

50
things to do **five** before you're
™

Promoting Community and Celebrating Diversity



Case Study 1 - Working with the Roma Community



50 Things to Do Before You're Five

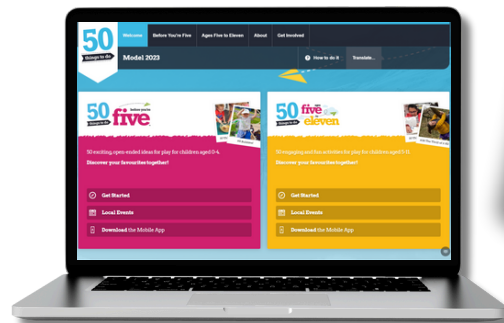
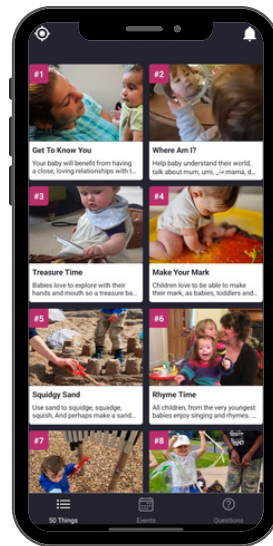
We built **50 Things to Do** because we are passionate about reducing inequalities and increasing life chances. As experts in the early years, we know the value of high-quality experiences, building early relationships and parental involvement. Through place-based, localised, playful experiences, **50 Things to Do** helps young children to have the best start in life.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is an exciting initiative full of ideas and activities for parents and families with young children.

50 Things is a suite of **localised**:

- Apps
- Websites
- Promotional materials

Our project offers a wide range of activities from **outdoor discoveries** in the woods, to **exploring how sound changes** in different places, to **sharing stories** and **water play!**



Localising 50 Things to Do enables us to celebrate the diversity of individual communities across the country and acknowledge the need for an offer that represents and connects with local people. We passionately believe that it is important that families see themselves and places they know within the resources. There is evidence to suggest that there is a higher level of engagement from families when local teams tailor their campaigns, use images of local landmarks and population.

"Individuals often respond best to messages about behaviour from those within their local community."

Science and Technology Select Committee 2011



Context

Roma communities are known to **face some of the starkest inequalities** in outcomes amongst the UK population, including when compared with other minority ethnic groups

Roma children remain the lowest achieving ethnic groups in England, are more likely to be identified as having special educational needs

Nationally, **49.5%** of Gypsy or Roma children are in the **bottom 20%** of the **Early Years Foundation Stage Profile**

Often discrimination in educational settings leaves Roma families **feeling alienated**. Having open and honest conversations with Roma families about their struggles with the education system is important to build trustful relationships. From these conversations considerations can be made to give Roma children equal opportunities to other communities in early years settings and throughout school. The language barrier is an ongoing issue in education which can have detrimental impact on a child's development.

'Unhelpful and stereotypical views about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents and about the wider Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can be seen in both the local and national media, possibly resulting in poor relationships between schools and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities that they serve.'

Moving Forward Together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement, The National Strategies (2009)



"All Roma parents want the best for their children and want to see them succeed, **according to their cultural values, lifestyle and aspirations.**" Moving Forward Together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement, The National Strategies (2009)

Families have a significant influence on their child's development and subsequently, their academic success, which directly influences the child's life chances.

Research consistently demonstrates this pivotal role of interactions between parent and child, yet many **families feel judged by professionals and services**, and **lack the self-esteem and confidence** to engage in developmental activities with their children. When parents feel competent in their parenting role they are more likely to be engaged in their child's learning and development. "An individual's belief in their ability to be successful in the role of parenting (i.e. confidence) is an essential component of the quality and sustainability of parenting behaviours." Belsky J, Jaffee SR (2006) The Multiple Determinants of Parenting.

67% of parents* said that, since using 50 Things to Do Before You're 5 they feel more confident to try new things with their children.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five Stay & Play Sessions

St Edmunds Nursery School, Girlington, Bradford hosts a weekly 'Play and Learn' session, where the **50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities are incorporated**. The children and families play together and parents are encouraged to embrace the activities at home. The 50 activities allow **individualisation** for families to adapt them whilst upholding their own household traditions.

