Level 3 Children's Care, Play, Learning, and Development: Practice and Theory

Extended Investigation
Unit 331: Investigating current issues in children’s care, play, learning, and development in Wales

Distinction Awarded

Learning Outcomes

Task 1	9	/ 9
Task 2	30	/ 30
Task 3	15	/ 15
Task 4	14	/ 14
Task 5	18	/ 20
Task 6	10	/ 12

Mark: 96 / 100 Assign Mark

Level 3 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development: Practice and Theory

TIMESHEET must be submitted with the candidate's work

Centre Name/*Enw'r Ganolfan*:

Centre Number/*Rhif y Ganolfan*:

Candidate Name/*Enw'r Ymgeisydd*:

Candidate Number/*Rhif yr Ymgeisydd*:

Extended Investigation

The total time allowed must not exceed 15 hours. / *Ni ddylai cyfanswm yr amser sy'n cael ei ganiatáu fod yn fwy na 15 awr.*
The timed, supervised hours took place as follows: / *Dyma'r oriau gafodd eu goruchwylio a'u hamseru:*

Dates *Dyddiadau*			Time Allowed (15 hours) *Amser sy'n cael ei ganiatáu (15 awr)* Hours/*Oriau*	Minutes/*Munudau*
30	3	2022	3	30
31	3	2022	2	40
01	4	2022	2	20
06	04	2022	1	15

Topic 2

Health care professionals/workers have a crucial role in promoting child health from conception to 19 years.

Research how the different roles work together to support children's health and development in Wales.

Task 1

Write an introduction to your extended investigation.

For my investigation I have chosen to research how health care professionals/workers with different roles work together to promote and support children's health and development in Wales. I have chosen to take a closer look how these professionals work together to promote Healthy eating, Positive relationships and well-being in children from birth to 19 years old.

More and more children are becoming overweight and obese. Fast foods and sugary treats are so easily accessible to children, and families facing poverty have no choice but to buy foods that are not particularly healthy because it is cheaper and more cost effective to be able to feed their children. An article I read on familydoctor.org stated "*Healthy eating can prevent many chronic diseases. These include obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes".* The government are working with parents and schools to encourage children to be healthier and more active. At my work placement the children bring in a healthy snack for their morning breaks. Parents are told that this snack is strictly fruit only. Parents are also encouraged to pack the children a healthy lunch with the school sending out letters to give parents 'health swap options. I feel as a future practitioner I would like to understand the benefits of healthy eating more, to be able to educate the children that are in my care.

I also want to look at the impact positive relationships can have in a child's life. Through my studies I have particularly found it interesting that children learn so much through positive relationships. They learn how to think, understand, communicate, behave, express emotions and develop social skills. Elinor Goldschmeid really advocated how children could massively benefit from having a 'Key person' when at a setting. She really emphasized that having a 'key person sysytem' is crucial to aid development and help children reach their full potential. From my studies I have learned that early attachment influences later realtionships. Secure attachment will ensure the child feels loved and know that all of their needs will be met. Poor attachment for a child will cause a child to have poor emotional development and they will more than likely have a low self esteem. In an article I read: The foundation stage forum by Mickelburgh (January 21, 2011) it discusses how "*Implimenting a key person approach in an early years setting is not just a case of devising an organizational strategy: it needs to be motivated and driven by a spirit of advocacy for the rights of children to be listened to, even before they can speak".*

One of the Welsh governments 7 core aims is for children to have a flying start in life. The flying start programme in Wales is aimed at families in disadvantaged areas. It allows children from the age of 2 years to attend a flying start setting where they will have a key person to help them with their development while at the setting. I feel that this initiative gives children a real advantage to build on positive relationships and identifies children that are from families who need more support from professionals.

References:

Mickelburgh, J. (January 21, 2011) Foundation stage forum: Attachment theory and the key person approach

Available at: https://eyfs.info/articles.html/general/attachment-theory-and-the-key-person-approach-r64/

(accessed: 23/03/21)

Familydoctor.org: Nutrition tips for kids

Last updated: Decemer 12,2019

https://familydoctor.org/nutrition-tips-for-kids/

(accessed: 24/03/21)

Task 2

Discuss how your selected topic and focus areas support children's care, play, learning and development.

