

Let's think about... Black History Month

A 1-2 hours staff meeting template to use with your team.

Objective:

To develop practitioners awareness and understanding of Black History Month. And to support settings to plan and celebrate Black History Month meaningfully.

Rationale:

Black History Month is an annual celebration of Black history, heritage and culture. It provides a dedicated opportunity to recognise the histories, achievements and contributions of Black people in Britain and across the world, past and present.

Black History Month was first formally celebrated in the UK in October 1987, making 2026 its 39th year.

Each year has a theme. The theme for 2026 is Honouring Our Communities, encouraging us to recognise not only well-known figures, but the Black people whose everyday contributions help to shape, support and strengthen communities.

How we approach Black History Month matters. Thoughtful planning can help us avoid tokenism and move beyond simply thinking about what we will do in October, to consider why we are doing it, what children might gain from it and how it connects with our wider inclusive practice.

What do we mean by tokenism?

Tokenism is when something is included mainly to appear inclusive, rather than being meaningfully embedded in practice. This can happen when inclusion is limited to isolated activities, resources or celebrations rather than being part of children's everyday experiences.

Activity 1 (10 minutes)

Thinking About Our Approach to Black History Month

Start from where you are. You may be reflecting on previous Black History Month celebrations, considering your plans for this year, or exploring Black History Month for the first time.

Think about what you have done or are considering and use the questions below to explore the intention behind your choices.

If you already have examples in mind, choose two or three activities, books, displays, music, food, visitors or other experiences to explore together.

Discussion prompts

- What made us choose this?
- What did/do we hope children will gain from it?
- How does it connect with the children in our cohort?
- What messages might it communicate about Black people, cultures or histories?
- Is it meaningful and developmentally appropriate?
- Where are the opportunities for celebration, pride and joy?

Key Reflection

Are we starting with clear intentions for children's learning and experiences – or starting with a fun activity?

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

Making Our Choices Meaningful

There is no checklist of activities or resources that makes Black History Month meaningful. What matters is that we are clear on why we choose an experience, what children might gain from it and how it connects with their lives, interests and learning.

Explore the examples below. Rather than treating them as activities to replicate, consider the thinking behind them and how this might inform your own planning.

Think about:

What could children experience and learn through this activity beyond simply trying a different food? How can we introduce and talk about foods, cultures and traditions in ways that avoid exoticisation?

What do we mean by exoticisation?

Exoticisation is when people, cultures or cultural practices are presented as unusually different, 'foreign' or fascinating. Even when intended positively, this can position some people's everyday lives and cultures as outside of what is considered 'normal'.

As practitioners, we can model and support children to approach difference with respect and understanding, without positioning one culture or way of living as the norm against which others are compared.

Beyond Black History Month:

You could invite all families across the setting to contribute recipes that are meaningful to them to a shared recipe book. Keep it accessible to families and use it throughout the year to explore and cook a variety of foods.

I wonder... who created this?

This activity is about broadening children's knowledge of the people behind the music, books and art they encounter.

Choose a piece of music created or performed by a Black artist without initially showing children the artist. Listen together. Move, dance or respond to the music and wonder aloud: "I wonder who created this?" before eventually introducing the artist through a photograph or video.

The aim is not to test whether children can guess what somebody looks like. Instead, it creates opportunities for children to encounter a wider range of people as musicians, artists, authors and creators.

The same idea could also be adapted using books or artwork. Explore a story or piece of artwork together before showing the author or artist and wonder about the person who created it.

Think about: How might experiences like this expand children's ideas about who creates music, books and art?

Beyond Black History Month:

You could try repeating the activity throughout the year using musicians, authors and artists from different genres, countries, generations and backgrounds.

Activity 3 (15 minutes)

The Danger of a Single Story

We've considered some of the experiences we might provide during Black History Month. It is important to think about the range of stories and perspectives children encounter through those experiences.

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk, [The Danger of a Single Story](#). Through stories from her own life and experiences, Adichie explores how our understanding of people, places and groups can be shaped when we repeatedly encounter them through the same limited narrative or perspective.

As you watch, consider how the idea of a 'single story' might relate to your own thinking and practice.

Pause for personal reflection

How might a 'single story' influence the way I see and understand others?

Reflect together

- What might a 'single story' of Black identity look like within our practice?
- When we think about Black History Month, whose stories are we most likely to tell?
- Whose experiences might be missing?
- How can we avoid passing single-story narratives on to children?

Facilitator Reflection

There is no single 'Black' experience or culture. Children and families have diverse histories, nationalities, languages, cultures, faiths, family structures and everyday experiences.

Thoughtful Black History Month practice should broaden children's understanding rather than unintentionally replacing one limited story with another.

Invite, but don't rely on families

Families can be a valuable part of Black History Month and should have opportunities to contribute if they would like to. You might invite families to share music, food, photographs, stories, books, memories, skills or people that are meaningful to them.

However, inviting families to contribute is different from relying on them. Black children and families should not be expected to represent Black communities, educate practitioners or provide the content needed for a setting to celebrate Black History Month. The responsibility for developing thoughtful, informed and inclusive practice remains with us.

Consider how this also sits within your wider approach to working with families. Are families routinely invited to contribute their knowledge, experiences, interests and skills across your curriculum, rather than only being approached in relation to particular celebrations or aspects of identity?

Reflect

How can we create genuine opportunities for families to contribute without placing responsibility on them?

Follow-up Activity – What Happens on 1 November?

Look around your environment and think about your everyday provision once the resources, displays and activities introduced specifically for Black History Month have been removed.

Discussion prompts

- Where would Black children and families still see themselves reflected?
- Where would children encounter Black characters in everyday books and stories?
- What music, images, experiences and perspectives would remain?
- Where would children encounter Black British lives and histories?
- Would anything noticeably disappear?
- What does this tell us about our provision throughout the rest of the year?

Facilitator Reflection

Black History Month can provide a valuable opportunity for additional focus, celebration and reflection. It should not, however, carry responsibility for representing Black identities, histories and experiences for the entire year. October can instead help us notice gaps, discover new resources and strengthen practice in ways that remain beyond the month itself.

Final Reflection

What will remain in our practice because we celebrated Black History Month?

References and further reading

- [Adichie, C. N. \(2009\). The Danger of a Single Story. TEDGlobal.](#)
- [Black History Month UK \(2026\). Black History Month 2026: Honouring Our Communities.](#)
- [Birth to 5 Matters \(2026\). Birth to 5 Matters: Non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Second Edition.](#)

Further resources

- [Black History Month UK – 2026 resources](#)
- [Bristol & Beyond Stronger Practice Hub – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion resources](#)
- [Black History Month – Birth To 5 Matters](#)

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