



# Gender equal play

in early learning and childcare



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# Introduction

Children's experience of childhood and play is becoming more gendered and polarised between girls and boys, with products such as toys, books, online resources and clothes increasingly being produced and marketed along gender lines<sup>1</sup>. Academic research, including the work of Dr Nancy Lombard from Glasgow Caledonian University<sup>2</sup>, highlights the negative impact on all children of gender stereotyping and the important role that early learning and childcare (ELC) can have in positively promoting gender equality. This resource has been co-produced by the Care Inspectorate and Zero Tolerance in order to help practitioners enhance gender equality for children across all ELC settings. As part of this collaborative project, we worked in partnership with other organisations including Play Scotland, Education Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Improvement and the Scottish Childminding Association.

The benefits for children and society from the ELC workforce becoming more gender balanced is part of promoting gender equality. The current expansion of funded ELC means that many more staff are needed, which provides an unprecedented opportunity. This resource is therefore intended to complement the Scottish Government's ongoing activity to attract more males to join the workforce, supported by key partners such as Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council. The Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy, for the prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls, is supported by this publication. It also meets the Public Sector Equality Duty, which applies to all public services in Scotland.

While most people agree that gender equality is a good idea, within ELC services there is a need for advice and guidance for practitioners on how to support gender equality and avoid harmful stereotyping in their practice. The resource therefore offers practical and helpful tips on how to promote gender equality in an accessible way. As well as sharing practice examples from a range of different settings, we also advise on other practice resources available to services, such as children's books, toys and activities, training and further reading.

In 2013 Zero Tolerance published [Just like a Child – A guide for childcare professionals, a guide for childcare professionals on respecting gender equality in the early years](#) and in 2016 [The Default Setting: What parents say about gender stereotyping in their children's early years](#). In co-producing this resource, we wanted to not only provide an update to 'Just like a Child', but also to highlight a range of practice examples narrated by practitioners. This online resource adopts a similar format to other Care Inspectorate publications intended to encourage improvement and innovation across all ELC provision, such as [My World Outdoors](#) and [Our Creative Journey](#). In common with these

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<sup>1</sup> Peer Toy Play as a Gateway to Children's Gender Flexibility: The Effect of (Counter) Stereotypic Portrayals of Peers in Children's Magazines, in Sex Roles Journal of Research, Spinner L, Cameron L, Calogero R, 2018.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6096659/>

<sup>2</sup> Young people's views on violence against women, Dr Nancy Lombard, Lecturer, Napier University, Edinburgh, 2012:

<https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/videos/young-peoples-views-violence-against-women-nancy-lombard>

other publications, for each practice example the relevant 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators are referenced. By featuring the direct experience of children and highlighting the positive impact practitioners can have on their outcomes, we are also modelling Scotland's new [Health and Social Care Standards](#).

## The purpose of this guide

In the early years, children begin to learn about gender roles and expectations, and will pick up messages from their surrounding environment about what is perceived as 'normal' for boys and girls. They are influenced by their environment and the adults around them. They learn from everything they see, hear and do. This shapes how they see themselves and others as they grow up and supports them to follow their own wishes and expressions of identity.

It is never too early to question what is seen as 'normal' or what is traditionally expected of boys and girls in our society. In fact, doing so from a very young age helps to protect children from the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination as they grow into adults.

Research conducted in Scotland by Zero Tolerance found that nine out of ten parents agreed that it was important to treat boys and girls the same in early childhood<sup>3</sup>. Yet outdated gender stereotypes remain common in our society and the lack of awareness about how to challenge these harmful patterns is a fundamental obstacle to providing Scottish children with an equal start in life.

ELC practitioners are in a unique and important position to influence children's development. They also have the capacity to create environments that encourage equal and respectful relationships, break down harmful gender norms and promote gender equality to ensure that children are free from limiting gender stereotypes.

This resource has been developed for early years educators and it will also be helpful for parents, and anyone working with young children. It explains the importance of challenging gender stereotyping in the early years and provides ideas and examples of existing practice from across Scotland.

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<sup>3</sup> The Default Setting: what parents say about gender stereotyping in their children's early years, Zero Tolerance, Edinburgh, 2016.

# What are gender stereotypes and why does it matter?

## What is a stereotype?

Gender stereotyping is a deep-rooted and common issue. Stereotypes perpetuate inequality and reinforce preconceptions about what a person will like or how they will behave, simply because they belong to a particular group. When it comes to gender, stereotypes are based on an assumption that all boys will be the same and like the same things, and all girls will be the same and like the same things. This puts pressure on boys and girls to conform to certain notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' which can really limit and restrict young children. Stereotypes influence the activities children engage in, their interests and skills – and, ultimately, the roles they take in society as adults.<sup>4</sup>

## Examples of common stereotypes and perceived gender roles

	BOYS	GIRLS
EXPECTATION	Strong, adventurous, practical, rough, leader, non-emotional 'boys don't cry', like to get dirty, aggressive, independent, dominant, decisive, logical, unemotional, assertive, tough, stoic, active, worldly, boisterous, brave, challenging, loud.	Sensitive, caring, vain, gentle and 'proper', weak, dependant, passive, kind, intuitive, submissive, emotional, illogical, talkative, indecisive, giving, quiet.
SOCIALISATION	Toys focused on: action, construction, technology, fighting and conquering.  Social reinforcement through: social media, TV, authority figures (parents and carers).	Toys focused on: baby dolls, cooking, princesses, art and craft.  Social reinforcement through: social media, TV, authority figures (parents and carers).
GENDER ROLES	Men must be physically strong, aggression is an acceptable part of male behaviour, a willingness to take risks (superheroes / action figures).	Women are expected to highly value appearance (being pretty), being compliant (nice, sweet, gentle), submissive roles (princesses).

<sup>4</sup> Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, Melbourne, 2015.

## **Why does avoiding gender stereotyping matter in the early years?**

A gender equality approach means helping children to achieve and aspire. We want children to be whoever they want to be and make them feel equally comfortable playing football or taking dance classes and aspiring to a wide variety of careers and pathways.

Breaking down gender stereotypes from a young age helps to stop the negative consequences of inequality and discrimination as it can support children grow into adults who aren't limited by expectations based on their sex. By providing children with environments that encourage non-gendered norms and expectations, children can feel more accepted and celebrated for their individuality. They can broaden their aspirations and be more open to a wide range of opportunities.

### **Preventing violence against women**

Gender inequality is a root cause of violence against women and girls, and despite the many advances being made there remain persistent inequalities between men and women.<sup>5</sup> Evidence shows that levels of violence against women are significantly and consistently higher in societies, communities and relationships where there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women.<sup>6</sup> It is vital that ELC practitioners, parents and carers throughout all stages of the early learner journey are equipped to challenge rigid and harmful gender stereotypes.

## **What are the harms of gender stereotyping in the early years?**

### **Impact of gender stereotyping on health and wellbeing**

Rigid gender norms and gender stereotyping have a negative impact on children's outcomes and can lead to poor mental health, self-esteem and body image. The damaging effects of these early gender stereotypes also have an impact on children later in life. This includes contributing to girls being at risk of leaving school early, dropping out of sports, eating disorders, early pregnancy, HIV and sexually transmitted infection, exposure to different forms of violence against women, and depression. Because of our social gender norms, there is a stereotype that boys and men should not express their emotions as it makes them too feminine, less manly or weak, and consequently they may try to appear emotionally strong when facing difficult life events. This has an impact on their mental health. In Scotland in 2016<sup>7</sup> the suicide rate for men was more than two-and-a-half times that for women.

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<sup>5</sup> Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, 2018: <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/04/5766/0>

<sup>6</sup> Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It, UN Partners for Prevention, 2013: <http://www.partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/resources/p4p-report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Suicide Statistics for Scotland Update of Trends to 2016, NHS Information Services Division, 2017: [www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Public-Health/Publications/2017-08-02/2017-08-02-Suicide-Summary.pdf](http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Public-Health/Publications/2017-08-02/2017-08-02-Suicide-Summary.pdf)

Moreover, reinforcing a stereotype that boys need to be strong encourages them to engage in risky behaviour like smoking, drinking and using drugs at an earlier age as well as engage in, and be the victims of, physical violence to a much greater extent than girls. Boys and men die more frequently from unintentional injuries and suicide, and their life expectancy is shorter than that of women.<sup>8</sup> Children are also bullied for not meeting stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a boy or a girl; and children who do not conform to gender stereotypes may experience negative feelings about themselves.

