

## Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

Now that you have attended our Gender Friendly Nursery training, if you are keen to work as an establishment to gain Gender Friendly Nursery accreditation the first step is for you to share the learning from the training with your colleagues. We have pulled the following information together to help you to do this. In pre Covid times the expectation is that you would deliver the full session to your staff team, however the move to virtual delivery means we now need to take a slightly different approach. The table below outlines the Learning Outcomes we would hope all staff to have met, and suggested ways in which you can support them to do this.

We would suggest that you work through this chronologically, beginning by asking all staff to view (individually or as a group) the pre recorded session 1 and finishing with session 4 before working together on your audit. The table below also includes some added consolidation exercises that you may also chose to use.

As sessions 2 and 3 were delivered live, we will also provide you with the powerpoints (with facilitators notes) to allow you to deliver these yourself. You can either choose to deliver them as two stand alone sessions, or chunk them up by learning outcomes as outlined in the table below. If you are uncertain about how to take this forward, do get in touch! Good luck on your GFN journey!

Learning Outcome	Suggestions and Activities	Complete?	Notes
Staff should understand the meanings of and differences between “sex” and “gender”  Covered in Session 1	Ask staff to watch the prerecorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 1 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U</a>		
	<b>Consolidation Exercise if needed:</b> Use the Sex or Gender quiz to test staff’s understanding of the concepts of sex and gender.		
Staff should understand “stereotypes” and why they are problematic  Covered in Session 1	Ask staff to watch the prerecorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 1 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U</a>		
Staff should understand what is meant by an equitable approach and that this is the most effective way to approach gender inequality. They should also understand that children may be experiencing a variety of inequalities in life which may intersect to mean that certain children may experience additional	Ask staff to watch the prerecorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 1 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPngNQhd1U</a>		
	<b>Consolidation Exercise if needed:</b> Share the “Equality and Equity” Worksheet.		

## Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

disadvantage.  Covered in Session 1			
Staff should understand that children in the nursery have already learned about gender roles based on their experiences in life so far, and that these develop as they get older to become more problematic.  Covered in Session 1	Ask staff to watch the prerecorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 1 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPnqNQhd1U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPnqNQhd1U</a>		
	Arrange for staff to view our film where we ask children about gender roles - in session 1 or direct link here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak4p8y2CxDU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak4p8y2CxDU</a>		
Staff should understand what is meant by unconscious bias and the role that it can play in our practice and actions.  Covered in Session 1	Ask staff to watch the prerecorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 1 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPnqNQhd1U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CPnqNQhd1U</a>		
	<b>Consolidation Exercise if needed:</b> <a href="https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/publications/2015/unconscious-bias/">https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/publications/2015/unconscious-bias/</a> There is loads of information here which you could share with your colleagues, including a useful video which describes unconscious bias and the role it can play in our decision making. You could watch this with your colleagues and then have a discussion about the ways in which unconscious bias about gender which are as a result of the gender stereotypes we have been brought up with, might be having on our practice. You might also want to think about what unconscious biases you might have. It is important to stress that it is not easy to change our unconscious bias, but that the more aware of it we are, the more we may be able to catch ourselves when they are having an impact, and can reflect on how we can adapt and change our future practice as a result.		
Staff should understand that from birth and throughout our lives we are bombarded with messages about gender, and that the media in particular plays a huge role in perpetuating harmful gender	Use the Gender in the Media presentation from Session 2 and the accompanying notes to take staff through the various areas where we see gender stereotypes.		
	<b>Consolidation Exercise if needed:</b> If staff wish to look into specific issues further then these are useful starting points:		

Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

<p>stereotypes.</p> <p>Covered in Session 2</p>	<p>Children's TV:  <a href="https://hopster_wordpress_v2.storage.googleapis.com/Hopster-Predjudice-Report-DIGITAL.pdf">https://hopster_wordpress_v2.storage.googleapis.com/Hopster-Predjudice-Report-DIGITAL.pdf</a></p> <p>Toys &amp; Toy Marketing: <a href="https://www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk/about/">https://www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk/about/</a></p> <p>Kids Clothing: <a href="https://www.letclothesbeclothes.co.uk/">https://www.letclothesbeclothes.co.uk/</a></p> <p>Representation of Dads:  <a href="https://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/wheres_dad_too">https://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/wheres_dad_too</a></p>		
<p>Staff should understand the concept of "gender boxes" as a way of understanding unrealistic gender stereotypes and the harms associated with them.</p> <p>Covered in Session 3</p>	<p>Use the Gender Box slides from Session 3 and the accompanying notes to take staff through the activity as a whole group.</p>		
	<p><b>OPTION:</b> Gender Box activity – groupwork version. Use the instructions in the Gender Box Instruction sheet at the end of this document to take staff through this activity using flipchart paper and in groups.</p>		
	<p><b>Consolidation If Needed</b> (But we would you suggest you do both these activities): Share the Tony Porter Video with staff.</p> <p>Use the following questions to hold a discussion.</p> <p><b>Q: How did the 'man box' impact on Tony Porter's parenting?</b>  <b>A:</b> He treated his son and daughter differently because he felt that crying was acceptable from a girl but not from a boy.</p> <p><b>Q: How might this have affected his son and daughter?</b>  <b>A:</b> It may have reinforced stereotypes about boys and men not being encouraged to show emotion, which could continue to influence both his son and daughter as they grow up in their interactions with others and their expectations of themselves.</p> <p><b>Q: What harm did staying inside the man box do to Tony Porter's father?</b>  <b>A:</b> He felt unable to cry at his own sons funeral</p> <p><b>Q: As a young boy/teenager, Tony Porter felt like he had to remain in the man box. What might be going on inside the mind of a boy who has to live up to this image on a daily basis?</b></p>		

## Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

	<p><b>A:</b> Huge pressure. Many boys, like the young Tony, know that sexual violence as took place in the story is wrong and feel bad about perpetrating, condoning or remaining silent about it, however the fear of being 'outed' as anything other than the stereotyped 'man box' man, and the possible consequences, may be even stronger.</p> <p><b>Q: What might the longer term impacts be on men who feel they need to remain 'within the box'?</b></p> <p><b>A:</b> Loads. Their mental health, relationships and education and career paths can suffer due to the pressures described above, as well as those of their families.</p>		
Staff should understand how by ignoring seemingly harmless behaviours like gender stereotyping or sexist jokes can lead a culture where more extreme forms of gender based discrimination and violence can occur.	Sharing and discussion of Allport Scale using the Slide (18) and accompanying notes from Session 3		
Covered in Session 3	<b>Consolidation:</b> Use the Sticks and Stones Activity slides (19-21) and accompanying notes from session 3 to expand on this further.		
Staff should understand ways in which we can ensure that our nursery is more welcoming to male staff and fathers and why this is important.	Ask staff to watch the pre-recorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 4 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhtEl6qCimU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhtEl6qCimU</a>		
Covered in Session 4			
Staff should understand the issues which might be preventing men from entering the Early Years workforce (and how many of these stem from gender stereotypes) and	Ask staff to watch the pre-recorded Gender Friendly Nursery Training Part 4 here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhtEl6qCimU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhtEl6qCimU</a>		

## Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

<p>why gender balance is important in early years settings.</p> <p>Covered in Session 4</p>			
<p>Staff should have considered the potential challenges of adopting a Gender Friendly Nursery approach and how they might overcome them.</p> <p>Covered in Session 3</p>	<p>Challenge Activity: Use slides 22-29 from session 3 to lead staff in a discussion about approaches to challenges that you might face. You could do this as a whole group using the slides, or use the Challenges Activity instructions and cards below to do this in small groups.</p> <p>The “answer” sheets are included below – you may wish to consider printing these for each member of staff for reference, especially if you don’t manage to get through every challenge.</p>		
<p>Staff should have used the Gender Friendly Nursery audit tool to consider how they can adapt their practice and make suggestion for changes to the practice across the wider organisation.</p> <p>Covered in Session 4</p>	<p>Audit tool: p22 of the Nursery Support Pack, available at <a href="http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/gbvresources">www.nhsggc.org.uk/gbvresources</a> (select Gender Friendly Nursery)</p> <p>Staff will have been introduced to the Audit Tool during sessions 1 and 4. It is now up to you to decide how you want to complete the audit tool for your setting. Here are a couple of suggestions about how you could do it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with the “what are we already doing well” and ask all staff to complete this as individuals before coming together to discuss areas for improvement. You could consider doing the “what are we doing well” before the training and the areas for improvement after.</li> <li>• Divide staff into small groups and assign each group one section of the audit to work together to complete. Come back together as a whole staff to discuss.</li> </ul>		
<p>Staff should work with colleagues to agree on an action plan for moving towards Gender Friendly Nursery accreditation.</p>	<p>Action Plan: p30 of the Nursery Support Pack, available at <a href="http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/gbvresources">www.nhsggc.org.uk/gbvresources</a> (select Gender Friendly Nursery)</p> <p>Once you have completed the audit, involve staff in a discussion based on the areas for improvement to agree the actions you will add to your action plan.</p>		

