

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

This guidance will help practitioners consider how to develop domestic role play areas that maximise opportunities for language and social development.

The home corner is often the most popular area of any setting where toddlers will spend much of their time stirring, pouring, filling, emptying containers, cooking, dressing up and taking on an assortment of roles. Home corners are simple enough to set up with the usual child sized kitchen furniture of a cooker, table and chairs and some pretend fruit, but to truly capitalise on the vast outcomes role play has offer, it is important to carefully consider the resources provided and the role of the adult, so that impact and levels of involvement remain high and learning inevitable.



Why?

Research underpins the importance of imaginative play on a child's development. Role play develops a child's imagination. It supports cognitive development, improves social skills, grows children's creativity and problem-solving skills, and offers opportunities for 2-year-olds to explore and understand events that they have observed or experienced in real life.

Curriculum

Domestic role play can support all areas of the curriculum. Consider what experiences 2-year-olds will naturally explore in their play and what experiences you feel are important to offer in the home corner.

How?

Organisation

- If possible create a large, enclosed space by using rugs, furniture and walls to create a 'little room'
- Space – how many children can fit in the space?
- Layout furniture to encourage social play. By placing kitchen units against walls, children lose opportunities to play face to face and develop their social skills.
- Use low level, open storage units for easy access, which encourage independence and choice making
- Remember less is more. Don't overload resource boxes with props
- Increase sensory experiences by adding cornflakes, conkers, dried pasta and use adult sized utensils
- Include a table and chairs for 2 year olds to recreate experiences they see at home
- Mops, cloths, dustpan and brushes so children can help clear up spills

Resources

- Dress ups – add fabric pieces, materials, scarves and saris. Pegs and hair scrunches are useful to pin fabrics together
- Hats, bags, sunglasses in a basket or hanging off a hat stand
- Tea sets, cutlery, old recipe books, table cloths, fake flowers
- Cleaning props - sponges, cloths, empty washing up liquid bottles
- Baking props -muffin trays, paper cup cake cases, rolling pins, weighing scales
- Cooking - real pots, pans, mixing bowls, whisks, wooden spoons, colanders, chop sticks

- Note books, post it notes, pens, story books, magazines, clocks, mirrors
- Babies, dolls and props - nappies, changing mats, bibs, potty, towels
- Photos displayed in scrap books or walls of the children in action, in the setting or at home with their parents / carers
- Extra props – keys, phones, keyboards, suit cases

Adult role

- **Interact** with the children, take on a role and be aware of potential learning
- **Provide** resources that enable children to explore their ideas & follow their interests
- **Extend** the play by adding props that foster curiosity, creativity and motivation e.g., offer cornflakes in cereal boxes to pour and stir in large silver mixing bowls
- **Explore** children's ideas. Don't dictate the play!
- **Model** and reinforce language, make comments, and ask open ended questions
- **Build** relationships, allow children to make decisions and choices
- **Encourage** children to interact with their peers in the home corner by prompting them to show other children what they are doing, for example, stirring in the pot or asking a friend if they would like some of the drink they have made
- **Support** quieter / shy children by playing alongside them, taking cues from them and following their lead
- **Value** children's efforts and use specific praise e.g. 'Well done, you gave David the doll. You shared the doll.'
- **Use observations** to inform additions to extend play
- **Be careful** with questions - when we change from questions to statements children talk to us for longer and ask more questions themselves



Involving parents/carers

Involve parents in developing home corners and role play by asking them what they would expect to see in the home corner that reflects their home? Encourage parents to invite their children to help with chores at home by giving them an extra sponge, a brush to do the sweeping, a cloth to wipe windows and let them exert their growing determination for independence!

Promoting differences

Does the role play area reflect the makeup of your cohort of children and locality? Consider what resources and props you offer that represents diversity:

- Dolls & books representing different races/cultures/disabilities
- Equipment used by people of different cultures
- Variety of fabrics / materials reflecting different cultures for dress up
- Food packaging, kitchen tools and equipment
- Recipe books from around the world (ask parents if they can donate)
- Display photos of children with their families in their homes

How to Support

- Tune in: listening carefully to what is being said, observing body language and what the child is doing
- Showing genuine interest: giving your whole attention, maintaining eye contact, affirming, smiling, nodding
- Get involved – join the play
- Follow the child's interests
- Learn some useful words in the child's home language to use in the role play
- Adding language and expanding on what they say
- Give children time to listen and respond, become familiar with new language

Reflection: How effective is your home corner?

Regularly monitor the home corner and role play areas both inside and outdoors to ensure all children can be independent, challenged, imaginative, experiment, collaborate in their play and develop language skills through moving and doing.

Reflective Practice Through a Lens

You may find it useful to film children's play in the role play area, then as a team, consider the following questions:

- What did you notice about how the children are using the home corner / role play area?
- What worked well? How and why did it work?
- Do 2-year-olds move quickly from the home corner or do they stay and immerse themselves for lengths of time?
- What is the behaviour like?
- What didn't work and why? How could it have been improved?

Are all children accessing the home corner, fully engaged and able to explore, be independent, make choices, be active or be quiet, creative and imaginative in purposeful play?	
Can 2-year-olds freely access a variety of resources to support and extend their play without asking an adult for help?	
How do the resources provided support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk • social skills • early maths 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fine and gross motor skills • CoEL • diversity 	
Do you offer role play outside?	
Do adults play alongside 2-year-olds, feeding language, modelling new skills and different ways to use resources?	
What is working well?	
What needs developing?	
What resources do I need?	
What resources can be donated by parents or found in nature?	
Are there any training needs?	