

Adventures in play – Norfolk

Parents, Early Years and Learning: Practice example

A range of early years services and providers in Norfolk combined to design an innovative way of sharing, with parents, the educational value of role-play.

They organise a workshop for a range of settings, to take place over two days: on the Friday, the children attend with nursery practitioners; and on the Saturday, children attend with their families.

Role-play scenarios are set up, indoors and out, for families to play together. These include, for example, a garden centre; health centre; dog show; Three Bears' cottage; building site; jungle; and journeys such as under the sea, to the moon or a paradise island.

Children and parents can take part in a pretend wedding, washing day, driving test or explore a Traveller's trailer.

Practitioners are available on the day to take part and talk to parents about the value of imaginative play.

Parents are able to see their child having fun, observe children totally involved and absorbed in play, and think about how this helps learning.

Practitioners taking part find their own awareness of the value of role-play is raised and they are inspired to try planning for more imaginative play in their settings. They also practise and gain confidence in talking to parents about the value of play.

Parents gain ideas, which they can use at home, and are offered a handout giving further practical advice on extending imaginative play at home.

“It made me realise it is not necessary to have expensive equipment, but I can use things I have at home already.”



“The vet’s box was one of our favourites. Next time I go to the vet, I will take Sophie with me so she can see what really happens.”

By taking part, parents become more aware that involving children in everyday activities, such as shopping or washing, will help their learning.

Training is provided to practitioners by Norfolk Children’s Services to help them deliver workshops in their own settings. Role-play boxes are also available for them to borrow.

The wider community have been involved in providing authentic props for boxes. The Traveller Education Service has produced a box on fairgrounds, which will contain resources celebrating Traveller culture.

A DVD of workshops in action has been produced that will be used to show parents how to offer real-life experiences to their children, simply through everyday activities.

This approach has convinced practitioners and parents that role-play is a good way for children to learn. Both parents and practitioners have been encouraged to provide more imaginative opportunities for play at home and in settings.

“I was amazed at what they were doing in the baby clinic. I never realised my daughter knew so much about looking after babies. I could see how much she was learning. The construction site outside was a real favourite and they were two girls! I have learned how important it is to involve her in the things I do at home. Perhaps I can persuade my husband to let her help him clean the car!”

