

Enriching Day Care: a comparison of different principles and practices

This film highlights issues of principle and practice which needs to be considered when planning to set up day care facilities or reviewing existing ones.

They apply not only to local authority and education department centres, but also to those increasingly being set up by private organisations such as large companies that employ many young mothers or potential mothers.

The film compares different practices of care for children under five including some examples from the other two films in the series, and from *Sunday's Child* by Lynn Barnett, which examines the development of a child from birth to six years, with extracts from his child-minding experience.

It emphasises the importance of developing close personal relationships between children, parents and staff; the management of separations and transitions; the assessment and discussion of the co-operation with and support from other professionals for staff who though well trained, need help with the strains of child care.

What is Good Child Care ?

Young Children are primarily attached to their parents who supply their physical and emotional needs. These early years lay the foundation for a more or less secure base from which to grow and begin to explore the world. The quality of the attachment varies and can be affected by the substitute caretaking. Thus the quality of day care a child receives can be of critical importance for its development.

Research into the effects on children of attendance at day-care institutions has led to the formulation of principles which need to be followed if children are to find their day care experience enriching:

Continuity of care

Preparation for and management of transitions and separations: home to day care; within day groups; day care to school

Individual case assignment rather than indiscriminate group care

Facilitation of close personal ties between staff and young children

Individual assessment of children's and parent's needs and provision to meet them

Staff ratios which reflect the changing attachment needs of children as they develop

Staff attention to the psychological as well as the physical needs of children

Time for staff to think and talk about their work

Involvement of parents