



Grass Roots Newsletter

Hello November!

Welcome to this month's newsletter. We understand that many of our families are feeling the pressure of the current cost of living crisis. As a nursery, our primary focus is your children's well-being, but we know that healthy and happy children start with secure and supported families. This month, we're dedicating our newsletter to sharing resources, tips, and fun activities that not only help manage budgets but also teach valuable life skills to your little ones. We are here for you, and we hope you find these pages helpful.



Monthly Theme - Resourceful Living & Family Budgets

This month, our theme is "Resourceful and Creative." We want to empower families with simple, budget-smart ways to enjoy time together without spending money. Being resourceful allows us to be creative and thoughtful!

Here are a few focus areas and ideas you can try this week:

Creative Play with Household Items

The most engaging toys are often the free ones already in your home!

- **Box Town Engineering:** Don't throw away that large delivery box! Turn it into a rocket, a puppet theatre, or a cosy reading den. Add old sheets or blankets to create a free, imaginative play space.
- **Kitchen Cupboard Sensory Play:** Use dried pasta, rice (plain or dyed with food colouring), or lentils in a shallow tray with spoons, cups, and old measuring jugs. This provides hours of scooping, pouring, and sensory fun for minimal cost.

The Value of Experiences

Remember that valuable time together doesn't cost anything:

- **Free Fun Outings:** Utilise free community resources! Visit your local library for story time and free books, or spend an afternoon at the park collecting sticks, leaves, and stones for art (see our Risky Play section!).





Practitioner Spotlight:

This month, we are thrilled to introduce Amy, our new employee who will be joining us in mid-November. She is a Level 3 practitioner with considerable experience and is also a mother of two. Having previously been a parent at Grass Roots, Amy has a strong understanding of our nursery's ethos and has already built relationships with some of our team members.

Amy will be working in the Fold (under 2s) and we are eager for her to start and become a valued member of the Grass Roots team.



Event Calendar:

- Family SEND support session @ Grass Roots Family Centre Thursday 20th November at 10am.
- We break up for Christmas on Friday 19th December (Term time only)/ Wednesday 24th December (full year care) and return to nursery on Monday 5th January.

Community News:

- Check out Grass Roots Family CIC facebook page for community events <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086769567112>
- 50 things to do before you are 5 has events on their website <https://calderdale.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome>
- Support Noa's Place, a vision of one of our nursery's parents - www.noasplace.org.uk

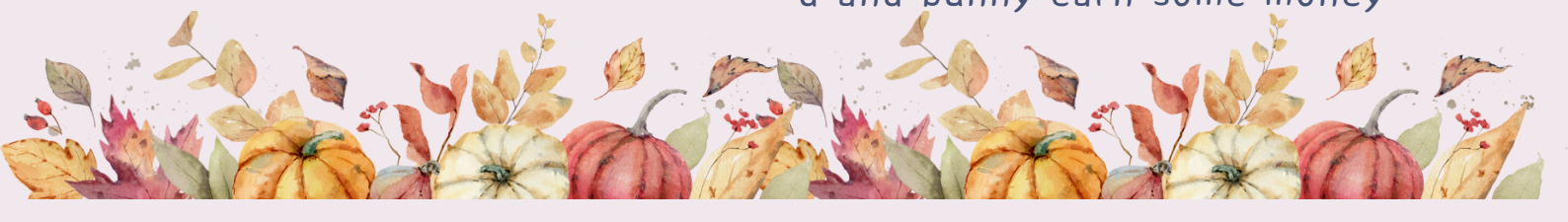
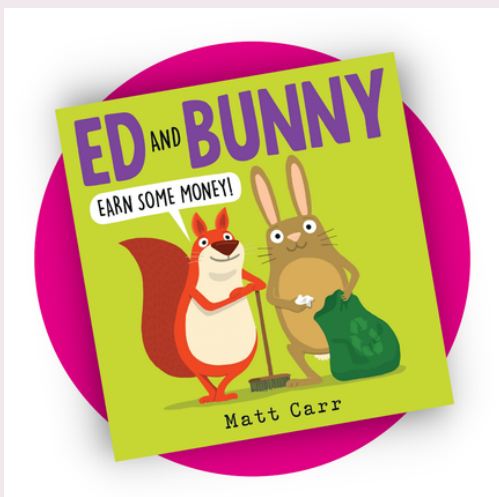


Book Review:

Ed and Bunny Earn Some Money - Matt Carr

This book is a great way to introduce the concept of money, including earning, saving and spending to young children. The money heroes website has some amazing resources, including activities and support for children with SEN.

