

Celebrating and promoting diversity in the early years

Creating an environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging, means promoting and celebrating diversity.

Whilst it is important to have resources that promote diversity, it is about creating a culture in your setting where children feel safe and able to ask tricky questions, and practitioners feel confident enough to talk to children about diversity.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) also seeks to provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported. Inclusive practice means the diversity of individuals and communities in your setting is valued and respected. No child or family is discriminated against.

Use our top tips to support the diversity and inclusive practice in your early years setting:

1. Create an environment where children can ask questions:

Children do not worry about phrasing things carefully or being politically correct. If children say something that could be deemed offensive, gently guide them to the correct phrases/words and explain. By 'telling children off' for saying something inappropriate, you miss out on the opportunity to support their understanding of diversity.



2. Don't shy away from the tough questions and topics:

As early years educators, it is your job to educate children on the world we live in and this can sometimes mean tackling some tricky questions and topics. Where appropriate, answer children's questions honestly, using age-appropriate language. Test staff confidence in challenging stereotypes or discriminatory practices through scenarios at staff meetings.

3. Offer positive role models:

Reflect on the resources in your setting, do they represent different cultures, ethnicities and people from the protected characteristics groups? By providing resources that are diverse, you allow children to explore their own thoughts on diversity through play. Ensure your environment, resources and activities reflect your community and families too.

4. Celebrate differences:

Talk to children about their own strengths and challenges. By pointing out to children their individual strengths and the strengths of their peers, they are able to recognise that we are all different and that's something to be celebrated.

5. Invite visitors (remotely during the coronavirus outbreak) to share their experiences:

Encouraging visitors from different groups to come and spend time with and chat with children ensures you are giving children the opportunity to spend time with people that they may not normally get the chance to meet.

6. Create an accessibility policy and review your equality and diversity policy:

How effective is your equality and diversity policy? Are there any gaps? By looking at the current cohort of children and the area that your setting is in, you can more easily identify which groups of people may be less likely or able to join your setting too. For example, do you have children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in your setting? If not, why not? Are you accessible to all groups and how can you ensure that you become accessible? Think about creating an accessibility policy.

7. Celebrate different festivals/occasions:

Look for opportunities to celebrate different cultures, support awareness-raising days and introduce children and families to events they may have limited knowledge of. By celebrating different events, you can widen children's experiences, supporting their understanding of the importance of diversity.

8. Identify an ENCO:

Identify a member of your staff team as an ENCO (Equality Named Coordinator). This role can be really effective in supporting and monitoring practice across the setting.