### Impact of gender stereotyping on learner pathways and career choices

One of the harmful impacts of gender stereotyping is that they limit how children imagine their futures. Stereotypes can convince children that certain options are open to them while others are not. This early influence has long-term consequences first in school subject choice and later in career choice. This might take the form of little girls feeling like they cannot be interested in block play and cars or pursue a career as a firefighter and little boys feeling like they should not show nurturing skills or pursue a career in nursing - or ELC.

*"Success will be marked by more girls going into technology and more boys going into childcare."*

Naomi Eisenstadt, the Scottish Government's anti-poverty adviser.<sup>9</sup>

To hear some personal examples of what it's like living with gender stereotypes listen to: [Tony Porter at TEDWomen](#) "Don't act like a man" and Ria Chinchankar at TEDxYouth [Gender Roles in Society](#).

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<sup>8</sup> It Begins at 10: How Gender Expectations Shape Early Adolescence Around the World, Robert W. Blum, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., Kristin Mmari, Dr.P.H., M.A. \*, and Caroline Moreau, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H. Journal of Adolescent Health, 2017:

[https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(17\)30355-5/pdf](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(17)30355-5/pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/eisenstadt-report-middle-class-told-to-be-proud-if-children-get-an-apprenticeship-0xhz3pqmk>



# How to challenge gender stereotyping

## Start with yourself

It is important to be aware of the ways in which gender may create unequal opportunities or experiences for children in your care. Personal reflection is a great start in identifying ways in which you can begin to break down stereotypes and foster an inclusive ELC setting. Gender roles and stereotypes are reinforced through a number of societal channels – toys, sports and games, clothes, books, the media, education, teachers and families. It is also important to remember that we all hold unconscious bias about gender. Being aware of our own biases and how they influence our behaviour and noticing stereotypes when they are present is an important step to challenging gender stereotypes.

In an experiment, adult participants were shown a video of a baby kicking and rolling about in a cot. One group of participants saw the baby dressed in pink and the other group saw exactly the same baby dressed in blue. The baby's movements were identical for the two groups. When asked to describe what they saw, the group of participants who watched the baby dressed in pink described the infant as delicate and graceful, while those who saw the baby dressed in blue described the same movements as more vigorous, with some even going as far as to suggest that the baby would become a champion footballer!<sup>10</sup>

In another experiment in Swedish preschools, teachers were required to review videotapes of themselves with the children, to identify subtle differences in the way they interacted with boys and girls. Many found that they used more words, and more complex sentences, with girls. And when helping children in the cloakroom they were assisting boys to get dressed more than girls and expected girls to dress themselves.<sup>11</sup>

Try reflecting on the questions below by yourself or with a co-worker.

- What are some of my own biases, values and belief systems in relation to gender?
- How might these gender values / beliefs influence the way I interact with children? Do I engage differently with boys and girls?
- How can I model a positive attitude to gender equality in my everyday activities, actions and conversations with children? What am I already doing?
- How can I promote and strengthen gender equality in my practice?

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<sup>10</sup> A Unique Child: Cognitive Development – Boys and girls, Kyra Karmiloff and Annette Karmiloff-Smith, 2011

<sup>11</sup> New York Times newspaper, 24/3/2018:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/world/europe/sweden-gender-neutral-preschools.html>

When considering if something is a gendered stereotype try asking:

- would this be the same for either gender?
- why is it like that? - is it only like that because it always has been?
- is that fair? - does it strike you as equal and similar? Or the opposite?

*"I don't know if it's just our culture, or whether it's a boy thing, that they find it very hard to pick up a book or go to a film if a girl is the central character. I don't know where that comes from, but it worries me because it makes it harder for girls to be equal. We do still have those problems. It does concern me."*

Lauren Child author-illustrator and the Waterstones Children's Laureate for 2017-19.

For more information check: Education Scotland - [Reflective questions to support self-evaluation in the area of gender equality](#) - drawn up by Dr Nancy Lombard. These questions are written for schools but are also relevant to ELC.

### **Audit your environment and resources**

Look at your surroundings and do a 'gender' audit of your play area.

- Are certain areas of the room favoured by one gender in particular? If so, talk to the children about why they like or don't like playing there; they may think that a space is 'meant for boys' or 'meant for girls'. If that's the case, talk to the children about why everyone can play in any area and with any toy. You could consider blending areas and resources across the playroom to encourage use.
- Think about how you organise the space. The presence of a 'home corner' and a block area can unconsciously segregate girls and boys. You could decorate the home corner in greens, reds, yellows, blues and oranges instead of pink or pastel colours, which may suggest that the area is for girls only.
- Display posters that show adults in non-stereotypical jobs, for example female firefighters, pilots or politicians, male ballet dancers, nurses or ELC practitioners. This will help prompt all children to play in all areas.
- Have more than one 'male' and 'female' doll in the dressing up play space or home corner, as well as dolls of different ages and ethnicities.
- Review materials and images used with children to make sure they include gender diversity, non-stereotypical images and diverse family structures, such as single or same sex parents.
- Make sure that parents send children to the service in practical clothing, so they can climb and run.



- Check through the resources in your nursery - toys and books. Do they promote particular ways of being girls or boys/men or women? Children's story books will often feature more male than female characters, or no female characters at all. Aiming for an equal balance will mean all children have a wide range of role models.
- Ensure dressing up and role play props offer variety and are not limited to costumes that may be aimed specifically at boys or girls. Consider moving from providing ready-made superhero or princess costumes to providing a variety of general clothes that children can use creatively to dress up.
- Have a variety of open-ended resources that are not perceived as gender specific – for example loose parts play, paints and crafts that inspire creativity and excite all children to play with them. Most activities and toys should be 'gender neutral'.

In-depth analysis of the 100 most popular children's picture books of 2017, shows that male characters are twice as likely to take leading roles in children's picture books and are given far more speaking parts than females. Among other creatures featured in books that are not human, the gender bias is even more marked. Whenever an author revealed a creature's sex, it was 73% more likely to be male than female.<sup>12</sup> To learn more, watch the Rebel Girls [video](#).

Watch this video on gender, children's toys, and social inequality [Beyond the Blue and Pink Toy Divide – TEDx talk](#) by Elizabeth Sweet . For more information on resources for children, see Appendix 2.

### Think about your language and interactions with children

Research about education shows that boys are praised more than girls for sharing correct knowledge, and wrong answers provided by boys are likely to be overlooked. In contrast, girls are more often criticised for incorrect answers, and teachers tend to provide less praise for correct answers given by girls. From this, an expectation arises that boys' knowledge is more highly valued than that of girls, which can convince girls that they are less competent than boys.<sup>13</sup>

### Improve your gender-neutral language skills

The words we use to communicate influence how we think and act. Think about whether what you say to the children reinforces gender stereotypes, and if so, use more neutral and inclusive language. This will support their understanding that everyone can do or like anything, regardless of gender. Here are a few suggestions.

<sup>12</sup> Must monsters always be male? Huge gender bias revealed in children's books, The Guardian newspaper 21/1/2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/21/childrens-books-sexism-monster-in-your-kids-book-is-male>

<sup>13</sup> 6 Ways You Can Promote Gender Equality In Your Classroom, Teach Thought website, 2017:

<https://www.teachthought.com/education/6-ways-can-promote-gender-equality-classroom/>

- Try greeting the children with 'hello everyone' or 'children' instead of 'hello boys and girls'.
- Use more inclusive pronouns – say 'they' or 'them' or 'theirs' instead of 'she' or 'him' or 'hers'.
- Compliment a girl because she has achieved something and not because of how she looks; try a compliment such as 'I like your skipping' and not only comments on her appearance such as 'I like your hair.'
- Use the same words of flattery for girls and boys.
- Tell boys it's OK to be scared, upset or emotional .
- Tell girls it's OK to get angry and to express this in a healthy way.
- Praise all children when they share and display co-operative behaviour with other children.

Substitute sexist language for inclusive synonyms.

- 'Mankind' becomes 'humanity', 'people' or 'human beings'.
- 'Man's achievements' become 'human achievements'.
- 'Man-made' becomes 'synthetic', 'manufactured' or 'machine-made'.
- 'The common man' becomes 'the average person' or 'ordinary people'.
- 'Mr Squirrel' becomes 'squirrel'.

It is usually equally easy to be non-specific in terms of gender, sometimes it's even easier because:

- 'male nurse' becomes 'nurse'
- 'woman doctor' becomes 'doctor'
- 'chairman', 'fireman', 'policeman', 'postman' and so on, becomes 'chair' or 'chairperson', 'firefighter', 'police officer' or 'postal worker'.

You can reflect on the questions below in pairs/trios in a supporting, trusting environment.

- Think about whether you treat girls and boys who are crying the same – why?
- Think about whether you treat disruptive behaviour of boys and girls differently – why?
- Think about whether you interact more with boys or girls – why?