<https://www.moneyheroes.org.uk/resource/ed-and-bunny-earn-some-money>





Curriculum Focus: Financial Literacy Through Play

This month, we are integrating concepts of resourcefulness and value into our daily play, aligning with core Early Years learning goals:

- **12/34 Maths:** We use coins and tokens in our role-play shop and during counting activities. This gives children a tangible connection between number work and the idea of value and exchange.
- **🤝 PSED (Personal, Social, and Emotional Development):** Discussions on "wants versus needs" help children develop self-regulation and thoughtful choice-making. Our preschool "Savings Jar" teaches the satisfaction of delayed gratification.
- **🎨 Expressive Arts & Design (EAD):** By focusing on upcycled and recycled materials (boxes, lids, scraps), we are demonstrating that creativity is not dependent on cost, fostering ingenuity and resourcefulness.

We are actively laying the groundwork for our children to become savvy and responsible decision-makers.

Q&A: "How do I handle constant requests for expensive toys or snacks when we're out shopping?"

This is a common challenge! Try to establish a simple "one thing" or "no thing" rule before you enter the shop.

- **Offer a Choice:** If you have budgeted for one small treat, let them choose it themselves (practising decision-making). If not, firmly but kindly remind them: "Remember, today is a 'no extra things' day. We are being savvy shoppers and sticking to our list."
- **Redirect and Distract:** Instead of buying, turn the trip into a game. Ask them to be your "list helper" or "price checker." This makes them feel helpful and engaged in.





Recipe Corner: Budget-Smart Family Meal

Lentil and Vegetable Ragu. This recipe is excellent for using up store cupboard ingredients, is packed with protein, and freezes beautifully for busy weeknights.

Cost-Effective Lentil & Vegetable Ragu

Ingredient

Dried Red Lentils 150g
Tinned Chopped Tomatoes 2 x 400g tins
Tinned Tomato Purée 1 tbsp
Onion, chopped 1 medium
Carrot, chopped 1 medium.
Celery stick, chopped 1 stick (optional)
Garlic, crushed 2 cloves
Stock Cube 1 (vegetable)
Use hot water to make 400ml stock.
Dried oregano or mixed herbs 1 tsp
Oil, Salt & Pepper to taste

Simple Steps to Ragu Success:

Heat oil in a large pan. Add the chopped onion, carrot, and celery. Cook gently for about 5 minutes until soft. Add the garlic and tomato purée and cook for 1 minute.

Stir in the dried red lentils, tinned tomatoes, and stock. Bring the mixture to a simmer.

Reduce the heat to low, cover the pan, and leave it to gently simmer for 30-40 minutes. The lentils should soften and absorb the liquid, creating a thick, rich ragu. Check occasionally and stir to prevent sticking.

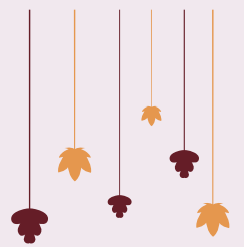
Season to taste with salt, pepper, and herbs. Serve over spaghetti, rice, or on top of a jacket potato.

Tips and Tricks: Smart Swaps for Families

Being budget-smart doesn't mean giving up fun—it means getting creative! Here are three quick-win swaps to help you make your family budget stretch further:

- **1. The Food Shop Swap:** Try switching just three key items in your weekly shop (like cereal or beans) to the supermarket's own-brand range. This is a simple change that delivers immediate savings. Also, save time and money by committing to batch cooking one freezable family meal per week.
- **2. Secondhand & Swaps:** Before buying new clothes or toys, check out pre-loved options on Vinted or local uniform swap groups. Teaching children that "pre-loved" items are great quality fosters resourcefulness.
- **3. Free Fun:** Utilise the wealth of free activities in your community. Plan outings around the UK's free museums, local parks, or your library's story time sessions. These are high-quality, zero-cost ways to spend time together.





