

## Plastic waste at nursery

**We all have a part to play in ensuring that our world is sustainable and fit for future generations.**

COVID-19 has had both positive and negative indirect effects on the environment. Travel restrictions have led to improvements in aspects such as air quality and less environmental noise, however, due to increased household waste, everyone is being urged more than ever to recycle.

As an early years professional, you could start by reflecting on your practice, as well as teaching children about looking after our environment. Take some time over the next week to identify and list the single-use plastics and other waste at your nursery that could be re-used in some way or recycled. Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled - this includes items such as bags, straws, water bottles and most food packaging



- Consider how you can replace or make more conscious purchasing decisions for each item.
- Some of this may be unavoidable of course, but you could look at trying to reduce waste wherever possible, reusing items where possible or finding another use for things that might otherwise be thrown away. For example, using food packaging for junk modelling or old sheets and towels cut up as cleaning cloths and the setting could invest in things like biodegradable nappy bags.

For example, here are some creative ideas for recycling plastic bottles, why not try some of these in your setting;

- Storage cups - create recycled plastic bottle cups which can be used for a variety of purposes. Chop the top off bottles and be sure to cover the rough edge with something to make it safe, for example, tape and then use these to store pens, pencils or paintbrushes in
- Decorations - cut the bottom off the plastic bottle (the part with bumps that looks like a flower). These can be painted and hung up to make decorations or arranged and used as mobiles over changing areas
- Post trays - chop the top off a 2ltr plastic bottle and again secure the rough edge with tape. These could be fasted to a wall or stood upright on a table with children's names on where pictures or letters can be stored ready to take home. The same could be done in the staff room for staff

- Growing things - make a DIY plastic bottle planter or reuse a range of plastic bottles by creating a vertical garden where bottles are turned on their side with a hole cut out and filled with compost and seeds
- Watering things - upcycle laundry detergent bottles by cleaning them thoroughly and adding holes to the lids to turn these into watering cans for the children
- Make sensory bottles for children filled with water, biodegradable glitter and food colouring
- Use bottles to play outdoor games such as skittles.