Gender Friendly Nursery: Cascading Learning to Wider Staff

Covered in Session 4			
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## Sex or Gender: Quiz Sheet

The following are our working definitions of Sex and Gender:

**Sex:** Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions. Note: people can also be born intersex.

**Gender:** A spectrum, within which a person identifies as boy/man, girl/woman, anywhere in between or neither. Refers to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.

For each statement in the table below decide if it is referring to Sex or Gender and tick the corresponding box.

Statement	Sex	Gender
Women give birth to babies, men don't.		
Little girls are gentle, boys are tougher		
Women make up 70% of administrative, secretarial, personal service and customer service occupations		
Most building site workers in the UK are men		
Men are more likely than women to use violence against their partner		
In Ancient Egypt men stayed at home and did weaving. Women handled family business. Women inherited family property and men did not		
Men's voices break at puberty, women's do not		
Good, affordable childcare helps women to balance work and family commitments		
Women can breastfeed babies, men can bottlefeed babies		
According to UN statistics, women do 67% of the world's work, yet their earnings for it amount to only 10% of the world's income		

## Sex or Gender: Quiz Sheet - Answers

Statement	Sex	Gender
Women give birth to babies, men don't.	✓	
Little girls are gentle, boys are tougher		✓
Women make up 70% of administrative, secretarial, personal service and customer service occupations		✓
Most building site workers in the UK are men		✓
Men are more likely than women to use violence against their partner		✓
In Ancient Egypt men stayed at home and did weaving. Women handled family business. Women inherited family property and men did not		✓
Men's voices break at puberty, women's do not	✓	
Good, affordable childcare helps women to balance work and family commitments		✓
Women can breastfeed babies, men can bottlefeed babies	✓	
According to UN statistics, women do 67% of the world's work, yet their earnings for it amount to only 10% of the world's income		✓

## **Equality and Equity Handout**

**Equality:** treating everyone the same

**Equity:** giving everyone what they need to be successful

Though the words are very similar, the meanings and the ways in which each may be achieved are very different. Equity and equality are two strategies used to produce fairness. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. We have tried to give a couple of examples below to demonstrate the differences in each approach.

### **Example 1 – Nursery Breakfast**

There is concern in the nursery that some children are not receiving breakfast at home and this is impacting on their behaviour and ability to take part in nursery activities.

#### **Equality:**

ACTION: Give all children one slice of toast to ensure that all children have eaten.

RESULT: All children get something to eat, but there will still be children who have had a lot less than others and therefore may still be at a disadvantage.

#### **Equity:**

ACTION: Offer all children toast, but encourage the children who staff suspect have not had breakfast at home to take more than one slice.

RESULT: The children who have not had breakfast are more likely to eat more than those who have and therefore are able to participate as fully as other children.

### **Example 2 – Primary School Coding Club**

A primary teacher has identified that some of the pupils in her class are not performing well in the coding activities which are part of the curriculum.

#### **Equality:**

ACTION: The teacher offers an after school coding club open to all the class

RESULT: The children who are better at or who enjoy coding are more likely to attend. The gap in ability at coding remains.

#### **Equity:**

ACTION: The teacher invites those children who are struggling with coding to attend an after school coding club.

RESULT: The children who are struggling with coding receive extra help therefore closing the gap in performance at coding

#### **Questions to ask yourself:**

- Is it enough for me to treat every child the same in my nursery?
- Are there some children in my nursery that may need extra support or help to achieve what the others are achieving?
- How can I be equitable in relation to gender in my nursery practice?
- Are there activities within the nursery where children of different genders may need more encouragement?