### **Support the children by helping them think about their language**

Talk to children about how they understand gender and sexism. Young children may have strong ideas that a particular toy or behaviour is not appropriate for their gender. When a child says that something is 'not for girls' or 'not for boys' ask them why not and explore this with them.

Challenge behaviour which shows signs of gender discrimination, for example:

- using gender as an insult, like telling someone they 'throw like a girl'
- putting down other children because of their choice of clothing or toy
- if someone says 'girls/boys shouldn't/can't do that', ask why?

Turn the challenge into a discussion instead of a criticism. Ask them why they think that way. What's wrong with that toy choice? Explain why stereotypical or prejudiced comments are unacceptable – don't just say something's 'rude'. Try to get deeper into why your children feel that way and it can help them to develop critical thoughts of their own. It will help guide them towards seeing things more equally.

However, in having these conversations, make sure you don't reinforce stereotypes by introducing them to children who may not yet have picked up that society has differing expectations of boys and girls.

This [video](#) shows how using 'like a girl' can be turned into a positive affirmation.

### **A few tips on planning and organising role play and storytelling activities**

Here are a few suggestions on what you can do to improve and develop what you are currently doing in terms of free play and imaginative play.

- Get children who are willing to re-tell nursery rhymes or fairy tales in a more gender equal manner – ask them how this feels.
- Suggest alternative storylines and ideas for children's play and storytelling. The rigidly defined gender roles in many children's TV programmes and films are very influential. You could suggest new storylines with heroic princesses who rescue princes or cast girls as builders or dragons and boys in caring, mediating and domestic roles.
- Shape the play by joining in and use your role to challenge children's assumptions. If you are a woman, you could take on the role of a scientist or explorer or astronaut or even the local doctor. If you are a man you could encourage boys to try co-operative games or take on the role of nurturing parent or nurse.
- For dressing up games, make it clear that all the children can dress up in whatever clothes they choose and avoid assuming that boys want to be pirates and girls princesses.

[This powerful film](#), Inspiring the Future: Redraw the Balance, from MullenLowe London provocatively captures how, early on in their education, children already define career opportunities as male and female. Find out more at: <http://inspiringthefuture.org>

For ideas on activities exploring gender roles with young children follow these links: [Boys Can't Do That!: 3 Activities for Exploring Gender Roles with Young Children](#) and [Breaking the Mould](#): challenging gender stereotypes – lesson plans.

## **You can develop a gender equality policy**

The suggestions above are written for any practitioner to reflect on what more they can do to improve their practice. We also recommend services to develop and implement a gender equality policy. A policy will help ensure consistency of practice across a service to ensure all practitioners understand what is expected of them and the role everyone involved in the service can play in enhancing gender equality. It also makes a statement to parents and potential parents around what your service is about – its values and commitments. It will also help practitioners to think about their role, contribution and practice.

What does a Gender Equality Policy look like?

- A statement that says that you are an inclusive service.
- A statement that makes clear your commitment to gender equality and boys and girls having the same opportunities.
- Examples of the ways in which practitioners interact with children.

Organisations can adapt and tailor policy examples to their individual service or can strengthen current and existing policy by adding a few additional sentences. For example, an Equality and Diversity/Inclusion policy could be strengthened by adding a sentence about actively promoting positive attitudes and practices that support gender equality. You may also want to add a paragraph/point to articulate your commitment under your service's aims and objectives. You will also need to consider what approach you will take to ensuring that staff and parents are involved in the process and any relevant training required. For an example of Gender Equality Policy see Appendix 3 at the back of this resource.

## **Talk to colleagues, parents and carers**

Zero Tolerance's research *The Default Setting: What parents say about gender stereotyping in their children's early years* (2016) suggests there is considerable appetite to look at the role that parents can play, particularly as the primary caregivers for young people in shaping healthy attitudes towards gender and violence. Their role in developing social attitudes towards gender should be recognised when developing an approach to tackling gender inequality.

Parents and carers usually have the most one to one contact with their children and enabling them to challenge gender stereotyping offers a unique opportunity to help prevent violence against women.<sup>14</sup> Parents and carers can play an important role by modelling respect and equality in relationships; challenging rigid and harmful gender stereotypes; and promoting diverse interests, opportunities and experiences for all children.

If you are a practitioner:

- make sure all visitors are aware of your institution's Gender Equality policy and recognise their role in tackling stereotypes
- support your colleagues to respond consistently to sexist comments from parents and children
- make sure no communications with parents and carers imply caring duties are solely women's responsibility
- encourage parents and carers to support gender equality by raising their awareness of how stereotypes limit kids
- don't be discouraged if equality teaching contradicts what children learn at home.

If you are a parent or a carer:

- think about roles and tasks shared by you and other adults within and outside the home (for example, cooking, cleaning, child-rearing, mowing the lawn, managing household finances, taking kids to the park and going to work) and how they may influence children
- encourage children to be friends across genders
- consider what themes and colours of clothes, toys and presents are given to children
- look at what expectations are placed on different family members based on gender. For example, that it is the responsibility of women and girls to care for others, this includes tasks such as cooking, cleaning, remembering birthdays etc
- think about how you reward or discipline behaviour and give praise or criticism for the same behaviour. For example, praising both boys and girls for being neat or being active in physical activities. Or through statements such as 'boys don't cry', or 'boys will be boys' to excuse inappropriate behaviour.

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<sup>14</sup> Talking to young kids about gender stereotypes, The Line, 2015:  
<https://www.theline.org.au/discussing-gender-stereotypes-at-home>



# Policy context

Children have rights to equality and an enriched life free of discrimination. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government, sets out what a child needs to survive, grow, participate and fulfil their potential. More information is available at [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(2014\)](#).

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) is designed to further the Scottish Government's ambition for 'Scotland to be the best place to grow up in by putting children and young people at the heart of planning and services and ensuring their rights are respected across the public sector'. The Act's wide-ranging provisions will have implications for many of the services that the Care Inspectorate inspects and regulates.

## National Outcomes

The focus on equality in the context of children and young people is enshrined in the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

## Equally Safe Strategy

The Scottish Government, COSLA and key partners are committed to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls once and for all and the [Equally Safe Strategy for Scotland](#) is a mechanism for achieving this ambition. Violence against women and girls in any form, has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, successful Scotland. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a fundamental violation of human rights.

## Play Strategy for Scotland

The [Play Strategy for Scotland](#) seeks to improve the play experiences of all children and young people, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds. It aims to ensure all children and young people can access play opportunities in a range of settings which offer variety, adventure and challenge. They must be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, stage, ability and preference.

## Health and Social Care Standards

The new Standards describe what high quality care looks like from the perspective of people experiencing care. In particular, this resource illustrates what the following Standards can look like in different ELC settings.

Standard 1.1: 'I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health status, race, background or sexual orientation.'

Standard 1.2: 'My human rights are protected and promoted, and I experience no discrimination.'

Standard 2.15: 'I am enabled to resolve conflict, agree rules and build positive relationships with people as much as I can.'

Standard 2.27: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.'

Standard 3.5: 'As a child or young person, I am helped to develop a positive view of myself and to form and sustain trusting and secure relationships.'

Standard 4.1: 'My human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me.'

Standard 4.2: 'The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.'

Standard 4.3: 'I experience care where all people are respected and valued.'

## Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) - SHANARRI wellbeing indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included

With Scotland's focus increasingly falling on children's outcomes, this resource is structured using the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators. To become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens all of Scotland's children need to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. These indicators are an effective way of assessing and improving how services are making a difference to children in their care. The eight indicators of wellbeing are a key tool in realising the Scottish Government's vision to make Scotland 'the best place to grow up'.

**Safe** - Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.



**Healthy** - Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices.



**Achieving** - Being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community.



**Nurtured** - Having a nurturing place to live in a family setting, with additional help if needed, or, where possible, in a suitable care setting.



**Active** - Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community.



**Respected** - Having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them.



**Responsible** - Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision, and being involved in decisions that affect them.



**Included** - Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities, and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.





# Practice examples

## Here's what others have done. What can you do?

We asked a range of ELC settings to tell us how they are challenging gender inequality. Here are the responses, as told to us by the practitioners themselves. We are offering a range of practice examples where a range of ELC services have promoted gender equality for children in their care. We hope that other services will find these examples interesting and pick up some helpful tips to develop their own practice in promoting gender equality.

## Observation, reflection and change

### Shaw Mhor Early Years Centre, Glasgow

Shaw Mhor Early Years Centre is a local authority centre based in the large urban area of the Southside in Glasgow. The service registered with the Care Inspectorate in 2011 to provide daycare to a maximum of 134 children aged from birth to those not yet attending primary school. It was evaluated as 'very good' for both Care and Support and Management and Leadership following an inspection in December 2016.