The UK at the moment is in the grip of an obesity pandemic. More and more children are being diagnosed with health issues due to poor eating habits. In recent years childhood obesity in Wales has remained consistently high. If this issue is not tackled then these rates will keep on rising In the years to come. We know that obesity can cause on going health problems and it shortens a persons overall life span. The government are encouraging schools to be pro active in fighting obesity and improving the overall health of children. I have been reading a guide, Childhood Obesity from the National Assembly for Wales. In the booklet it states. "*A healthy, balanced diet during childhood and early adolescence is extremely important for development, maintenance of a healthy weight and general well-being. Research indicates that eating patterns developed in early life continue into adulthood, so there has been a significant focus on introducing measures to improve the diet of children. The main target has been the nutritional standards of food provided in schools".* As stated previously my work placement, children are only allowed to bring in a piece of fruit for snack time. Parents are encouraged to only provide healthy

options in their lunchboxes and they are also only allowed to have their water bottles filled with water. The children are also encouraged to be active throughout the day by having outdoor play time, yoga sessions and once a week we go to forest school. The welsh governments 7 core aims states that all children should have access to play, leisure and sporting, and in the foundation phase curriculum it also says that children should have access to outdoor learning and play, which can play an important role in getting children to have the necessary amount of exercise needed. Healthy eating for children also has many physical health benefits. Children will feel less fatigued, have more energy and have better brain growth. This can have such a positive effect on their well being and contribute to their learning and development. Healthy eating can also have an impact on their mental well-being. Children who are obese are also more likely to be the target of bullying. We always teach children to be kind and encourage kind words but unfortunately this sometimes does not work. Children who are bullied are more likely to suffer depression and anxiety and have overall poor mental health. Children who also drink and eat more sugary food are also likely to have dental problems, which can cause chronic pain and discomfort. The designed to smile initiative in Wales is a targeted national oral health improvement programme. It involves a wide range of professionals including health visitors and other early years services. It allows professionals to go into schools and educate the children on good oral health. The initiative aims to start good habits early and targets nursery and primary schools. They will encourage children to eat healthier foods and drink healthier drinks to keep ther teeth nice and healthy. They also educate parent/carers on how important oral health is for children. My 3 year old Son who attends nursery has a new toothbrush and toothpaste sent home every couple of months by the Designed to smile programme. He has also been taught a rhyme about brushing his teeth, which brings enjoyment to his morning routine at home and makes the task of brushing his teeth a lot more fun.

The nursery my son attends also has a healthy eating policy and has discussed with parents what types of foods we could chose to send in their packed lunch. The teachers themselves also have a strict policy of what they consume in front of the children. They feel that being good role models to the children when it comes to eating habits, will encourage the children to do the same. I feel that this is such a good way to be a positive role model for the children as they spend most of their day at school around those adults.

We know that being a positive role model in a childs life is so important to teaching them how to be good people and allows them to be able to form positive relationships as they go through life. Before college I did not really understand how having a secure attachment with a child could really impact on that childs future. Being a mum myself I am lucky that I have a really strong bond and relationship with my son. But for some parents and children this is not always the case.

When a woman is pregnant the mid wife will always be pro breast feeding as it has many health benefits for the baby. Breast feeding ensures the baby is getting all the nutrients and vitamins they need to grow and be healthy. Breast feeding is also a great way to bond with your baby and some theorists believe that this was a key role in forming a secure attachment with your child. We know that midwives will provide full antenatal care while a woman is pregnant. Part of their job is to teach new and expectant mothers how to feed, care for and bathe their babies. Their role is very diverse but for a first time mum the thought of breast feeding can be very daunting and sometimes a very had task to do. An article I Read on The GP infant feeding network (UK) says *"Attachment theory originates with the work of John Bowlby in 1858. He proposed that attachment can be understood within an evolutionary context, and that it is adaptive as it enhances the infant's chance of survival (by way of protection and being*

fed)". We know that babies cry to let the parent/caregiver know that they need something, whether it is feeding, changing or even to tell us if something is wrong. The baby then recognizes from this that the caregiver will tend to their needs and feed them etc, they will feel a sense of security with that person and therefore start to form a secure attachment.