**You will need: Flipcharts and pens for each group**

**Introduction:** In the last exercise we looked at how gender roles are perpetuated by different forms of media. Now we are going to look at what the impact is when you are encouraged to believe that you should fit neatly into one of two gender categories: boy/man or girl/woman.

1. Split participants into groups of about 4-6. Give each group a flipchart and pens and ask them to split their paper into two halves by drawing a line down the middle. In the middle of each half draw a square (they will be asked to write both inside and around the square so make sure it is big enough). Inside one write 'act like a man'; inside the other write 'act like a woman'.
2. Ask participants to think about what these phrases mean in terms of ways men/boys and women/girls should look, dress, behave, think, act, and talk. What does it mean to act like a man or act like a woman? Ask participants to write these things inside each of the two boxes. (Examples would be for a man to be muscled and strong, not to show emotion, and for women to look pretty, or be gentle.)
3. Ask each group to share some of their answers.
4. Now ask participants to think of the kinds of things that might be said to or done to a person when they do not conform to the instruction to "act like a man" or "act like a woman". They should write these around the outside of the two boxes. NB. Some of these words might be words that would not usually be acceptable for us to use, but as this is a safe space and a training activity participants should feel ok to use them if they wish. Examples of responses might include being called a gay/lesbian, being told to man up, being physically beaten, raped, even murdered.
5. Ask each group to share some answers.
6. Once participants have done this lead a discussion to pull out some of the learning from this activity if you feel it is needed. The following questions provide some prompts to help lead this discussion.

**Q: (Optional) How are men supposed to be different from women?**

**A:** stronger, tougher, in control / nicer, weaker, gossip

**Q: (Optional) What feelings are a 'real man' and a 'real woman' supposed to have?**

**A:** anger, superiority, confidence / fear, sadness, low self esteem

**Q: (Optional) How do 'real men/real women' express their feelings?**

**A:** yelling, fighting, silence/ crying, screaming, hysteria

**Q: (Optional) How are 'real men/real women' supposed to act sexually?**

**A:** aggressive, dominant, with women/follow the man, don't sleep around but also be hot when required

**Q: (Optional) Why is it that many of the worst insults for men involve the implication that they are like a woman/girl?**

**A:** because within this system we are describing, the alpha male is considered the ideal and the norm which people should strive for. This means that while women are expected to stay in their place, if they don't they are still seen as striving towards that ideal. For a man to take on attributes seen as female goes against this idea that masculine is best, and they are seen as trying to be something inferior, which challenges the idea of male superiority and can make alpha males feel vulnerable. This is also why some of the worst abuse is directed at trans women (ie women who were assigned men at birth and who now live as women). Within the patriarchal system they are seen as the worst kind of man because they have rejected masculinity entirely, and again challenge the idea that masculine is superior.

7. **Summary questions** – we would suggest that you ask these one by one to ensure the key learning points of this activity are covered.

**Q: How many people here are in the box all of the time?**

**A:** Likely none of us. We are all different, and as these are stereotypes they are not an accurate representation of who we are. These are expectations placed on us by society and are not realistic.

**Q: What is the easiest thing to do if you have stepped outside the box and these things happen or are said to you? How can you protect yourself?**

**A:** Get back inside the box (i.e start conforming to the stereotypes)

**Q: What could a man do to put himself back inside the box and how easy would it be?**

**A:** He could use some form of violence to confront his aggressors and show his “masculinity”

**Q: If a man stays inside the box does he generally avoid getting called names and harassed etc?**

**A:** Yes, although it is likely that living within these rigid gender stereotypes will have a negative impact on a mans mental health and wellbeing.

**Q: If a woman stays inside the box does she stay safe safe?**

**A:** No, because women inside the box are also at risk of rape and abuse. Being inside the box does not bring safety or power for women. The only benefit being that they may be believed by society more often than women outside the box should these things happen to her.

**Q: What are the influence of the boxes on homophobia and transphobia?**

**A:** People who are seen to reject these boxes threaten the patriarchy and the status of those who benefit from it (ie powerful white, hereosexual, able-bodied, men). Homeosexuality doesn't sit easily within these boxes and threatens the heteronormative idea of men as the dominant partner in a relationship with a woman. Transgender people threaten the patriarchy by rejecting their assigned gender and the roles that come with it, and in particular the idea that someone born male with all the privileges that entails, would not want to continue in this way. Therefore homophobia and transphobia are a response to this fear of anything other than the accepted norm and the implications this has for one's own status. See also the earlier question about the worst insults for men.