Risky Play: The Value of Found Materials

This month, our risky play focuses on the most affordable and sustainable resources available: natural and free materials. We define 'risky' not as dangerous, but as challenging—allowing children to problem-solve and assess risks independently. Loose parts (like sticks, stones, mud, leaves, cardboard boxes, and old fabric scraps) offer limitless creative and engineering possibilities.

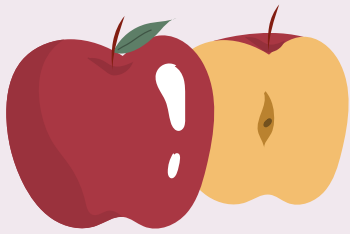
- **The Power of Creation:** Giving a child a stick and some rope allows them to build a den, a fishing rod, or a shelter. This challenge of engineering and creation provides a massive sense of accomplishment, promoting self-confidence far more than a pre-made toy ever could.
- **Encouraging Physical Development:** Collecting these items involves essential physical activity—lifting, balancing, digging, and carrying—all of which strengthens core muscles and improves coordination.
- **Zero-Cost Fun:** The best part is that this kind of play costs absolutely nothing. We encourage you to collect items on your next park visit or nature walk and let your child decide what they become.

Healthy Choices: Cost-Effective Nutrition

Maintaining a healthy diet doesn't have to break the bank. With a few smart swaps, you can ensure your family gets great nutrition while staying budget-smart.

- **Frozen is Gold:** Did you know that frozen fruits and vegetables are often cheaper than fresh, and are picked at their peak, making them just as (if not more) nutritious? Stock up! Use frozen berries for quick morning smoothies, or toss frozen peas, sweetcorn, and carrots straight into stews, curries, and pasta sauces—no chopping required.
- **The Power of Pulses:** Look to pulses and beans (such as lentils, chickpeas, and kidney beans) as a fantastic, budget-friendly source of protein and fibre. Swapping out a portion of meat in a meal for lentils, for example, can significantly stretch the meal budget while increasing the nutritional content. They are incredibly versatile for making cheap, filling soups, curries, and dips like hummus.
- **Planning Prevents Waste:** Food waste is money wasted! Before your weekly shop, plan your meals and check what you already have. This simple act reduces impulse buys and ensures you use all ingredients before they spoil.





Online Safety: Free Educational Resources



In a time when every penny counts, ensuring your children's screen time is both safe and productive is key.

- **Mindful Screen Time:** Instead of letting your children endlessly scroll or watch non-educational content, actively search for high-quality, free educational apps or videos that align with their interests (always check age recommendations!). YouTube offers fantastic channels for simple science, history, and craft tutorials.
- **Security and Costs:** Always ensure you are using time and data wisely. Keep devices fully charged before you leave the house so you aren't forced to use expensive public charging points. More importantly, strengthen your home router password—a secure connection prevents neighbours from using your bandwidth, which can protect your internet speed and data usage (if on a limited plan).
- **Active Supervision:** Parental controls are essential, but nothing replaces active supervision. Stay engaged with what your child is doing online and use it as a chance to bond and discuss what they are learning.

Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Repair

The most sustainable choice is almost always the cheapest choice, directly supporting our "Resourceful Living" theme.

- **Reduce the Consumption:** This is the most effective step. Challenge yourself and your children to buy one less thing this week. Before purchasing, ask: Is this a want or a need? Can we make it instead?
- **Creative Reuse:** Look at your household waste through a creative lens. Turn empty food containers into handy storage for pencils and toys, or staple together scrap paper to create drawing pads. This extends the life of materials and avoids the cost of new supplies.
- **The Lesson of Repair:** Instil the value of care by focusing on repair over replacement. If a toy breaks, try to fix it with glue, tape, or a quick stitch. This teaches children patience, problem-solving, and the life-long lesson that not everything should be disposable.