Positive relationships will help young children learn to be strong and independent. Give them a sense of security and help them to build trust and meaning. It will allow children to build self confidence and also allow them to build resilience. This is important during the earlier years of their life as it will have an impact on both their mental and physical health. Having a secure attachment earlier in life will often lead to a child having better mental health and fewer behavior problems. A theorist who advocated for a 'key person approach' in childcare was Elinor Goldschmeid. She described a key person as "*a person to whom they can relate in a special way*". Goldschmeid drew attention to the crucial , triangular relationship between the baby or child, the key person and the parents. A key person in a nursery/setting, is a person who is allocated a small group of children which allows them to pay particular attention to the emotional and physical well-being of those specific children. Elinor Goldschmeid encouraged practitioners to see things from a childs point of view. For children starting nursery it can be an extremely distressing time. They can not at that time understand why their parent/caregiver is leaving them or if they are going to come back. Having a key person approach allows the child to have a special person who they can trust, this person will be able to get to know that child on a deeper level and understand what they like/dislike and understand their feelings. As the relationship grows with the key person the child will become more confident in that setting. My son started to attend a Flying start setting in septemeber 2020 at the age of 2, and had a key person allocated to him. I was especially nervous about leaving him there as in March that year we had been put into lockdown as the COVID pandemic hit. He had not been able to soicalise with other children and had basically been by my side, day in day out for months. I was un able to go in to the setting with him to settle him in because of strict government guiadance and was really worried that he would not settle in at all. Outside of the setting I was able to chat tho his key person and told her of my concerns and worries. She spoke to us both and really re assured me that he would settle in to the setting in no time. She sent me pictures that day of him during messy play and kept contact with me to say he had absolutely loved his time there. The relationship between me as a parent and his key person I believe had a massive effect on how he handled that transition and I believe that because I have a secure attachment with my son I believe he knew that if I trusted her then he had nothing to worry about.

References:

DR Sarah Little: Published April 2017, reviewed 5th October 2019

The GP infant feeding network (UK): Building secure attachment & infant mental health

Available at:
https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Nutrition%matters%20for%20the%20early%20years%200118.pdf

Accessed (22-03-22)

Childhood obesity **(Date unknown)**

Available at: **https://senedd.wales/media/ujodr5oo/child_obesity_booklet-english.pdf**

(Accessed 22/03/22)

Positive relationships: Key people part 1

(Date unknown)

Available at: **https://www.happykids-childcare.co.uk/content/uploads/2014/12/key-person.pdf**

(Accessed 22/03/2022)

Task 3

Evaluate how the values and principles that underpin your selected topic and chosen focus areas are used in practice to support children's care, play, learning and development.

During this investigation I have been researching how the different professionals work together as a team to ensure that children are meeting the needs of children In their care. In article 29 of the UNCRC it states that *"a child's education should help their mind, body and talents be the best they can".* For this I started to look a little closer at the benefits of the Flying Start scheme in Wales. On the Caerphilly county borough website it says "*The scheme aims to provide intensive support services for children aged 0-3 years old and their families. The focus of the programme is on promoting language, cognitive, social and emotional skills, physical development and the early identification of high needs".* Health visitors normally do a health review on a child at 2 years. They will then normally be able to identify potential delays in development and will keep in closer contact with the child and parents to help with activities or referrals that child may need. I feel that by having the Flying start programme it can really help as said above, for professionals to identify at the earliest possible stage, if a child has any developmental delays or signs additional learning needs. Early diagnosis of these means early intervention which will allow the child to have the support needed going forward. Early diagnosis of any additional learning needs can have a massive impact on a child's future. It will allow the future school the child attends to be prepared and inclusive of that child's specific needs. They will be able to have the correct staff put in place, for example a one to one support if needed. The ALNCO will also be there at the setting to ensure that all the child's needs are being met to be able to reach their full potential. The ALNCO within the school will coordinate and support and will liase with other professionals beyond the setting (such as GP's, Speech and language therapists, hospital staff etc). They will work with the child and the child's parent's along with other professionals to assess the needs of the child. They will listen carefully to the child and parents to be clear about their choices and likes and dislikes. This will ensure that they are building

positive relationships with positive outcomes for the child. Any ALNCO in a setting should be empathetic and be commited to improving the services for the child.