**Q: How do these boxes contribute to the existence of domestic and sexual violence?**

**A:** These boxes, and the structures in society that uphold them, mean that we all grow up with ideas about our role in society, including within relationships. So first of all relationships are expected to be heterosexual. Men are supposed to be strong, dominant, decision-makers and discipline-keepers who are allowed and even encouraged to be sexually promiscuous and to not require the consent of female partners. Women are supposed to be passive and are encouraged to seek society's approval mainly through their appearance, and by behaving 'well'. So in its crudest sense this means women should submit to men's advances and are basically there to please them and to facilitate their advancement (by providing children, keeping house etc.). Some men take this to extremes through a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour to 'keep women in their place' (domestic abuse), and by exerting what they see as their male privilege through non-consensual sexual acts, harassment and stalking (sexual violence).

### **'Challenges' Scenarios Activity Instructions**

Scenario cards should be printed and cut out. You may choose to do this in different ways depending on time or group numbers. We have suggested a couple of options below.

**Option A:** Ask each person/pair/group to read out a scenario and say what they think is the problem or issue here, and what could be done. The other participants can then add their own comments, ideas or suggestions.

**Option B:** Participants could look at a selection of scenarios together in larger groups and discuss together what they would do. You could then ask each group if there were any cards they found tricky or could not agree on and discuss these with the larger group. You could also draw attention to any that you as a trainer find particularly interesting or you feel are particularly relevant to the group who are being trained.

Use the 'Challenges' guide on the following pages to help guide the discussion.

**A dad arriving to collect his son finds his son happily playing in a princess dress. He looks shocked.**

**You overhear a couple of the boys telling one of the girls she can't join their activity – playing with cars - as it's "not for girls, only boys". The girl walks away looking glum.**

**One of your colleagues regularly greets the girls coming to the nursery by complimenting them on their dress or hairstyle. She does not do the same to the boys.**

**At the end of the day after nursery a parent tells off her son for something and he begins to cry. As they head towards the door you hear her say, "Don't cry like a wee lassie!"**

**There is a new, male member of staff in the nursery. The children love him because he is great at 'rough and tumble' and is good at getting outside with them and doing adventurous activities, even in bad weather. However, he tends to avoid the home corner as he says it "isn't really my thing".**

**The member of staff responsible for ordering the children's Christmas presents has bought gift bags in blue and pink, and filled them with 'The Brave Boys' Story Book' and 'The Sparkly Girl's Story Book'.**

**Your local councillor visits the nursery and refers to the female staff as 'the girls'.**

## **‘Challenges’ Case Studies Guide**

### Challenging Parental Behaviour or Attitudes

#### **A**

**One of the boys in the nursery enjoys wearing a princess dress which he takes from the dressing up box almost every day when he comes to nursery. Several times recently he has been collected by his dad who though not having expressed it directly to nursery staff is clearly unhappy and embarrassed by what his son is doing.**

**What’s wrong with this?** Research shows that even before their second birthday, children manifest ‘evaluative audience perception’, which means they adjust their behaviour according to whether they think they are being observed, and how they think the observer values their behaviour. This means that very young children will behave in the way they think adults around them approve of<sup>1</sup>. So a negative reaction by a parent or by staff to this boy’s choice of clothing is likely to discourage him from wearing it again. For older children, we know that feelings of shame and guilt become present and will also influence whether they engage in behaviour that has already elicited a negative response.

**What could you do?** The ideal option here is to take this opportunity to speak to the dad about why he feels unhappy with the behaviour, reassure him that this is normal behaviour and share some information about gender and the benefits of letting children choose their own toys and activities at this early stage.

It is helpful to be aware that parents at home may be giving children conflicting messages around gender. It is the role of nursery staff to acknowledge this, yet try whenever possible to give the correct message.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Taking the boy aside and ensuring he is changed into his own clothes in time for Dad’s arrival. The boy is engaging in normal gender expression and creative play. Whatever you decide to do what is really important is that the boy is not made to feel singled out, or that his behaviour is somehow problematic, abnormal, or shameful in any way. One option might be to ensure that all the children get changed before parents start to arrive.

