

# Girls and boys

Training and discussion ideas for exploring gender and gender stereotypes, linked to this month's Feature on single sex work.

## 1 Making a statement

### Sharing opinions on gender stereotypes.

Cut out the statements below and place them in a box. Ask participants to pick out one statement at a time (without looking) and read it out to the group. They then give an opinion about the statement. Use this as a starting point to discuss issues about men, women, relationships and society.

**Tips** You can adapt this game according to the group you are working with. For example, you may decide some questions are too old for the group you are working with. Similarly, if the group members have poor literacy skills or do not like reading aloud, the youth worker can read out the statements for the group members.

### Possible statements:

- Men are better cooks than women
- Women are more caring than men
- Some women wear clothes that ask for trouble
- Assertive women are considered to be aggressive
- It is more acceptable for men to swear than women
- Women are better listeners than men
- A man shouldn't cry
- Men should always pay for their partners when they go out
- Women just aren't mechanically minded
- Men are violent
- Women can be mentally and emotionally stronger than men
- It is easier to talk to women about personal things than it is to talk to men
- Men should protect women
- Women like being whistled at by men
- Women should be able to fight on the frontline in wars if they choose to
- Men find it hard to express their feelings
- Women work harder for their money than men
- Girls grow up faster than boys
- Men don't listen to women
- Men have uncontrollable sexual urges

## 2 Girls' work/ Boys' work

### Gender stereotyping in paid and unpaid work.

**You will need:** 20-30 minutes; a large space; 3 A4 cards with 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Don't know'; a prepared list of controversial statements.

Place 'Agree' and 'Disagree' cards at each end of the room and the 'Don't know' card in the middle.

Ask the group to listen to a statement and then move to the area of the room that best reflects their opinion of the statement. Make observations on where participants are standing and the balance in the room. Encourage group members to share their opinions and facilitate a group discussion. Ask them to try to persuade someone from the other side to join them.

When discussion subsides, sum up the main points raised and any you feel have been missed, read out the next statement and repeat. Review questions could include:

- How easy was it to decide where to stand?
- Did you feel any pressure in making your choice?... if so, can you say why that was?
- Were you surprised by anything?

### Possible statements:

- Women have as much right as men to be fighting soldiers! fire fighters/astronauts.
- Girls make good mechanics/engineers.
- Girls and boys should do the same household chores.
- It isn't as important for a girl to go to university as a boy.
- In our house the chores are split evenly between us all.
- Women make excellent managers at work.
- The world would be a better place if women ran the military forces.
- This country would be a better place to live in if there were more women in parliament.
- Men are excellent child carers.
- Women are better cooks than men.



### 3 My favourite advert

Raising awareness of how advertising portrays girls and women.

**You will need:** 40-60 minutes; a wide selection of magazines and newspapers; flip chart paper, felt pen and glue.

Sit in a circle with the magazines and newspapers in the centre. Tell everyone that they have 15 minutes to look through the magazines to choose their favourite advert. Explain that they will share their advert with the group and will be expected to give reasons for their choice.

After 15 minutes bring the group together to share their favourite adverts in turn. Once an advert has been shared, glue it on the flip chart paper and on another sheet write the reasons why this advert was chosen. Eventually you will have a page of adverts and a page of statements. Then facilitate a group discussion using the group's source material. Review questions could include:

- Are there any similarities in the chosen ads?
- Is there a group favourite?.., if so, what made it the favourite?

### 4 Watching TV

A critical review of TV soaps.

**You will need:** 40-60 minutes; a TV, flip chart paper, blu-tac and a felt pen; a pen, piece of paper and a chair each.

Start with a quick think about the stereotypical woman. Record words on flip chart paper and put the sheet on the wall as a reference. Give everyone pen and paper, asking them to divide it in two and write 'stereotypical' - or 'S' - on one half and 'un-stereotypical' - or 'U' - on the other half. Explain that you want them to watch the soap and to make a tick on the appropriate half of the paper every time a character acts in a stereotypical or un-stereotypical way. If any action really stands out ask them to note it. Sit back and watch the soap.

At the end of the showing, ask everyone to add up their 'S' and 'U' ticks. Record the totals and discuss the 'result'. Review questions could include:

- How were the main male/female characters portrayed?
- What message does this send out to young men and women?
- How would you like to see characters portrayed?

Activities are adapted from materials in **Boys2Men** (Activity 1) and **Body, Mind & Society** (Activities 2-4) both published by UK Youth.

#### Boys2Men

A guide to working with young men and running a fatherhood programme.

Boys2Men works through fatherhood issues; opens up broader subjects such as sexuality; sexual health; responsibility; relationships and masculinity. There is an

extensive range of activities including informative fun games; thought provoking discussion ideas; entertaining quizzes and useful self-evaluation activities



#### Body, Mind & Society

A comprehensive and accessible resource concerned with nurturing the physical and mental health needs of young women. The publication contains over 70 activities to use in promoting young women's levels of confidence and sense of identity, provides information on eating disorders and healthy eating, explores external pressures such as the media, education, family or friends and encourages young women to analyse what influences them and articulate their feelings constructively.

**visit** ▶ to the UK Youth storefront for details on both publications and to order.



NETWORK UPDATE

YOUTH VOICE

ACCREDITATION

FEATURES

ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE

NEED TO KNOW