Flying start also aims to make a difference to the lives of children who are impacted by poverty. The Welsh government guidance : Flying Start health programme guidance (May 2017) says " *Through a multidisciplinary team approach, which identifies all of the needs of a child and their family and provides prudent and proportionate interventions, flying start aims to ensure that: Children are thriving; families are capable and coping; and flying start children are reaching potential."* Poverty can have a massive effect on a child's development both mentally and physically. One of the Welsh governments 7 core aims is that a child should not be disadvanted by child poverty. Families now more than ever are struggling financially. We are seeing more and more working families pushed in to poverty by the rising cost of living. During my research I also wanted to look at what the government is doing to help children and families become more healthy. For some families buying fresh produce can become very expensive. The cost of buying unhealthy frozen processed foods for instance is a lot cheaper, and when you have children to feed many parents would agree that a fed child is better than a hungry child. Lunchboxes can also be a great expense for families on a daily basis. The Welsh government are going to be offering all primary school children, free school meals from septemeber 2022. These meals will be healthy and balanced and allow children to have a good healthy meal which I feel is absolutely a basic right for any child. With the free school meals being rolled out, plus schools getting children to be more active with more outdoor play and forest school etc, I really feel it is really going to have such a positive outcome for the children's future health and well-being. I also feel that by the roll out of the free school meals it brings equality in to schools. The children will all have access to the same foods and same healthy diet while they attend the settings. I also feel that this will help families with the financial burdens, such as packed lunches because as we know it can become expensive to buy fresh healthy produce daily.

References:

Caerphilly county borough council

(Date unknown)

What is flying start?

Available at: **https://Caerphilly.gov.uk/services/children-and-families/how-to-get-help-and-support/flyingstart/what-is-flying-start.**

(Accessed: 22/03/2022)

Welsh government

(May 2017)

Flying start health programme guidance

Available at: **http://Gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/flying-start-health-programme-guidance_0.pdf**

(Accessed: 23/03/22)

Task 4

Consider how relevant theories, legislation or frameworks (as appropriate) have influenced practice in children's care, play, learning and development settings.

Today more parents are working and therefore the number of children spending time in childcare is increasing. That is why it is imperitive as childcare practitioners that we are being good role models to these children in our care. Albert Bandura social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling and imitating the behaviours, attituedes and emotional reactions of others. Children will constantly observe people around them behaving in different ways. During placement I have observed the children in the role play area acting like myself. They have taken words and phrases that I use at placement on a daily basis and use them to play 'Teachers'. I always use positive language and body language while around the children to ensure that they too can feel positive about themselves and their day. During Albert Banduras Bobo doll experiment a group of young children witness an adult hurting the bobo doll and saying mean things to it. Once the adult has left the room the children then proceed to imitate the adult and act in an aggressive way to the doll. This is the same in real life situations, Children imitate behaviours they see around them. If a child witnesses aggressive and negative behavior at home then that child will most likely act in that manner towards other people they come in to contact with. That is why at placement I like to always be positive and give constant praise to the children. It is impossible to form positive relationships if you have a negative mental attitude and use negative language to the children in your care. The sad reality is not every child goes home to a loving family life, this is why at school/nursery children should always be greeted and taken care of by positive role models.