**Unhelpful:** Saying ‘Oh don’t worry, it doesn’t mean he’s gay!’ If Dad has difficulty with LGBT issues this statement may reassure him about his son in the short-term but will reinforce his prejudice that being gay is something to worry about and that sexual orientation can be learned. As a Gender Friendly Nursery we need to avoid doing this and just try to make everyone feel comfortable with gender as a cultural concept and not a biological fact. You could try to point out the benefits of being equally comfortable around girls and boys, and of being adventurous and trying out new things.

**Examples from other nurseries:** A similar situation occurred when a dad questioned his son being ‘allowed’ to push a toy buggy around. The staff member asked the dad how he had taken his son to nursery that day, knowing the answer would be “in a buggy”. She then told him, “he’s just trying to be like you”.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/dev-dev0000548.pdf>

## Challenging Parental Behaviour or Attitudes

### B

**At the end of the day after nursery a parent tells off her son for something and he begins to cry. As they head towards the door you hear her say, “Don’t cry like a wee lassie!”**

**What’s wrong with this?** This kind of statement is harmful in a number of ways. It undermines and devalues girls – both for the boys it is directed at and for the girls that may overhear. It perpetuates stereotypes and the idea that gender is binary, by dividing behaviours into those expected of girls and those expected of boys. And it tells boys and girls that showing emotion isn’t acceptable for boys, which we know contributes to boys having poorer emotional literacy, and the problems this can cause for mental health.

**What could you do?** This is a difficult situation, not least because they are leaving the nursery (possibly already stressed out) and you don’t want to be seen to be calling them back in to correct their behaviour. You might not be able to address it until the next time they are in, when, depending on your relationship with the parent you may be able to remind them that this is a Gender Friendly Nursery and that boys and girls are allowed, and even encouraged, to show their emotions. You could try the following:

- Give an anecdote about a man you know who tried to keep in his emotions because he was told to as a child.
- Talk about how good it feels to have a good old cry – and then mention that it’s important for boys and men too.
- Talk about doing something ‘like a girl’ in a good way rather than in the derogatory way mean by the statement.

If you have already done the groundwork by telling everyone connected with the nursery about being Gender Friendly then it will be a lot easier to have these conversations.

If you are able to catch them before they leave, perhaps you could start by giving the parent some information you had ‘forgotten’ to pass on before, then ask the boy why he is crying and only then address the statement.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** You could let them walk away and never mention it again. This might have the effect of telling the parent, the child and anyone else who has overheard that statements like this are tolerated in this nursery – so even if you can’t catch the parent before they leave, it might be worth reminding anyone who’s listening that it’s ok to cry, whatever your gender.

**Examples from other nurseries:** we don’t have any for this one yet. If you have a great example of how you have dealt with this, please get in touch!

## Challenging Children's Behaviour or Attitudes

**C - You are preparing some materials for an activity while the children enjoy some free play time. You overhear a couple of the boys telling one of the girls she can't play at...as it's "not for girls, only boys". The girl walks away looking glum.**

**What's wrong with this?** This situation will probably be one of many in this girl's life where she is told that her gender limits what she can do. It is really important that every opportunity is taken to challenge this, so that not only she but all children are not limited in this way.

**What could you do?** This would be an ideal opportunity to have a chat with the children about why they think this is 'for boys' and 'not for girls'. Ask them why this is and explore their responses. Explore their perceptions of other roles and give examples of non-gender-stereotypes through books, talking about visitors that have come to the nursery, parents jobs etc. If they tell you that pirates can only be boys you (or a female member of staff) could join in the role play yourself and demonstrate. Involve them in a conversation with the girl about what parts they are playing and what she would like her role to be. Read them a book about pirates that includes girl pirates.

Longer-term you could be thinking about how imaginative play resources are laid out in the nursery and whether themes can be mixed up to encourage everyone to feel this is 'their' area too.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Assigning the girl a typically 'female' role in the game eg. cook, nurse, captured princess! Short-term these will achieve the goal of involving the girl but will continue to perpetuate stereotypes.

