

Ideas for parents

Understanding the World: People and communities focuses on children having an understanding of themselves, their families and their local community. They begin to understand the similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities, and traditions.

Helping your child to learn about people and communities

There are lots of easy ways you can help your child to learn more about people and communities.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you do this.

Under twos

- It is very important that your child knows that you are supportive of the early years setting which they attend, so try to make as much time as possible at the handover periods at the beginning and end of the day to develop a positive relationship with the staff of the setting.
- Showing an interest in, and talk about, what happens in the early years setting which your child attends (even with babies) will help to make a connection between your child's home and nursery environments.
- Talk to your child about family members and close friends – what they look like, where they live, and what they do.
- Make a photo album of your family and friends especially for your child to look at and handle.
- When you take your child out on walks, talk to her about the features of your local environment you see – the shops, the green spaces, the natural world, the different types of cafés, churches, and community buildings such as hospitals and libraries.
- Be positive about differences between people and families and help your child to accept differences between people.
- Look at picture books which show different types of environment from the one you live in – talk about cities, towns, villages, the countryside, or the seaside.

Two- to three-year-olds

- Help your child to recall the names of their friends and the adults in their early years setting and listen carefully when they talk to you about what they have been doing during the day.
- Tell stories about family members and special events in your family life, both in the present and past.
- Help your child to remember special occasions in their lives, talking about what happened in the past.
- Talk to your child about the work you do and the jobs of different family members and friends to help them understand what people do in their local community.
- Choose books and games for your child which illustrate people and communities from different cultures, ethnicities and traditions.
- Young children often show a natural curiosity when they see someone who is different from them; help them to respect differences in others in terms of race, disability, and culture.
- Take as many opportunities as possible to give your child experience of different communities – on holiday, on day trips, using Skype to communicate with family members and friends who live elsewhere, or by looking at DVDs, the internet and books.

Four- to five-year-olds

- Whenever possible, take your child on visits to broaden their understanding of people and communities – a stream walk, a visit to the library, a bus ride into a town or city, or a visit to a local museum or gallery are all free or low cost outings.
- When you walk past religious buildings in your area, take the opportunity to talk to your child about different faiths and traditions.
- Help your child to recognise the similarities between people and families of different cultures and your own experiences, as well as recognising differences.
- Children of this age group are often very interested in the jobs of people who work in their local community; help them to know more about the jobs of policemen and women, the fire service, medical staff, farmers, and shop keepers for example.

- Make sure that your child is aware that jobs are done by both men and women – talk about female fire fighters, male nurses, female doctors or male childcare staff.
- Read books and watch DVDs and television programmes with your child which illustrate different family setups, people of different cultures and traditions, and life in different types of community and places in the world.
- Encourage your child to share a record – in photographs or verbally – of special events in your family with the children and staff of the early years setting they attend.