Parents and teachers are the primary people to instil values and characteristics in children. This is why I believe helping children to be the healthiest and fittest they can be is so important. The healthy schools scheme Wales rolled out across Wales since 2000. While reading the Vale of glamorgan council: healthy schools scheme website it states that it's aim is: "*To promote and protect the physical, emotional and social health and well-being of children and young people in Wales".* As mentioned previously my placement has a healthy eating policy. They also run a breakfast club initiative. A healthy breakfast for children will fuel their day and it will aid concentration. Children can start the school day with a full tummy and therefore children will be more engaged and willing to participate in their learning. While looking further into the benefits of breakfast club for children I found an article: A brief history of the humble school dinner. It says "*School dinners first became a topic for the national agenda in 1906 The provision of meals Act in that year was designed to give free school meals to all children. Nursery school pioneer Margaret McMillan, who lobbied for the bill, argued that if education was compulsory then it was only right for the state to provide a hot meal too".* Without McMillan advocating for free school

meals for children I really believe children who are living in poverty would have been spending most of their days hungry and under nourished.

Healthy eating can contribute to much more than just a child's physical health. Not only will children feel and look better but they will have a better mental state. Mental health problems in children is increasing, with so many social media platforms being accessible to children, being over weight or obese can be socially and emotionally damaging. They will become easier targets of bullies, and bullying at any age can have a detrimental effect on a persons well-being and mental state. Any professional (Such as a GP, Teacher/Tutor, Social worker) who believes that a child or young person is suffering depression, self-harm, anxiety can refer the child onto CAHMS. CAHMS Wales is an nhs service that assesses and treats young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. The service brings together NHS Wales professionals and key multi agency partners to design and plan services around these issues. We have activities at placement that help children deal with their emotions and weel-being, and allows the teachers to understand any concerns the children may have. One of these activities is circle time. We have circle time once a week at placement and the children are asked about things that make them happy and things that make them sad. The children are then asked how we could make our friends happy again or how do they think they would feel about being called names etc. This activity is such a great way to also gain knowledge from the children about potential bullying situations that they may be going through.

References:

Bitesize

Date unknown

A brief history of the humble school dinner

Available at: **https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zdjt7nb**

(Accessed 23/03/2022)

Vale of glamorgan council

Date unknown

Healthy schools scheme

Available at: **https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/schools/healthy_schools/Healthy-Schools-Scheme.aspx**

(Accessed: 22/03/2022)

Task 5

Assess how having knowledge of the selected topic and related theories and legislation can be used to bring about change in children's care, play, learning and development provision in the 21st century Wales.

The new curriculum in Wales is about to be rolled out in septemeber 2022. The way children learn in primary and secondary schools will be different. The new curriculum will allow schools to develop it's own curriculum. There is guidance about what children have to learn but it will be down to the school to decide how they are going to teach the specific topic areas. I feel that the new curriculum is a fantastic opportunity for schools to adapt a person-centred approach. The new curriculum will allow teachers to to adapt the children's way of learning by focusing on their individual strengths and interests. I also feel that especially for children with additional learning needs that this will be the best way for them to reach their full potentials. It will allow them to have a voice in a sense about how they learn best. We know that every child is unique and all have different ways that they learn better and by having an open reign on how these topics are taught it will allow the children to have a better academic chance. Over my course I have learned so much about the benefits of a 'child centred' approach. On the welsh government website: a guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales it states "*we all know it is easier to teach and support learners when we understand them, and this is why person-centred approaches are at the heart of the best education practice today".* During my time at placement I have seen how well the children's development has come along in such a short space of time, I have also watched how one child in particular has not been meeting her developmental milestones. This child is actually waiting to be assessed because she is far behind where she should typically be at this stage in her development. The children in the class are very confident in writing their own names because they practice every day. This child however was still un able to manage it. The teacher in the class noticed one day that she would draw more confidently with the big pieces of chalk out on the yard. As the weather was very nice one day the teacher had the children go out on to the yard and practice writing their names with the chalk on all the different floor surfaces. This child was given her name card and asked if she could have a go at writing her name. So he copied her name card and wrote her name so clearly using the chalk. The teacher knew that the other children could write their names no problem but by simply noticing that this specific child could use chalk more easily, she was able to understand that it was not the fact that she could not write her name, it was the fact that she could use and hold the chalk more easily. This simple activity has now given the teacher ideas of how they could be supporting her more to help her development. This is also going to have an impact of her self-esteem and well-being because it has given her the encouragement she needs.