**Examples from other nurseries:** A more subtle version of this is where a group of boys may be involved in an activity (eg. crowded round the sandpit) and a girl appears to be interested but is holding back from joining in. Here the simple act of moving in and physically making space for the girl, and encouraging her to join you, can give her the confidence to feel she is entitled to join in the activity. This would be the same for any child that is on the outside of an activity and needs help to join in.

## Challenging Staff Behaviour or Attitudes

**D - You notice that one of your new colleagues regularly greets the girls coming to the nursery by complimenting them on their dress or hairstyle. They do not do the same to the boys.**

**What's wrong with this?** Many of the things we do which promote gender stereotypes can often seem harmless, and are very often unconsciously done. For example greeting a female child by complimenting her on her pretty dress or lovely buns seems like a nice and harmless thing to do. However this is one of the more subtle ways in which as a society we tell girls that they should look nice, and act pleased when they do. Conversely we are telling boys that their appearance is less important but that they please us by being brave, strong or clever. We have looked at how these stereotypes can lead to much bigger problems. Children receive these messages in many areas of their lives and it is the role of a Gender Friendly Nursery to offer children an alternative view.

It can be hard to accept when someone does not share your views, but we are all people after all and it can be challenging to change practices even when we are in total agreement, never mind if we are not.

**What could you do?** One way to address this might be by example. You could make a point of complimenting both girls and boys on their work, attitudes and behaviour. You could also look for opportunities to talk to your colleague about the themes discussed today, and perhaps ask them if they have ever noticed the way they greet the children. You could also show them some of the links and resources suggested in the pack, and tell them that the nursery is Gender Friendly and that many of the staff have changed the way they do things after becoming more aware of the issue.

If you have a system in place whereby all new staff get some form of gender friendly 'awareness' session when they start and have the opportunity to look through the materials, watch some of the media clips and ask questions, then this scenario will become less likely.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Insisting they start complimenting the boys on their appearance! If you compliment a girl on her appearance then make a point of doing this for boys too – however this could get tricky and it would be better to move beyond thinking about children's appearance as a general rule.

**Examples from other nurseries:** The GFN team at one nursery have embarked upon a peer observation project where they and their colleagues have 'collected' the unhelpful words and phrases they have caught themselves using, and then thought through some alternatives. Staff are now enthusiastically supporting each other to keep doing this.

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**E - There is a new, male member of staff in the nursery. The children love him because he is great at 'rough and tumble' and is good at getting outside with them and doing adventurous activities, even in bad weather. However, he tends to avoid the home corner as he says it "isn't really my thing". He is the only male member of staff in the nursery and has only been in post for a few weeks so you don't want to upset him or make him feel uncomfortable.**

**What's wrong with this?** Having a male staff member in the nursery is a great opportunity to broaden conceptions about gender roles, however it's also easy to fall back into stereotypes. Men In Childcare have identified instances where male staff are given stereotypically 'masculine' tasks such as fixing the computer, playing ball games or leading adventurous activities. In some cases, male staff members may still see this as being their role – perhaps because they have been assigned this role in previous posts.

**What could you do?** As with the previous case study, if all new staff are made aware of the nursery's gender friendly aspirations when they start, and given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with some of the materials, then this will be less likely to happen.

If it does, there are a number of points to make to this staff member:

- Staff are required to carry out any of the tasks within their job description
- Home corner might not be your female colleagues' 'thing' either – being a woman doesn't mean you enjoy domestic chores or want to pretend to do them at your work!
- Likewise, all female staff should be involved in outdoor activities and in modelling active behaviours, and may enjoy this as much as he does (make sure no-one is getting 'off the hook' with these activities by allowing him to do them all, which could be seen to justify his reluctance to get involved in the home corner).
- It's really important for all children to see men involved in domestic chores as well as other childcare activities such as reading stories, playing with dolls, changing nappies and giving cuddles. You are a role model for them and you can help boys to be more comfortable with these areas of life, and help girls to not expect to have to carry the burden of household chores by themselves.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Nursery managers have sometimes been heard talking enthusiastically about having men in the nursery because they bring more energy to the role and can get more involved in rough-and-tumble activities than women can. It is really important that managers and colleagues alike, make families aware that people of all genders can carry out all of the roles involved in child care and education.

