

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Commemorating Queen Elizabeth II

With the sad news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September, we have now entered 10 days of national mourning.

Her reign of 70 years and 214 days is the longest of any British monarch and for many people she will be the only reigning British monarch people have ever known. There will inevitably be lots of questions and curiosity from children in your setting about the Queen and the events surrounding her death as they unfold.



This activity provides some ideas if you wish to support children to explore their curiosity of Queen Elizabeth II and to celebrate and commemorate her life and reign.

Learning aims

- To support children through their experiences of new events
- To remember and talk about their own knowledge and experiences
- To support children to understand their own and other people's feelings, offering empathy and comfort
- To have opportunity to comment and asks questions
- To develop an understanding of a commemorative objects or events
- Recognise that they belong to different communities and social groups and communicate freely about their own home and community.

Resources

- Access to the internet
- Image of the Queen (this could include newspapers or magazines)
- Scrap book
- Paper
- Creative materials – paint, craft resources, etc.

Activity outline

Please also see our top tips on supporting children with bereavement.

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Although people, in particular children, may not know a great deal about or have met the Queen they will most likely be aware of her and may see a lot of media coverage about her life and death over the coming days and weeks.

1. Some children may be aware of the Queen and who she is from the Platinum Jubilee celebrations which took place earlier this year, or from other experiences that they have had
2. Give the children the opportunity to talk about the Queen and to share their knowledge and experience of her. Ask open questions such as, "Who was the Queen?", "What do you know about the Queen?", and "What did the Queen do?"
3. Remember that some children's experiences of queens and kings may not be related to the royal family but will be based on stories and films where kings and queens can be depicted as villains. Let children share all their experiences
4. Make notes of children's comments and use these to make a commemorative book
5. Use your own knowledge and research from the internet to provide children with some key information about Queen Elizabeth II relevant to their age and stage of development
6. You may find the following websites particularly useful:
 - a. <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/monarchy/facts-about-the-queen-elizabeth-ii/>
 - b. <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Elizabeth-II/353095>
7. The idea is to help children to understand who the Queen was, what she did, why her death is so important, not just to her family but to the country and the whole world. Share with children, if you are able to, images and information relevant to them such as the Queen's corgis, her Coronation, family, crown, etc.
8. Explain that when someone dies, people often decide to remember (or commemorate) them by holding a special event or creating a special object, such as a book, to help them to remember the person. Remind the children about your Platinum Jubilee celebrations, or make links to other commemorative events such as birthdays, to help them understand
9. Share that the nursery is going to commemorate the Queen by creating a book of memories, thoughts and questions. Children can add to this if they wish but may not show an interest in contributing
10. Record children's comments in the commemorative book, add their thoughts and questions and encourage children to make their own entries. It can include anything they wish to contribute about the Queen
11. The book can be made available in the continuous provision and practitioners can share it with the children, answering any questions that arise
12. Offer children the opportunity to commemorate the Queen by making their own memories of her using the creative materials available. These can be annotated and added to the book
13. You could also offer staff, parents and visitors the opportunity to add their own entries to the commemorative book

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14. Use the book to support children moving forward over the next few weeks as they experience this unfolding event
15. Revisit and add to the commemorative book as and when appropriate.

Extending the activity

- Hold a commemoration event, such as planting a tree, spring bulbs or sowing wild flower seeds. Invite parents to join you and the children in commemorating the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