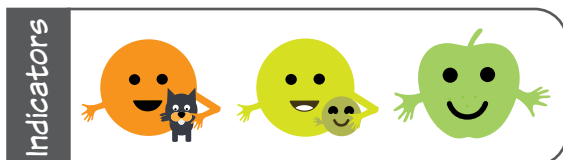
The head of centre Fiona Penman told us about the changes they made to their dressing up area, after they noted some of the boys in superhero costumes were showing more aggressive and destructive behaviour:

During superhero week, it was noted that some of the boys in costume exhibited much more aggressive and destructive behaviour and a decrease in creative and imaginative play than would ordinarily be seen. As a result of this the nursery made changes to their dress up area, the language



they used and interactions with the children. Pieces of fabric were added to the dress up area for children to create their own capes and costumes, without overtly branding them as specific heroes. The staff were able to introduce other creative ways of interacting as superheroes, for example by adding bits of string to act as spider webs. Staff also changed their use of language to talk about the qualities of superheroes, challenging the idea that their powers are purely destructive. The focus became more on superheroes being caring, protective and helpful, rather than aggressive and destructive. Later, the focus became the children themselves, and what superpowers they had, encouraging them to think about their own skills and qualities. Effort was made to tie the superhero interest to other areas of the centre for example, mixing potions to give themselves new powers, or to change their appearances.

The staff have been surprised by how quickly they managed to turn these mindsets around among the children and have been pleased with the response. The next stage is to work more with parents around gender and their attitudes. The centre also plans to implement more regular, formal staff meetings to create a space for all staff to talk about their observations and ideas. As a result of this reframing of the children's interests, play is more controlled, and the quieter children are more engaged. One child takes great comfort in wearing a cape and having this shared interest in superheroes with his peers has allowed him access to a new group of more confident children. It's about being comfortable in standing back and observing before making changes. Our aim is not to discourage boisterous play but to ensure there are reasonable and respectful reasons behind children's play.



# The Corstorphine Nursery, Edinburgh

The Corstorphine Nursery is a private nursery in Edinburgh registered to provide day care to 49 children aged from three months to primary school entry. The nursery serves a large urban area and was evaluated as 'good' for both Care and Support and Management and Leadership following an inspection in August 2017.

**Janet McDonald is the nursery manager and she shared their story:**

At the Corstorphine Nursery we are passionate about ensuring that the nursery is promoting and operating all forms of equality.

We have a 'house corner' but this is in the centre of the room rather than being to one side. All the children play in this. Some materials are wooden, and parents donated old pots, pans and tins so that the materials are metal. We find that using a mix of natural materials such as plain wood rather than plastic of a particular colour is effective in encouraging girls and boys to use the area equally. For example, we also have a natural wood doll house which all of the children enjoy and often take parts of the interior into their play in other areas.

We have a big construction area which all children love and use equally. It includes our outdoor space. We get supermarket deliveries and the children asked for them to leave the empty crates. All the children love playing and building things with the crates and it's great for developing gross motor skills.

We have a nursery allotment too and this helps to get all of the children outside and working with tools, handling soil, and getting used to worms and beetles. We also do a lot of small group work which is led by children's interests. This helps children begin to understand that different non-gendered activities can be fun. If children join the nursery and haven't been used to playing like this, or their home environment is enforcing stereotypes, we work to ensure this doesn't limit them at nursery. In

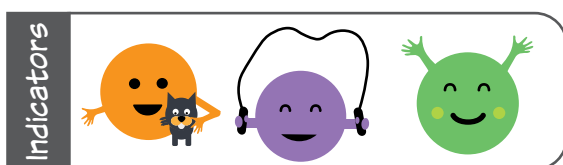


doing so we often have to work with the parents to explain what our aim is in promoting these activities. For example, we had a little girl who joined us in pre-school. She would only play with girls. She said "I don't like boys. They push me and shout all the time." Over a period of time we worked carefully with her in small mixed groups and now she plays with girls and boys equally. We have also had boys who wouldn't play with girls and we have used similar techniques to help them to overcome that barrier. Our aim is to provide all of our children with equal opportunities regardless of their gender but respecting their personal choices. Some girls genuinely want to play with dolls but there are girls who like to hammer and saw and play football. Boys who like to play with the doll's house and others who like to climb and run. This is all good. And our belief is that these choices can only be made if all of these opportunities are made available and the child's choice is respected and supported.

## Parent feedback

*"It's easy not to think about this but then you start to realise how important it is. I have a son and daughter and switched to Corstorphine Nursery initially because of their focus on outdoor play. However, I'm really impressed with the efforts to be gender neutral and it's made such a difference to both my children. Neither of them think in terms of boys or girls toys or activities, and are not limited because of it."*

*"My daughter joined from another nursery and we really noticed the difference in approach. Initially she wouldn't really take part in the outdoor play and refused to join in the ball skills sessions saying balls were for boys. We hadn't realised there was an issue before but the nursery staff worked with her and over time built her confidence. They were great at working with us too so we could help reinforce stuff at home. She is now outdoors in all weathers and plays equally with all the toys."*





## Southdale Primary School Nursery, West Lothian

Southdale Nursery is located in Armadale, Bathgate within Southdale Primary School and serves the local mixed urban/rural area. The service registered with the Care Inspectorate in 2016 to provide care to a maximum of 70 children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school. The service was evaluated as 'good' across all key areas following an inspection in August 2017.

**Early years officer Ann Cockburn shared her experience of observing block play and improving the block play area to promote gender equality and creativity:**

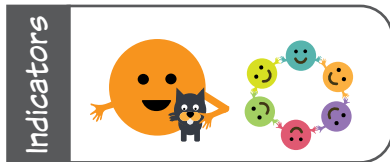
As part of my own continuous professional development I enrolled in the Froebel in Childhood Practice course at Edinburgh University. As part of the course I had to carry out a project which focused on one key Froebelian experience. The focus of my project was improving literacy through block play as during the time of the project this was a key initiative within the local authority and part of the nursery improvement plan. Block play covers all areas of the curriculum and can help promote literacy in all children. It was clear when I observed the block area that it appeared to only be boys playing in the area. The findings from a tally observation sheet placed in the area to record how many boys and girls played in the area during the day confirmed my observation; hardly any girls engaged in block play during the day. A further observation revealed that toy cars were being continually placed in the block area. Block building was limited in design, with mainly roads and the odd garage being built. Creativity was limited. An audit of the block area also revealed that it was not situated in an ideal place; it was next to a thoroughfare to another room and space was limited. For block play to be successful, children need to have the space to build and be free of interruptions. Taking these observations on board, I removed the toy cars and moved the block play area into a bigger space next to the role play area.

More girls immediately started using the blocks, on their own initially but then with other girls. Boys too engaged in block play alongside and with the girls. One day the children played collaboratively in block play which they called 'The Kitty Pirate Ship'. Although the initial building was started by two



girls by the end of the observation both boys and girls worked with each other to create an amazing piece of block building. Throughout the building process, children showed creativity, with different children bringing different ideas to the 'ship'; they showed respect to each other, saying it was alright to join in play; older children helped younger children and children self-disciplined themselves saying 'don't knock it over but it's ok we can just rebuild it'.

From an area where only boys were playing, it has now developed into area where all children are involved. Parents have commented on how busy the area is in the mornings as children head there as soon as they come in. Staff have found a difference in the quality of the block play being produced compared to just the roads and garages previously and they too have become more confident in asking open-ended questions to help promote children's thinking. Most importantly, all children are experiencing rich learning experiences and value their block play.





# Play

## Aberlour Family Support Centre, Langlees, Falkirk

Aberlour Family Support Centre in Langlees is part of Aberlour Child Care Trust's provision for children and families. The centre is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide day care to children aged from 18 months until they begin primary school. The aim of the family centre is to work in partnership with the local community by providing a range of services to promote, positively support and strengthen the capacity of families to reach their full potential. The centre serves an urban area and was evaluated as 'very good' across all key areas following an inspection in July 2015.

The centre's manager Kim Covey shared their experience of helping children play imaginatively to remove gender restrictions.

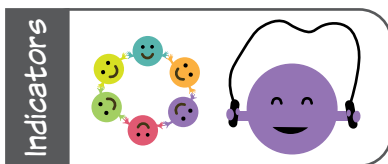
We work very hard to help children play imaginatively. We have found that changing the dressing up resources to a range of materials has supported this and allowed children to be much freer and more creative. Previously they would have had ready-made tabards and outfits which sometimes limited children. Having a range of textures and colours has allowed children to pretend to be a much wider range of characters without gender restrictions. Colours are not associated with gender and children are encouraged to take on a range of roles. Three boys recently designed costumes to be kings and used blue, pink and green materials. Another boy used the material to make a princess outfit. These choices are encouraged and not seen as an issue by other children or by parents.

