

# Transgender lessons for two-year-olds: Drag queens drafted into nursery schools to teach children about sexual diversity

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Drag Queen Story Time, Bristol  
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Drag queens are being brought into taxpayer-funded nursery schools so that children as young as two can learn about transgender issues.

The cross-dressers are reading nursery rhymes and singing specially adapted songs ‘to teach children about LGBT tolerance’.

Nursery bosses say the sessions are needed so that children can ‘see people who defy rigid gender restrictions’ and grow up to combat hate crime.

They want to target two and three-year-olds to influence them early, as they say at this age children have not yet developed any discriminatory ‘isms’.

The ‘performances’ are the brainchild of Thomas Canham, a Bristol University law graduate and part-time cross-dresser who dismisses traditional notions of masculinity as ‘meaningless’.



Drag queens at DQST include Donna La Mode, who wears a ginger wig and is described as ‘the Fairy Queen of the drag world’, and ‘hyperactive’ Aida

But critics last night said the sessions could ‘blind impressionable children of two and three to one of the most basic facts of human existence’.

Leading child psychotherapist Dilys Daws, co-author of the book *Finding Your Way With Your Baby*, feared they could sow the seeds of confusion in young children about their own sexual identity, with long-term consequences.

She said: ‘There’s this idea that’s sweeping the country that being transgender is an “ordinary situation”. It’s getting so much publicity that it’s getting children thinking that they might be transgender, when it otherwise wouldn’t have occurred to them.



The aim of Drag Queen Story Times is, according to its website ‘we aim to capture the imagination and fun of the gender fluidity of childhood while giving children a glamorous, positive unabashedly queer role model’

‘But it’s perfectly normal for most young children to think about being the opposite sex. It’s probably because they

are identifying with a parent or sibling.'

Norman Wells, director of the Family Education Trust, said: 'One of the most disturbing things about the transgender agenda is the way that it tries to distort our perception of reality and deny something as fundamental as the distinction between male and female.'

Mr Canham's organisation Drag Queen Story Time (DQST) is holding sessions at seven nurseries run by the London Early Years Foundation over the winter. If deemed successful, they will be rolled out across all the nursery's 37 sites.

The chain receives taxpayer cash as many of its children qualify for Government-funded childcare. Besides reading to the children, sessions so far have included a 'Halloween drag disco', face painting and 'high tea'.

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Mr Canham, 26, started his organisation earlier this year after reading about a similar outfit in the US. He said: 'Once you think about the idea – which is essentially drag queens reading stories to children – it all makes perfect sense.

'Ultimately, they are performers, they're larger than life! It's exactly what children want.'



Just last week we revealed how the NHS is planning on training up hundreds of HPs as transgender 'champions'

He said he wanted to create a 'safe space' where adults or children would not be criticised for 'wearing a dress'. His drag queens had 'complete control' over their performances, he added.

'They can include, for example, drag queen references within songs. So if you're doing something like Wheels On The Bus, you can sing, "The skirt on the drag queen goes swish, swish, swish."

'The parents love it, and the children love it too – especially when you've got a six-year-old boy there in a princess dress which he isn't allowed to wear at home because his dad doesn't like it.'

His drag queens also had 'a library with books which focus on LGBT rights, feminist fairy tales and trans-rights issues,' said Mr Canham, the son of a British Army soldier.

'On trans-themes, we've got a book called Introducing Teddy where the teddy realises she's a girl teddy, not a boy teddy, and is worried her owner won't like her any more. It's a cute book,' he said.



In August, the BBC got a class to ditch everything that defined boys as boys and girls as girls – including separate loos

He said most venues 'give us free reign' but noted that London Early Years Foundation 'have requested we focus on books they already have at their nurseries'.

June O'Sullivan, chief executive of LEYF, said: 'By providing spaces in which children are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions, it allows them to imagine the world in which people can present [themselves] as they wish.'

She told BBC London radio it was good to expose very young children to men who dress as women, 'because children are very open until about three'.

'At three they begin to absorb all the "isms" that adults have developed very effectively,' she explained.

Both Mr Canham and Ms O'Sullivan said the storytelling sessions were also a way of getting parents to realise transvestites and transsexuals were 'people just like you'.

Greg Stewart Lane, manager of the chain's Soho nursery in Central London, which hosted the first event on Halloween, said they were motivated by a recent increase in the number of hate crimes in England and Wales.

Reported hate crimes rose 29 per cent in the last year, Home Office figures show, although only one in six was considered serious enough for a suspect to be charged.