practitioner. They are:

- The lack of professional development and training. This may be reduced to other factors such as funding, staffing issues, ratios and time and it may not be possible to release staff from duties during working hours.
- Language barriers between practitioners and families. Families with English as an additional language were more prominent in certain setting and partition found it more difficult to have meaningful connections with them.
- Time. Practitioner found it difficult to always find the time to engage fully with the children and their families all of the time in such busy environments.
- Limited resources in budget and funding. The impact of limited funding and resources can not only effect providing consistent high-quality provision but also on other challenging issues such as attempts to improve staff training or ratio. Ultimately limited funds mean limited resources and activities and although Forrester suggests, what many Early Years practitioners already do, getting creative and making effective use of free or low-cost resources such as home-made, second-hand, free and foraged or donated. However, expenses such as hiring transport for community outings might be more of a stretch impacting on connecting with the wider community.

Challenges

Estyn (2024) also highlights the importance of funding being consistent to provide much needed resources to support children living in poverty. Such as food, toys and school uniform as well as resources to create nurturing, inclusive environments within the settings to support children's social and emotional development.

In addition, An (2017) highlights another challenge in providing high level childcare. She states that staff recruitment and retention issues are due to the role of practitioner no longer being an attractive profession, with many practitioners feeling underpaid and undervalued for the amount of responsibility of the role. She believes this is a major factor of the decline in childcare qualifications being awarded. However, states that in other counties such as Finland, teaching is one of the most valued professions with Early Years teaching being highly respected. There they enjoy job satisfaction. with most teacher staying in the profession.

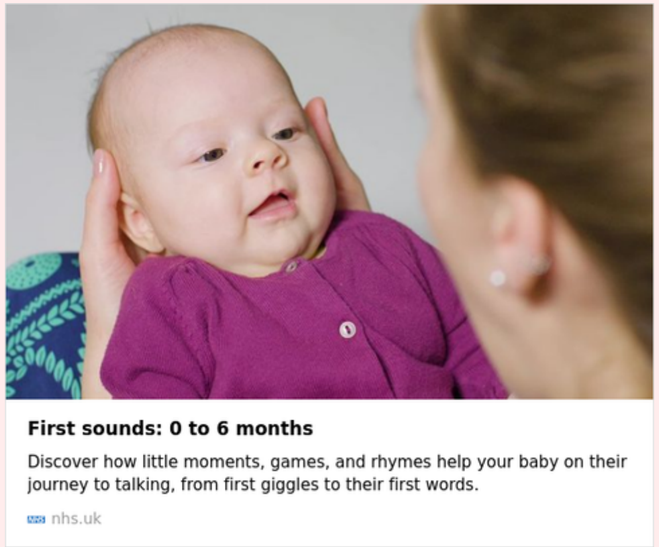
Ofsted agree that high staff turnover can have a negative effect on children's progress. With staff changing all the time it could easily interfere with adults' knowledge of the children within their setting, their abilities, needs and interests. It also proves more difficult to build and maintain relationships with children and their families and therefore, not being able to provide a long-term setting to home connection. Even though leaders may not have control over staff leaving, Ofsted point out that some leaders prioritise training for new staff to ensure they get the most important information and updates first such as safeguarding, any additional learning needs information. Leader should also offer staff support, where they feel listened to, can discuss concerns as well as offer professional development.

Activities

Singing



CELA (2023) list the many benefits of singing to babies and with toddlers. When parents or caregivers sing to their baby it promotes secure attachment and helps build a trusting relationship between baby and caregiver which reinforces Bowlby theory of attachment and the importance of the relationship between caregiver and baby, thus supporting the child's emotional, social and cognitive development (Aubrey and Riley). Singing can promote emotional regulation through breathing, rhythmic movement and sound as well as releasing endorphin. When babies feel the calming effect of the parent or caregiver, they learn to relax. Singing is also one of the earliest forms of language promotion. When singing adults will often do this face to face, using repetition of word, phrases and melody and in doing so also promoting memory and cognitive development. As children progress, parents and caregivers will initiate singing for children to join in. These songs/ nursery rhymes usually include actions or movement which promote physical development as well as memory through using multiple senses. They are also fun and encourage children to express themselves creatively building on their self-esteem. In Early Years settings, music and movement time tends to be a group activity where children are able to interact and learn from each other, promoting social inclusions.



First sounds: 0 to 6 months

Discover how little moments, games, and rhymes help your baby on their journey to talking, from first giggles to their first words.

nhs.uk



Activities

Sensory



Action for children (2024) describes sensory play as any activity that stimulates a child's sense or senses such as sight, taste, touch, hearing or smell. Children learn and retain more of the information processed when the activity stimulates multiple senses. Hwb () agrees adding that sensory activities also support children to begin to understand more of the world around them and develop their understanding of cause and effect. It provides children with opportunities to make choices, problem-solve and develop their creativity and critical thinking skills. In addition to Action for Children highlight that sensory activities can be varied to support and promote all areas of development to meet the needs of children. Sensory activities can be especially useful in promoting emotional regulation, particularly when supporting children who may have sensory needs or who seek particular sensory input. They can also be adapted for children with sensory sensitivities such as children who have certain tactile sensitivities to materials and might avoid getting their hands wet, sticky or dirty. It helpful to remember that all messy play is sensory, but not all sensory play has to be messy.