Similarly, the changes to the outdoor area have led to children enjoying a range of options. Previously many of the toys available were plastic and were sometimes perceived as being gender specific, such as prams and hoovers. They now have wooden tubs on wheels which allow the children to decide what they will be. This has allowed boys and girls to take on a variety of different roles and not be limited in



their play. Previously some of the boys may not have played with prams but now are happy to use the tubs in a range of ways. Girls too are similarly much more freed up and enjoy the active play options available.

The changes are helping us to support children to develop their curiosity and imagination. We have worked hard to help parents understand the changes and the benefits for their children. At first parents were wondering why many of the toys had gone. We have spent time bringing parents on board and helping them understand the real benefits for their children. When children are freed up to play imaginatively it helps them acquire speech and language skills as well as having fun.



## Pitteuchar East Nursery Centre, Glenrothes, Fife

Pitteuchar East Primary School Nursery is part of Pitteuchar East Primary School in the town of Glenrothes and provides ELC for 58 children aged two and a half years to five years. The centre was evaluated as 'excellent' for both Care and Support and Management and Leadership following an inspection in September 2016.

**Staff at Pitteuchar East Nursery Centre have engaged and sought creative solutions around the issue of challenging gender stereotypes through play. The headteacher Jennifer Knussen told us how an audit of the children's learning environment gave the team the opportunity to look closely at learning spaces as well as their own practice:**

Practitioners at Pitteuchar East Primary School Nursery have begun to explore the issues of gender balance and what impact they might have on children's early experiences. This work fits within a wider school improvement plan developing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and gender issues and feeds into local partnership work in Fife, and across the Auchmuty High School cluster of schools.

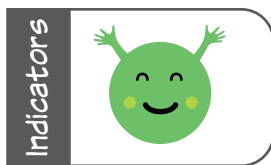
The resources created by Improving Gender Balance Scotland provided the ideal starting point. Practitioners undertook a thorough audit of the children's learning environment as well as reflecting on their own practice. They found that there were opportunities to make simple improvements: for example, ensuring images displayed reflected a gender balanced workforce and photographs of the

children in the nursery were balanced. This led to a range of improvements that have supported both boys and girls to fully access all areas of the nursery.

One member of staff described the impact on her of watching a girl trying to climb a climbing frame, and repeatedly tripping on her long skirt. Now, the nursery induction programme includes a reference to the importance of appropriate clothing. Parents are reminded of the need to dress the children, so they can explore all areas of the centre. Children shouldn't be dressed in restrictive or 'special' clothes, rather clothes they can climb in, get muddy in etc.

Headteacher, Jennifer Knussen suggests,

*"I recommend taking small steps. Small changes can have a big impact. Take your team with you. Everyone needs to be involved and engaged to have positive impact. You need to be mindful that everyone may be at different stages with work like this."*



## Emma Mechan, The Monkey House Childminding, Dumfries and Galloway

Emma Mechan runs The Monkey House Childminding at her home in the rural area of Annan in Dumfries and Galloway. Emma is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and no more than one is under 12 months. Following an inspection in July 2017, the service was evaluated as 'good' for Care and Support, Environment and Management and Leadership.

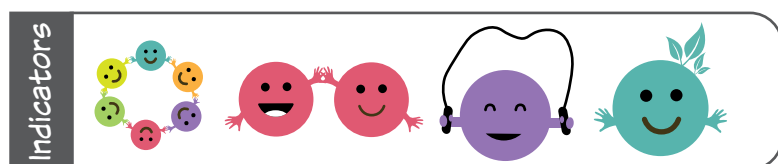
**Emma told us how she works to ensure all children are offered the same experiences regardless of gender and how a childminder's home-from-home setting can support this:**

Modelling equality and challenging gender stereotypes from an early age is important to ensure children develop values and skills which support them throughout their lives. Children are offered the same experiences regardless of gender and I use a lot of open-ended resources to support my practice. Children are all given the emotional support required and are allowed opportunities to express themselves. It is often said that boys should be tough and not cry and that simply isn't true, both boys and girls need to be supported and encouraged to ensure emotional and mental wellbeing.

We spend a lot of time outdoors where again children can choose from a range of activities and experiences from our 'Home Corner', a construction area, the mud kitchen, lots of loose play materials as well as large play equipment and activities such as jigsaws and drawing. I have the dolls with a buggy, dressing up hats and scarves and a fire station. The three children I had at my service today – including two boys and one girl - have all at some point during the day played with the doll.

I also think it's important to challenge the perception that boys need to have rough and tumble and have more physical play than girls. We play outside as often as possible and all my children are given the support they require as an individual for physical play. Physical play experiences are designed to challenge children and encourage risk taking and their development - boys are not encouraged to take more risks than girls. When we are out and about I have noticed that the children in my care do participate in more risky play, and when they play in groups they choose toys more freely and don't go for the same toy each week. Again, there doesn't seem to be any gender influence in their choices or the way in which they play, which is a positive and encouraging to see.

One thing I have found challenging and I'm trying to make improvements, is visiting our local care home. When my minded children visit the elderly residents, it's apparent that the residents have very distinct expectations of girl and boy gender roles. This can sometimes be as simple as which colour of balloon the children should choose to play with, with pink for girls and blue for boys. I am respectful of their age and the fact that they grew up in a different generation, where gender inequality was the norm; however, last time we visited, I had everyone playing with dolls and it seemed to go down very well with all ages and sexes.



## RBS Nursery (Gogarburn), Edinburgh

Bright Horizons@Gogarburn is a workplace nursery provided by international childcare provider, Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd. It is based at the Royal Bank of Scotland's Gogarburn campus in Edinburgh, serving a large urban area. The nursery has been registered since 2005 and provides care to a maximum of 70 children under the age of eight years during term time and school holidays. It was evaluated as 'very good' for both Care and Support and Environment following an inspection in March 2017.

**The nursery's manager Susan Killen shared their story about changes introduced to the role play and dressing up area, to improve choice, creativity and encourage gender friendly play:**

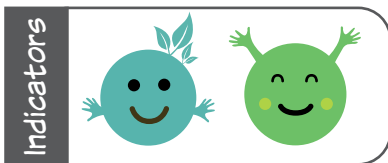
Some time ago it was decided to encourage both genders in developing their skills, specifically in the Role Play Area. It was agreed to offer material that could be used in a multifaceted way; material that could be utilised for anything from an astronaut to a cook, from a princess to a fairy, from a baby to a tiger, and to encourage both genders to use the role play area giving a greater choice. Furthermore, encouraging them to influence their own play/learning. It was believed that not only would this inspire children to use their imaginations and support language but most importantly children would not be guided in any specific gender orientation and could make independent choices about what they wanted to be. This was discussed with the children and by providing material they could adapt, change and add to, the hope was that it would influence what they wanted to do or be.



Recently there have been many second babies born in the nursery and siblings, both boys and girls have participated in bathing and washing, feeding and patting the 'babies' to sleep ... there was no talk of 'only girls can look after the babies' and the boys gently washed and dressed them as easily as the girls. It could therefore be suggested that there is evidence to show that our children are beginning to understand that they can participate in all roles.

Children are supported by knowledgeable adults, who understand that choice of words, actions and body language are important in reducing the stereotyping influence that is embedded in our society. We have encouraged language acquisition and imagination development. This approach has facilitated an understanding that all children can achieve what they want to be and what is key is that this is developed from the early stage where belief systems are foundational.

There has been mixed response from parents; some positive, some unsure, but we will continue to encourage parents to be neutral in their provision of activities at home. Also, we intend to undertake a curriculum evening in the Autumn when we will discuss and explain our reasoning for gender equality in the nursery.





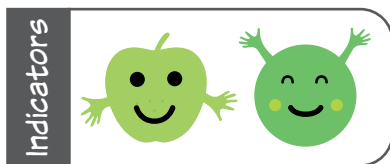
## Working with parents

### Lara Haken, Childminder, Livingston

Lara Haken operates her childminding service from her family home in the town of Livingston and is registered to provide day care to a maximum of six children under 16 at any one time. The service was evaluated as Excellent for both Care and Support and Management and Leadership, as well as very good for Environment, following an inspection in January 2016.

Lara shared her experience of ensuring there is no gender differentiation in her setting:

I am careful with my language and encourage the older children to follow my example. It is a great aim of mine to ensure that everyone - whatever their choices or preferences - feels welcome. One of the boys I look after loves to dress up as a Disney princess, as he really loves the music, the characters of the different princesses and the magic. As a result, his father expressed concern to me about this and we discussed it. He has been more understanding about not dividing play and expression into gender categories since and happily allows his son to dress up as he wishes at home too.