These groups aim to foster **socialisation**, encourage **play-based learning**, and **enhance parent-child bonding**.

We know that when parents confidently play with their children, there will be a positive impact on:

- ✓ **Family health and wellbeing**
- ✓ **Children's achievements in the long-term**

Juraj Tancos, St Edmund's EU Migrant Workers Support Officer and a lead practitioner in these sessions, tells us that parental involvement varies. Sometimes parents will be involved in the play. The sessions encourage positive interaction between parents and children, but Juraj also stresses the importance of "allowing the child to lead."

The 'Play and Learn' sessions give space and resource for families who may not be able or comfortable to provide their children messy play such as:

- #4 Make your Mark**
- #5 Squidgy Sand**
- #17 Hocus Pocus Potions**
- #26 Splish, Splash, Splosh**



The importance of spoken language and building trusted relationships

Some 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities require elements of explanation and guidance in order for families to fully grasp the concept. Having the support of a practitioner at hand, who develops trusting relationships with the families, helps the families implement 50 Things to Do at home and enables them to support their children's learning journey from the start of life.

One of the barriers to engagement can be language. 50 Things to Do has a translation tool on the website version. However, **illiteracy rates are high among the Roma community**.

Therefore, Juraj explains that he takes extra time to carefully talk through the initiative, giving parents resources such as pictorial based posters, and explaining how to access the initiative from their phones. Moreover, some activities need modelling to parents, so they fully understand and can carry on using 50 Things at home. Juraj will often make time to talk with parents, on an individual basis, to provide further explanation.

These close and active relationships made and maintained with practitioners and parents is key to supporting the success of the initiative. Moreover, the fact that Juraj is himself from the Roma community is imperative.

"Experience shows that policies for the Roma rarely become effective unless the Roma themselves become involved and participate actively in both developing and implementing them, particularly at the local level" (FRA n.d.: 2):



Play and Home Learning in the Roma Community

The percentage of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller families who have opted to educate their children at home is increasing at a high rate. The main reasons are linked to a cultural mismatch in terms of purpose and expectations between that of the communities and that of schools (Research and Advice Commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, 2006)

The focus of 50 Things to Do is on families having fun together. This is a deliberate approach, promoting an inclusive, non-judgmental way for parents to engage fully with their children. This aligns perfectly with the way that Roma families promote home learning.

Common attributes of learning in Roma households include:

- Children learning through participation rather than by verbal explanation.
- Learning involves temporal and spatial freedom which is not always possible in a school environment.
- Learning takes place on an intergenerational basis.
- Learning tends to be collaborative, rather than competitive.
- Learning allows children opportunities to work independently.
- Learning has a clear connection to everyday life, gaining qualifications for their future working life.
- Learning enhances the sense of community identity and family.

Studies of Roma children in Transylvania (Brown, FC 'The Play Behaviours of Roma Children in Transylvania', International Journal of Play, 2012) identified that Roma children commonly utilise the environment, music and movement as stimuli for play. There has been no specific research around play in Roma communities in the UK, but anecdotally we have heard that the identified themes are the same.

Typically, Roma parents leave their children to their own devices in play. Parents do not usually function as play partners, and it is common for older siblings to take responsibility in supervising their younger brothers and sisters when playing. (The National Strategies, 2009)



Encouraging Community Connections

Children grow up in a locality and are part of a community, however, it is common within Roma families for parents to feel isolated in their surrounding communities

50 Things to Do Before You're Five encourages families to build ties with their community and the environment around them, with the aim of providing children with a sense of place and a greater connection to communities around them. It was developed as a universal offer, not subject to a singular community, the 50 activities allow all children to have the same opportunity or parents to take inspiration from it.



70%
of parents* who use 50 Things to Do Before You're Five have said that their child has had more opportunities to socialise within their local community



50 Things to Do Before You're Five would like to thank Juraj Tancos and the Roma families at St Edmund's Nursery School for enabling us to put this case study together

Why not read more about **Juraj's journey** in the **State of the Nation 2023 - People and Places, on pages 224 and 225?**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64f853399ee0f2000fb7bf80/state-of-the-nation-2023.pdf>

