

OpenLearn: LearningSpace
Y156: Understanding children
Meet the Family



Daisy and Ryan live with their mum, Jodie, and her partner, Eamon. Jodie divorced Ryan's and Daisy's father when Ryan was 18 months old. It was a reasonably amicable separation. Graham lives about 30 miles away and maintains contact by telephone and regular weekend visits with Daisy and Ryan. He also regularly visits Rosalind, often taking all three children!

Jodie and Eamon have decided not to marry. Eamon has a close relationship with the children and plays a significant role in their care as he works shifts. Mia is Jodie's and Eamon's daughter and her birth has further cemented their relationship. Jodie and Eamon have been determined to involve Daisy and Ryan in the care of their new sister as much as possible. Eamon, however, has felt that he lacks confidence in caring for Mia – he has had little contact with babies and is also anxious about his role with Daisy and Ryan now Mia has arrived. Unlike Jodie, who is one of five children, Eamon is an only child.

Jodie returned to work part-time when Mia was five months old. Mia's care is shared between Jodie's parents (Michael and Grace), Eamon and Jodie. Michael and Grace are very involved in their grandchildren's lives and are interested in thinking and learning about children along with Jodie and Eamon.

The Watkins/McLaughlin household is busy, at times hectic, but generally lively and happy. Jodie and Graham talk on the telephone a lot about their children and how they parent them. All three 'parents' come from very different family backgrounds and believe in talking about and sharing their experiences and cultures to enrich their children's lives.

Jodie's parents are English and originally from London. Jodie is a confident parent; she played a significant role in the care of her four younger brothers and also has six nephews and nieces.

Eamon is from County Antrim in Northern Ireland and Jodie met him after he moved to the Birkenhead area for work. They have been together a couple of years.

Graham has lived in and around Birkenhead all of his life. However, as his parents were Nigerian, he is keen that Daisy and Ryan are positive about their Nigerian background. He sees Rosalind as very important to this as his parents are dead and he has no other Nigerian relatives in the country.



Figure 3 Daisy

Daisy:

I'm 10 and will be moving schools next year. I've pretty much grown out of most kids' stuff and my little brother drives me mental – always messing with my stuff. Mia is sweet though – but she is always either asleep or making a racket. Mum and Eamon keep on at me to keep my music down and not to leave stuff around in case she gets hold of it. My best mates are Sammy and Sandeep. We always go around together, shopping, listening to CDs and just hanging out. I'm good at maths, writing stories and football. I hate spelling, netball and Mrs Jones at school!



Figure 4 Ryan

Ryan:

I go to school like Daisy and my friends are Connor, Paul, Nicholas, Emily and Miss Dee. I like Thomas the Tank Engine and Percy and Gordon and the Fat Controller and Power Rangers! My favourite colour is red and I have a bedroom by myself with a picture of Thomas. Mia sleeps with Mum and Eamon and sometimes I go in their bed in the morning but Mia is too noisy so I watch telly. Nan and Grandpa are coming to see me tomorrow when they bring Mia home and Grandpa is going to help me make a dinosaur picture. I can put my top and trousers on but Mum or Daisy do my shoes. My peg at school has a cat on it. Nicholas has a tiger. I like the tiger. Miss Dee says I am good at my numbers. I missed my playtime today when I was playing Power Rangers with Nicholas. Miss Dee says 'no pushing!'



Figure 5 Mia

Daisy says:

Mia is our little sister – she is only a baby so she can't talk about herself. We know what she likes though! She loves banana and mushy apple and being on the floor playing. She hates potato, drinking from a bottle and sitting in her chair, except at breakfast time. Mia loves people and meets a lot when she goes out with Rosalind and she gets excited when anyone comes to visit and she always pulls my hair. I love having a baby sister.



Figure 6 Jodie

Jodie:

My name is Jodie and I am a working mum with three kids. I work part-time as a recruitment consultant and most of the rest of my time is taken up with the family. I am lucky to have lots of help around, including my ex, Graham, who lives only 30 miles away and has his two to stay now and then. My partner Eamon is a great help with the kids, not just Mia. We also have my parents and Rosalind, Graham's auntie, to help out. I'd like to develop my career as most people in recruitment are graduates, so if I want to move on I really need a degree. Now is not the time with the family getting used to a new addition.



Figure 7 Eamon

Eamon:

Hi, I'm Eamon, the live-in lover! Seriously, I am Mia's dad and I hope that Daisy and little Ryan think of me as 'a dad' even though Graham is their real father. I love Jodie to bits – she is the best thing that has happened to me, although it has been a bit of a shock getting used to living with a busy family. I work shifts as a telephone engineer – it works quite well, and Jodie and I can work around each other so that we do not have to rely too much on her parents.



Figure 8 Graham

Graham:

I am Daisy's and Ryan's daddy – they still mean the world to me and I really regret that I was not around more for them when Jo-Jo – sorry Jodie – and I were together. We just drifted apart – no one's fault really. It sounds bad to say it, but in many ways things are better now. I love spending time with Ryan and Daisy-May; we can just chill out and do our own thing when they come and visit. Rosalind plays a big part in their lives – she is their link with my history and better at it than I am. I was brought up by my Auntie Ros and she did the job of mum and dad for me. She spends a lot of time with the kids. I am working more steady now – as a retail manager. Jo-Jo is always on the phone about the kids. It is good to talk to her – but she does worry too much. They are good kids.



Figure 9 Grace

Grace:

I am Jodie's mother, and Daisy's, Ryan's and little Mia's Grandma. I suppose I am also her childminder, although that makes it sound very grand. I was brought up in North London – and met my husband Michael there. We moved to Birkenhead soon after the wedding.

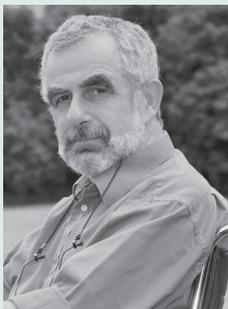


Figure 10 Michael

Michael:

I am the human buggy! I use a wheelchair nowadays and sometimes think that wheeling Mia about is all that they need me for [laughing]. Seriously, it is a wonderful opportunity being involved with the grandchildren – I really missed out with Jo-Jo and her brothers. Still – making up for it now. They are a noisy lot sometimes and I wish Eamon would make an honest woman of Jo-Jo – he tells me he will one day!



Figure 11 Rosalind

Rosalind:

I am Auntie Rosalind. I took care of Graham when he was a boy and try to help out where I can with his children. My family is back in Nigeria – but I left so long ago that I am at home here now. I am still in touch with the family back there. It took a bit of time for Jodie and her folks to get used to me, but now she says she can't do without me. It has been easy to include Mia in some of the things I do, and I'm glad to do it. I consider myself a friend of the family, not just Daisy and Ryan. I don't know! Graham calls me the wise old crow – but he was always the cheeky one!