**Examples from other nurseries:** Staff have reported having to deal with suspicion from parents and carers around men carrying out nappy changing. The response they give is that our child protection policy and procedures are there to ensure children are safe in the nursery, and this applies equally to male and female carers. There should be no question about a man's ability or suitability to carry out any aspect of this work.

## Challenging Staff Behaviour or Attitudes

**F - The member of staff responsible for ordering the children's Christmas presents has bought gift bags in blue and pink, and filled them with 'The Brave Boys' Story Book' and 'The Sparkly Girl's Story Book'.**

**What's wrong with this?** Giving gendered gifts like this perpetuates stereotypes. Restricting colours to pink and blue limits children's choices and reinforces perceptions of what is expected of them because of their gender. Gendered story books have come under criticism for promoting stereotypes so it would be good to avoid these – there are plenty of alternatives out there!

**What could you do?** Your colleague may not have attended the training or be aware of the Gender Friendly Nursery – or may have forgotten and need a gentle reminder. Keeping the GFN on the staff agenda and making all new staff aware should avoid this.

Points to make could include:

- The gift bag colours – why keep dividing the world into blue and pink? What about all the other colours?
- The story books – why divide them into girls' and boys' stories? Why would boys not want to hear stories about girls and vice versa? Boys also need to hear about brave/strong/clever women, and girls also need to hear about gentle, caring men.
- What about any children who might not be identifying as the gender they were assigned at birth? Which bag and book do they get?

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Just swapping things around so girls get blue and boys get pink will probably lead to confusion and a negative reaction from some families. It's better to get away from using those two colours if possible to reflect the fact that every child is different and that there are many different colours in the world.

### **What other nurseries have done:**

Staff from a few nurseries have reported realising that they were giving out gendered presents in the form of themed pencil cases, birthday cards, money banks, or using pink/blue gift bags. One nursery made a simple change: at the start of the year, instead of buying a certain number of 'boys' and 'girls' cards, instead thinking about the children's interests and buying farm/zoo/space/circus cards. They also realised that when they previously gave the boys truck-shaped money banks and the girls cupcake-shaped ones, the boys were actually getting bigger money banks – perhaps a hint about a future gender pay gap?

## Challenging the behaviour or attitudes of nursery partners or visitors

**G - Your local (male) councillor visits the nursery and refers to the female staff as ‘the girls’. What’s wrong with this?**

### **What’s wrong with this?**

There are a number of issues here. Referring to trained professionals in a formal situation as ‘girls/ladies’, or even ‘boys/men/lads’ devalues the work they do and their training and professionalism and reduces them to a gender. It would be the same if said by a boss in a formal or professional situation, but might not matter in an informal, peer group situation such as planning a night out with friends, where everyone in the group feels equal in the relationship and is comfortable with the word. You may also hear this from parents and carers.

Additionally, it encourages an assumption that this is women’s work – and if children overhear it, it can reinforce the stereotypes and undo some of the good work going on in the nursery.

Finally, using ‘girl’ to refer to a grown woman can be seen as infantilising, just as calling a man a ‘boy’ would be (unless, as mentioned, within a peer group). The key here is the power imbalance: an elected member or a boss is not your workplace peer, and would not expect you to call them a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ in that setting, so why would it be acceptable for them to do so?

### **What could you do?**

In some of the examples outlined above there is already a power imbalance, and staff may not feel empowered to challenge this person. It may be necessary for the head teacher or manager to deal with this by explaining what is appropriate. In others, if a parent has done this, the nearest staff member may feel they can say something – perhaps in a light-hearted way such as, “I haven’t been called a girl since my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday!”

Forward planning: as with other case studies, it helps to have thought this through before it happens and have put policies and procedures in place. Your Gender Friendly policy could include a section on how staff should be referred to, and all new families could be told clearly what is expected. This will be reinforced by staff referring to each other appropriately whenever anyone else is present.

**What would be a really *unhelpful* thing to do?** Take the attitude that ‘it’s just a word!’ Remember the Allport scale which showed us how seemingly harmless words and phrases form part of a sliding scale. If we tolerate these then we pave the way for outright discrimination, prejudice and criminal acts.

**Examples from other nurseries:** One nursery head teacher is very clear that her staff are not ‘ladies’ or ‘girls’. If she hears parents referring to the staff this way, she is comfortable about correcting them with ‘child development officers’ or ‘your child’s special person’ (for key workers)