

#mityey

Men In The Early Years

Case study

Nathan Sweetman, nursery manager



Toad Hall Nursery Group run 13 nurseries across the South East of England and are committed to recruiting men in childcare. Children need both male and female positive role models to thrive in their early years, and Toad Hall work hard to increase the numbers of men in their childcare settings.

In 2015, Toad Hall launched a networking group called Men in Early Years which brings together men from different childcare settings to discuss ideas and challenges. This exciting movement for change challenges gender stereotypes and promotes the benefits of men in childcare. It's promising to see that attitudes are beginning to change and a growing number of men are opting to work in nurseries, such as Toad Hall Nursery Manager Nathan Sweetman.

Nathan has a wealth of experience working in childcare, including time as a Nursery Nurse, Deputy Manager and Nursery Manager. We asked him about why he is so passionate about the vital role men play in a childcare environment.

What do you most enjoy about working in early years?

I like the fact that every day is different; one day we could be making a space ship and travelling to Mars, and the next day enjoying a bear hunt in the garden. What other job in the world would allow you to do that?

Childcare can be a challenging environment - what do you enjoy the least?

It's difficult to think of anything I don't enjoy! It's amazing to watch children develop, such as a little one taking their first steps or saying their first words, but I also love seeing children learning the difference between a square and a rectangle. For me the real magic is some of the things the children say, and how they can make sense of the world.

Why do you think so few men work in the field of childcare?

I think there are so few men in the nursery field for several reasons. It's long hours and basic pay at nursery staff level, and it can be a tough decision to tell all your friends and family that you are going to work with children. People's views can be quite hurtful and put you off from doing what's often perceived as a "girl's job".

If you could change one thing to get more men into early years, what would it be?

I would change the status of the nursery nurse to the level of a teacher. Teachers are an important part of every child's life, and it is acceptable to have both male and female teachers; nobody has any negative comments about their choice of profession. But if you are a male early years practitioner you are just as important to every child's development and learning.

What advice would you give to a man considering a career in early years?

My advice is simple: don't do it for the money but do it for the love of your job. It's the most rewarding role you will ever have.

To find out more about Toad Hall Nursery Group's work promoting men in childcare, visit www.toadhall-nursery.co.uk/nursery-jobs/men-in-early-years/.