The classroom I am currently working in is reception (ages 4-5). There is one teacher and one teaching assistant. The nursery class next door has one teacher and 3 teaching asssistants working at about a 1:6 ratio. They also have two 1:1 staff members who work with two children who have additional learning needs. Referring back to a 'Key person apporach' I feel that a teacher would be able to really get to

know children's likes and dislikes individually as I have noticed sometimes the days are just too busy for the teacher in reception to engage with every single child on that level.

Bronfrenbrennar is most known for his ecological systems theory. The theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. He states that as a child develops the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. We know that interaction with other people is essential for human development. Positive attachments and interactions with other people will help children to progress socially and develop more complex relationships. The new curriculum emphazises the importance of developing social interactions and skills and promotes health and well-being. Children from the age of 3 will now learn about all different types of relationships which I feel will bring equality and belonging to children and families to come. The equality Act (2010) provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. This new curriculum will allow children to be educated from such an early age that I feel it will allow children to be more open minded and less predujice, judgemental and have a more diverse way of thinking in their future. The ecological system is basically a cycle, if a child's parents have negative views for instance on gay relationships then that child will more than likely grow to have the same points of view. Education on these subjects I believe is key to bringing equality.

With the introduction of the new curriculum in Wales I feel that for children to be able to have a more child-centred experience while at school then there would need to be more staff members who have time to pay particular attention to their likes/dislikes and strengths/weaknesses. The more support that the children have in the classroom then the better they can be supported when faced with tasks/topics that is not one of their strong points.

References:

Welsh government: November 2015

Person-centred practice in education: a guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales

Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/person-centred-practice-in-education-a-guide-for-early-years-schools-and-colleges-in-wales.pdf

(Accessed: 21/03/22)

Task 6
Discuss how your research and learning will support your own individual practice moving forward.

While completing my research I have learned many things that are going to be of great use to me going forward in my practice. The understanding I now have on the impact of positive relationships in a child's life will make me better not only as a childcare practitioner but also as a mum. I feel that the children in our care absolutely need us to be positive role models and feel nothing but love and warmth when with us because it will shape the way the build relationships with others in the future. We do not know what type of role models these children have outside school so that is why it is so important to make sure that they have positive experiences while attending the setting.

One thing that has stuck out to me while doing my research is the fact that having a secure attachment earlier in life will often lead to a child having better mental health and fewer behavior problems. This is why I really value the roles of the midwife and health visitor. They can't teach anyone how to be a mum but with their support and guidance through pregnancy and after birth, they can really make a difference to children's lives. As a first time mum I found it so daunting when coming home from the hospital. The fact that this new born baby depends on you for their every need, and who you will help to grow and develop is really over whelming. But their constant help, support and encouragement i really allowed me to enjoy the experience and allowed me to form the positive relationship I now have with my child.

I was also shocked to find out Margaret McMillan really has change so many things about the schools/nurseries we know today. She advocated for free school meals, this meant that families who were disadvantaged by poverty now had a life line for their children while they attended school. Now schools also run free breakfast clubs which again is amazing for children to have fuel ready to start the school day. With the roll out in Wales in septemeber 2022 of free school meals for all primary school children, it is going to really have an impact on the health of the children for the future and without people like Margaret McMillan issues like these may never have been pushed for.

I also learned a lot more about the Flying Start programme. The fact that through the programme they can identify any early interventions needed is so positive for children's well-being and mental health. A child who is showing signs of developmental delays at an earlier age will allow professionals to implement any resources or referrals at the earliest opportunity. This will be something that can really help a child who for instance has additional learning needs. They will have support and care already implemented by the time they start school which is going to be really positive for their education. After completeing my research I have really thought about what I want to do in my future. I have a real interest in working in a flying start setting. I did not really realise the impact a Flying start setting can have on families and children living in disadvantaged areas and I really do think I would like to be a part of that in the future.