## TASC, Glasgow LGBT Charter – Our Journey

TASC aims to provide a quality out of school childcare service in an environment which is safe, caring and stimulating, providing opportunities that will enrich the lives of children that attend. The service has expanded over the years and operates in four primary schools in Glasgow.

**Christina Gray, service manager of TASC, describes their journey to achieving the LGBT Gold Charter:**

Our journey began with a discussion with a staff member from Woman's Aid, who made me aware of the impact that discrimination towards the LGBT community has on families and children. I learned more about the LGBT Charter and saw that there were several ways we could improve the support we were offering children and young people. I contacted LGBT Youth Scotland to ask them for support to work towards the Charter.

To ensure everyone was on board, all the staff took part in LGBT training. This training further highlighted the need to embark on this journey as we learned about the impact that non-acceptance of a child's LGBT status has on the individual, causing mental health issues and in some tragic cases, suicide.

We involved parents and carers from the very beginning and distributed a survey to find out more about the parent's experiences and knowledge of the LGBT community. We followed this up with discussion groups and together started to work towards the Charter. Some parents were a bit nervous and curious about what we would be telling the children, however, once we explained our reasons behind working toward the Charter and what it would involve, they were very supportive of what we were doing. We were very open and shared as much as possible, particularly around resources that were available to support them to have conversations with children at home.

Working toward the Charter encouraged staff to be more thoughtful about their interactions with children. When some children were working with Jacqueline Lindsay, Unit Manager, to build a house, they spoke together about the family that might live there and decided that two mums would live there with their children. There were lots of positive discussions about different families. One of the parents got in touch to say that this activity had led to them being able to talk more freely with their children.

The main theme of the Charter is respect for everyone, and we actively involved children in a range of activities that encouraged them to think about their values and to acknowledge, appreciate and

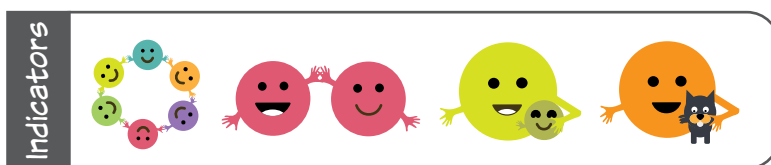
respect differences. We played a game and matched balloons with different faces on them showing a variety of couples. Practitioners were enthusiastic about thinking about how to ensure any activities were inclusive and addressed stereotypes. We were delighted when a group of children came up with the idea of working on a large banner that was presented to Pride Glasgow.

We purchased a wide range of LGBT child friendly books for the children to access, and created a 'lending library' for the parents, so that they could see what we were using and continue the discussions with their children. Favourites were 'And Tango Makes 3' and 'My Princess Boy', which are age appropriate fun stories. We continued training as a staff team, following up with transgender training, which again increased our knowledge of the issues that some children and young people were facing... The training also encouraged us to think about our discussions with children and to ensure that we were not using stereotypical language in our conversations, such as automatically referring to mums and dads and thinking about images used around the service. Staff came up with ideas for games and activities that were inclusive and would challenge gender and other stereotypes in a fun way.

We achieved the Gold Charter in 2018 and we are all very proud of this – it has been a learning journey for staff and the children and young people that use our service and reflects the passion that we have to support each other and treat everyone fairly and with respect.

Parents were initially nervous, I think they were worried that we were going to use words their children might not understand, but when we explained that we were focusing on equality and us all becoming better at accepting everyone, they were happy and supported the project.

*"Because of this program my kids feel more confident and don't feel scared talking about mum's girlfriend as a girlfriend. I also feel more confident."*





## Whole service approach

### The Gender Friendly Nurseries Project, Glasgow

**Barbara Adzajlic is a health improvement senior and a manager who developed the Gender Friendly Nursery programme and she shared the case study of her project:**

The Gender Friendly Nursery programme was developed by staff from Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership - North East Health Improvement team. Staff had attended the 2014 Respectme conference, Gender Is Everyone's Agenda, where Zero Tolerance presented their new resource for promoting gender equality in early years, Just like A Child. We felt that there was great potential for this resource to be used as part of a wider programme to address gender-based violence, mental health, the role of men in parenting and childcare, LGBT issues, creating more choice in education and employability and other areas. We called on the support of national organisations with an interest in improving gender equality: Zero Tolerance, Respectme, LGBT Youth Scotland, Men in Childcare and Fathers Network Scotland, and received guidance from Dr Nancy Lombard. Using experience of other whole-school and early years resources as a guide, we developed a training, resource pack and award programme to support early years establishments to reduce gender stereotypes and improve gender equality.

#### **Pilot phase**

The programme in the pilot phase consisted of a full-day training for entire staff groups of early years establishments. This was mostly undertaken on in-service days; however, courses were also delivered as a series of three twilights. During the training staff were introduced to the concepts of gender, equity and equality. They then explored gender stereotypes, where they are found, the relationship between gender stereotypes and gender inequality, and the many types of harm this can cause. Staff groups reflected on their own practice through an audit highlighting their existing good practice and exploring areas for development. Consideration is given to leadership and management; staff awareness; curriculum, learning and teaching; environment; resources; and communication with parents, carers and the wider community. Establishments are provided with a variety of tools and resources (including Just like A Child and a support pack developed by Health Improvement). They then work on an agreed action plan - taken from areas for development in the audit - and within approximately a year should be ready to apply for Gender Friendly Nursery status. Ten nurseries have engaged with the process over the pilot phase and the first two of these were recognised as Gender Friendly Nurseries in May 2018.

### **Evaluation and sharing**

An internal evaluation showed statistically significant changes in staff attitudes around the following statements before and after the training:

*"Gender and sex mean the same thing"*

*"Gender stereotypes can lead to negative outcomes like inequality, violence and unequal resources"*

*"No matter what we do girls will inevitably gravitate towards things like the home corner"*

*"There are easy to implement ways to ensure gender stereotypes are reduced at nursery."*

Qualitative evaluation, conducted through 1:1 interviews, online surveys and focus groups, revealed the following key points:

*"The programme affirms and enhances existing knowledge and practice, but there is always something more to learn"*

*"Staff highlighted the importance of engaging with parents and the impact of primary/secondary schooling"*

*"Discussion was a key part of the programme"*  
*"There is benefit in having the award, not just the training"*

*"Staff recognised the importance of remaining pragmatic/flexible in terms of the audit and action plan"*

*"Staff felt there was a good fit with wider agenda."*

Following a 'share the learning' event held on 31 May 2018, Gender Friendly Nursery resources have been shared with a wide range of partners interested in developing this in their own local authorities or areas of work, including the Scottish Prison Service and early learning and childcare practitioner training.



## Rollout phase

The training will now be rolled out to management for every local authority and early years establishment in Glasgow that is in partnership with Education Services. It will be adapted slightly to allow for a specific input on LGBT awareness. Management will then be supported by the Leaders of Early Learning team and Health Improvement to cascade this to staff within their own establishments. This will be done as part of a wider package of healthy relationships training whereby Early Protective Messages training is also being rolled out across the NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board area. Those wishing to receive more information on this programme can find links to the resources at <http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/about-us/professional-support-sites/gender-based-violence-resources/> or can contact [NorthEastYouth@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:NorthEastYouth@ggc.scot.nhs.uk).

**Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre in Glasgow participated in the Gender Friendly Nursery pilot project and received Gender Friendly Nursery accreditation.**

**Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre is a local authority nursery in Glasgow serving a large urban area. The service has been registered since 2002 and provides ELC to a maximum of 89 children aged six weeks to not yet attending primary school. The centre was evaluated as 'very good' for both Care and Support and Environment following an inspection in December 2017.**

### **Lorraine Gray, team leader, shares her story:**

Our journey to becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery began with our whole staff team participating in gender friendly training. After the training we got together to discuss what we had learned and what our next steps were going to be. We then set the dates for our twilights.

We decided to conduct an audit of our practice during both twilights with the 0-3 staff team and the 3-5 staff team. From this audit we were able to identify where our areas of strengths were and our areas which require development. We also chose our gender champions from the 3-5 staff, 0-3 staff and the management team. We identified the things that we were already doing well: neutral décor, exploring job roles, unisex toilets, shared spare clothes (unisex), children making choices in buying resources as well as introducing Gender Friendly Nursery training and gender friendly nursery forms. Our gender friendly champions came together to review our communication with our parents and carers, to ensure there are no biases or assumptions about roles within the families.