International Approaches







According to Welsh Government (2024) the curriculum for funded non maintained nurseries a child centred pedagogy and the learning environment within settings should be appropriate for opportunities for:

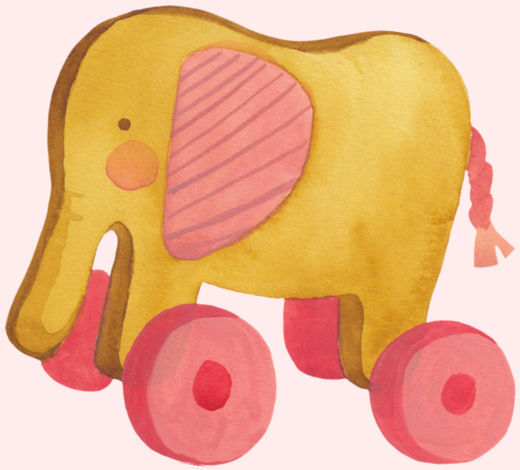
- Physical literacy - It's important to provide physical literacy in the early years by providing environments time an opportunity for children to experience all types of physical play including rough and tumble risky play different levels positions and movements.
- Play and play based learning which is essential for children specially during the first 1000 days through play-based learning children should be able to benefit across all developmental areas.
- Authentic and purposeful learning - research shows that all experiences they are meaningful and come with real life contacts help children make connections with their experiences within setting home and the outside world. It helps them apply knowledge that they already have, and problem solved identify problems and take risks. It gives them a better understanding and a sense of why they are learning what they learn and having some knowledge also supports their self-esteem. This is also supported by the Montessori approach to leaning of using practical activities to promote independent learners.





International Approaches

- Being outdoors - This can support a child's holistic development promoting social emotional spiritual physical development and improve in well-being. It provides authentic opportunity with the change in an unpredictable environment which promotes children to assess an experience risky play, explore their physical potential and develop resilience and confidence learning outdoors has become more popular overtime however this has been a compulsory part of children's education in Scandinavian countries for sometimes. And benefit from not only a child centred approach child LED activities which promote leadership holistic approach to their development authentic and purposeful learning that will provide them with skills for later life. It also promotes physical abilities and emotional regulation and well-being.





International Approaches

The Five developmental pathways of the curriculum for funded non-maintained nurseries which are shown in diagram B are:

❀ belonging ❀ communication ❀ exploration ❀ physical development ❀ well-being.

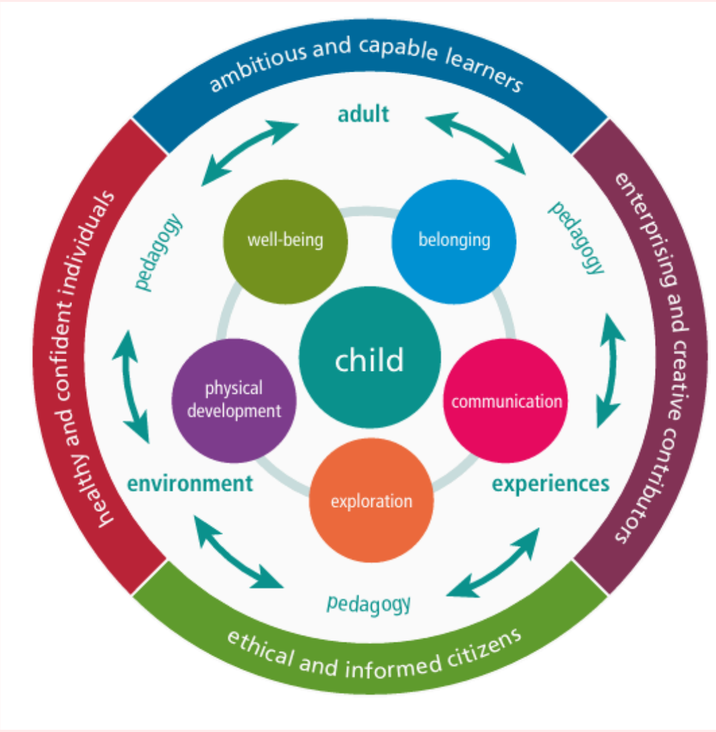
There are obvious similarities to the New Zealand Curriculum framework Te Whāriki who's goals are strands are:

❀ belonging ❀ communication ❀ exploration ❀ contributions ❀ well-being.

The Te Whāriki curriculum and pedagogy are underpinned by evidence-informed theory such as Bronfenbrenne's ecological systems model and Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory (The ministry of education 2017).







Reference List