We also reviewed our communication to parents that is provided by Glasgow City Council. We found that whilst the communication does not make assumptions about roles they do however ask specific gender related questions. We used our audit tool to review each area of the curriculum in line with the resources we use to enhance children's learning. From this we highlighted two areas which required development; our literature and dressing up.

We reviewed our books and we discovered that our books are not gender friendly. As a next step the gender friendly champions, Megan and Alesha, spoke with staff and children throughout the centre about types of books, focus, themes, age appropriateness and style. They then discussed budget and arranged a meeting with the book store and we successfully purchased gender friendly books.

We reviewed and adapted the way we select and purchase gifts. Before our training the gifts we purchased were gender specific as well as birthday cards. There was no intentional thought of gender when selecting the gifts and cards, although that was the problem. This was the change that was required. After our training we made lots of adaptations to the ways we select and purchase gifts and cards. Last year for our graduation we purchased camper van piggy banks for boys and cupcake piggy banks for girls! This year we have purchased the hungry caterpillar game for everyone and personalised pencils for everyone.

We also changed the way we tell the stories and here is some feedback we received from children:

*"I like it when princess smarty pants turns the prince into a frog" - Esme*

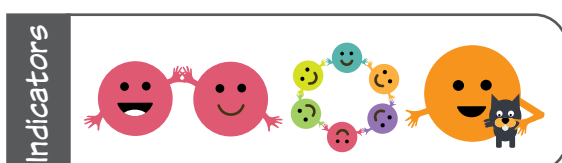
*"I like the big scary pets and motorbikes. The girl didn't get married because she just went on holiday herself"- Zara*

*"My daddy is a superhero because he has freckles" - Emileigh*

*"I like flash because he runs superfast. Wonder woman is a superhero as well" - Jake*

We have also reached out to Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth for information and posters to help inform parents, carers and staff. This link helped to create a positive awareness of gender equality for our families who come to our centre. After we completed our audit our policy team came together with Teresa, our Depute and Lead Policy Member, to create our Gender Friendly Policy. This policy was then reviewed by staff, parents, carers and stakeholders.

Our new area of work is a staff peer observation exercise where we identify all the gender-unfriendly words and phrases that we hear each other using, and list alternatives that we could use instead. We want to achieve this without hurting each other's feelings so to bring the staff with us we have devised a game.





**Milton Community Nursery in Glasgow participated in the Gender Friendly Nursery pilot project and received a Gender Friendly Nursery accreditation. Milton Community Nursery is a local authority nursery in Glasgow serving a large urban area. The service has been registered since 2003 and provides ELC to a maximum of 12 children under 2, 30 children aged 2 to 3 and 40 children aged between 3 and primary school age. The nursery serves a large urban area and was evaluated as 'very good' for both Care and Support and Environment following an inspection in August 2018.**

### **Dierdre Kilmurry, headteacher of Milton Community Nursery shares the story:**

When we were offered the opportunity to work towards this award I thought we were in a reasonably good starting place, for example the Christmas presents we buy are not gender specific.

Our children are supported regardless of what dressing up outfits, hats, bags they choose. We invite parents and carers in to talk to the children about the world of work and try to have males in traditionally female roles and vice-versa, for example female bus driver, male nurse, female police officer and so on. I don't call the male janitor in when something needs repaired, the children help me get the necessary tool and we talk about repairing things at home. I have found the girls to be as interested as the boys but it's the boys who try and take the screwdriver out of my hand, the girls wait to be offered.

The training provided by Barbara and Susie challenged us to reflect on aspects of our practice and put a plan together which included 10 steps to becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery. Importantly we included our Gender Friendly Nursery journey into our improvement plan. There are so many initiatives and unplanned issues arising that if it was not on our plan then we would not have made as much progress and it would have slipped down the priority scale. I will briefly mention a couple of the steps.

There was lots of debate amongst staff about how we speak to boys and girls and we agreed there were differences. Just like a Child guidance for staff advises that we don't only compliment girls on how they look and boys on what they are achieving but instead try to compliment all children on their kindness, thoughtfulness, humour and intelligence. So, we have spent the year observing and listening to one another spluttering over our choice of vocabulary dependent on the situation we find ourselves in.

We shared stories with one another on how we had to pause and think how to respond to situations. I found myself comforting a boy who had skinned his knee and he was having a really good cry. I would never have told him to stop crying but previously I would have probably said how brave he was, but I maybe would not have said that if I was comforting a girl. The gender friendly training also complements existing social and emotional learning programmes: Creating Confident Children and

PATHS (promoting alternative thinking strategies) as children are learning to identify and label their emotions correctly and talk about them.

We wanted to share this journey with the children's families. We needed to let them know what our training was about and why we were training. Milton's staff noted that reaching the parents has proven tricky – not because they are necessarily resistant, but simply because they are busy. To overcome this problem, they have come up with several possible responses. Firstly, the nursery posts videos, pictures and other information via social media where it can reach a significant number of parents to explain the importance of moving towards gender equality. We use Facebook to share our message, it's by far the most popular social media tool in Milton. I have shared information about TV programmes that support gender equality in education. There was a very good one last year and I had fruitful conversations with parents when they came in the following day. Secondly, staff suggested using events where parents were already coming into the nursery, perhaps to see their children perform, and used this opportunity to also show short video clips around the topic of gender inequality.

We have very good relationships with our parents and extended families which really helps if we hear stereotypical language. A grandpa was telling his grandson who had tripped that 'big boys don't cry' and I overheard a colleague very gently say that it was ok to cry. I also emailed all our families an update on the progress of the improvement plan and managed to fill it solely about our journey towards becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery. I had very positive responses and one mum proudly showed me an image on her phone of her son with her old handbag over his shoulder. We want our girls and boys to be confident happy and resilient with a 'can do' attitude. We want them to express how they feel and learn how to manage difficult situations through the language of cooperation and negotiation. For some children this is an exciting journey but for others a challenge as we know they are living in chaotic households and some days just coping with being in the nursery environment.

Staff members spoke about their experiences:

*"The impact I got personally from the training was that I didn't realise the enormity of the impact of these values [gender stereotyping]."*

They noted that, despite each being committed to equality, the training provided them with useful tools to apply the principle to daily practice. Most important was learning the right vocabulary and being given the confidence to use it – particularly in a non-confrontational way:

*"the training helped me... it gave me tools that meant maybe I could approach you know your stereotypical male who really is not up for that discussion."*

The fact that staff already had a good relationship with many parents made it easier, when necessary, to explain:

*"...look we really can't be saying that now, it's really better to say this and this is why..."*

It's just getting the right vocabulary isn't it? It's about having that conversation and not ignoring it. It's about addressing the issues as opposed to sweeping it under the carpet. One element of introducing gender equality is modelling the desired language. If a child said something derogatory we would just say how we'd like them to say it back, we don't give them a row, and we do that with parents too – just model the correct terminology.

Behaviours have been effectively modelled too. During dress-up one day a young boy decided to don a dress and some other boys took note:

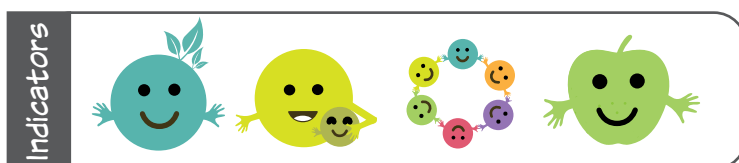
*"They're looking and there's a bit of laughing, and they're looking at us because they know."*

Staff have been active in their attempts to model gender equal behaviour and it seems effective:

*"We're not laughing... and then, because we're not laughing...then it's not so funny anymore."*

Staff who attended the Gender Friendly Nursery training have been sharing their learning with colleagues too, and nobody gets everything right all the time:

*"We can teach one another... maybe to think about our language when we say, 'you're looking good today' and get away from pretty/handsome/pink/blue, not that we're in the habit of doing it but sometimes it does creep in."*



## Arcadia Nursery, Edinburgh

Arcadia Nursery is located within the grounds of the University of Edinburgh. The university previously has two nurseries which both relocated and began trading under Arcadia in 2014. Arcadia Nursery offers early learning and childcare to a maximum of 113 children aged from birth to those not yet attending primary school. It serves a large urban area and was evaluated as 'good' for both Care and Support and Management and Leadership following an inspection in January 2018.

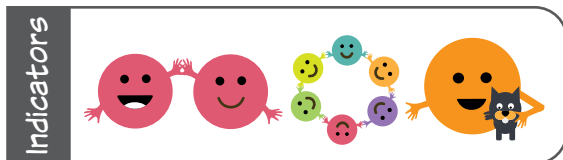
**Helen Ward, nursery manager, told us how her team used play and learning to challenge gender stereotyping after a parent raised concerns about comments made to her daughter:**

In our Preschool, we base our planning and the children's learning on their interests and we encourage parents to put forward ideas for planning. One of the parents expressed her concern when her daughter came home from nursery saying one of her peers had told her she could not be a doctor because she was a girl. As a staff team, we felt it was important to challenge this idea of gender stereotyping to ensure the children felt confident in their abilities and to help build up their self-esteem. We focused on what the children wanted to be when they grow up and looked at gender roles in the home.

The children went to the library to get books that challenged the gender stereotype of certain jobs. These books (by Clare Hibbert) were informative and illustrated both men and women carrying out the same role. Within our setting, we have a male and female chef, who came in to the playroom to talk about their job with the children. The staff supported the children to draw pictures and write stories on what they wanted to be when they grow up. We also looked at the different roles at home whilst reading books about different families, and challenging stereotypes that each home has 'a mummy' and 'a daddy'. The purpose of the activity was to challenge a number of stereotypes about gender and children's abilities. We are lucky that our purpose-built setting provides a neutral background for play



areas and our all-natural resources promote gender equality well. Since actively trying to highlight gender stereotypes within the nursery, we have noticed certain areas are more difficult to control. The impact of the attitudes of other children and parents as well as society is more difficult to tackle. Training for staff on how to promote gender equality would be useful, and ideas of how we can improve the ethos within our setting would be good.



## What else is there to support me?

### Zero Tolerance at Work

Violence against women can affect all aspects of our lives, both in terms of our lived experience and in the wider culture we inhabit. With the average person spending a third of their time at work, this means it affects our workplaces as well. Zero Tolerance has created a toolkit to help employers ensure that their employees feel safe and supported and that their workplace challenges the attitudes that underpin violence. The toolkit is available from: [Zero Tolerance at Work](#). For further information you can also visit [Close the Gap website](#).





# Appendix 1 – Further practitioner learning and development

## Organisations and training

### [Breaking the Mould](#)

A UK based educational project which provides resources and ideas on how gender stereotypes can be challenged in kindergartens and primary school classrooms.

### **Zero Tolerance and Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA)**

#### [Webinar for Early Years practitioners - Challenging Gender Norms and Stereotypes in the Early Years](#)

SCMA worked with Zero Tolerance in 2016 to promote their 'Challenging Gender Stereotypes' webinar to our childminding network. The webinar examines various gender stereotypes and asked participating childminders to think about themselves, their service and how they approach gender equality.

### **Gender Friendly Nurseries Project (Glasgow)**

For materials to develop your own training visit: [NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde website](#) or can contact [NorthEastYouth@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:NorthEastYouth@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

**The Institute of Physics, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and Education Scotland,** embarked on a three-year pilot project to look at the effects of gender on subject uptake and career choice, particularly in relation to STEM.

The Improving Gender Balance pilot project managed by the Institute of Physics, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and Education Scotland, ran for three years from March 2015 to March 2018. The project worked to support schools and ELC centres to establish interventions to effect long-term cultural change with regard to gender stereotypes, unconscious bias and inequity. Whole school/setting approaches were found to be most effective.

As set out in the Scottish Government STEM Strategy for Education and Training, the ambition now is to roll out the learning from the pilot to every school cluster in Scotland by 2022. Education Scotland will lead this next phase, supported by a dedicated team. This work will continue to focus strongly on the promotion of gender balance but will also be extended and deepened to include other equality issues as appropriate. Engaging with and supporting ELC settings will be a significant feature of this programme.

A range of resources to support practitioners was developed and published as part of the pilot. Perhaps of most interest to ELC practitioners, will be the sector specific short action guide to

improving gender balance, a booklet of case studies, and videos of practitioners describing why they engaged with the project and the actions they developed.

To access these and to find out more please visit: [Education Scotland Improving Gender Balance](#)

### [Let Toys be Toys](#)

A UK campaign and website which advocates for toy and publishing industries to stop limiting children's interests by promoting some toys and books as only suitable for girls, and others only for boys. The website houses resources for educators and parents about gender stereotypes and gives a list of recommended retailers and books that challenge stereotypes.

### [Science Toys for Mighty Girls](#)

A website with a list of 60 science toys for girls.

### **Children in Scotland**

Offers a wide range of training for people working with children delivered by current practitioners and leading experts in specialist areas, which includes learning and events on gender equality in the early and primary years. For example, Children in Scotland's current programme includes gender equality training provided by Sarah Goldsmith and Zero Tolerance. To find out more visit:

<https://childreninscotland.org.uk/>

### **Further reading**

**Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference**, Cordelia Fine, Norton and Company, 2010

**Pink Brain, Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow Into Troublesome Gaps - And What We Can Do About It**, Lise Eliot, One World, 2012

**Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare**, Scottish Government, 2014

**Gender Equality - A Toolkit for Education Staff**, Scottish Government, 2007

**Gender, Sex and Children's Play**, Jacky Kilvington and Ali Wood, Bloomsbury, 2016

**'Just Like a Girl': How Girls Learn to be Women**, Sue Sharpe, Pelican, 1978

**Key Concepts in Early Childhood Education and Care**, Cathy Nutbrown, 2nd ed., Sage, 2011

**Men in the Nursery: Gender and Caring Work**, Charlie Owen, Claire Cameron and Peter Moss, Sage, 1999

## Appendix 2 – Resources for children

### Books for gender equality

We know boys can be caring and girls can be brave, but with the gender stereotypes they are exposed to every day contradicting that, why not give them a little support?

<https://www.letterboxlibrary.com/> has a fantastic collection of books and other materials which portray positive images of girls, boys, men and women and challenge gender and other stereotypes.

[It's Child's Play, NUT](#) also has discussion topics around some of these books.

### VERY YOUNG (BIRTH-5)

**Alfie's Angel's** by Henrietta Barkow: Alfie wants to be an angel. Desperately. But his classmates and teacher insist that only girls can be angels. Will Alfie's passion win them round?

**And Me!** by Karen King and Lynne Wiley: Maya spends the day with her grandfather and wants to do everything he does. A lovely story of an irrepressible girl and her patient grandfather.

**How to Heal a Broken Wing** by Bob Graham: Nobody saw the pigeon fall to the ground. Except a kind and gentle little boy. Sparse text and fantastically eloquent illustrations.

**And Tango Makes Three** by Justin Richardson: Roy and Silo are just like the other penguin couples at the zoo - they bow to each other, walk together and swim together. But Roy and Silo are a little bit different – they are both boys.

**My Mum is a Fire Fighter** by Lois Grambling: The title says it all - recommended by real firefighters!

**Man's Work!** By Annie Kubler: Word free books depicting everyday situations - sometimes with a twist!

**The Sunflower Sword** by Mark Sperring: In a land filled with fire and smoke and endless fighting, where knights fight dragons, there lives a little knight who wants to be big like the others, and fight like the others, and have a sword like the others. But his mother won't let him. Instead of a sword, she gives him a sunflower, which, as it turns out, can be mightier than a sword.

**It's A George Thing** by David Bedford: George spends most of his time with his friends Peachy (a gorilla) and Moon (a lion). Peachy and Moon are very boissy boys given to bodybuilding and weightlifting. Neither of these are George's thing - but what is? This zebra was just made to boogie.

**Super Daisy** by Kes Gray: Cripes! Planet Earth is in DANGER! It's on a fatal collision course with Planet Pea! If they crash then Planet Pea will explode into a gazillionpillionkillion peas, and that means only one thing ... there'll be PEAS WITH EVERYTHING!!!! The fate of dinner-times worldwide rests with Super Daisy.

**The Odd Egg** by Emily Gravett: All the birds have eggs to hatch. All except Duck. When Duck is delighted to find an egg of his own to look after: it's the most beautiful egg in the whole world! But all the other birds think it's a very odd egg indeed - and everyone's in for a big surprise when it finally hatches.

### YOUNG-ISH (AGE 3-7)

**Bill's New Frock** by Anne Fine: Bill Simpson wakes up to find he's a girl, and worse, his mother makes him wear a frilly pink dress to school. How on earth is he going to survive a whole day like this? Everything just seems to be different for girls...

**Princess Pigsty** by Cornelia Funke: Young princess Isabella has had enough of being waited on hand and foot, of having to smile all the time, and of wearing beautiful dresses that she can't climb trees in. So when the king banishes her to the pigsty, his punishment backfires - Isabella's happier there than a pig in mud!

**The Paperbag Princess** by Robert Munsch: The Princess Elizabeth is slated to marry Prince Ronald when a dragon attacks the castle and kidnaps Ronald. In resourceful and humorous fashion, Elizabeth finds the dragon, outsmarts him, and rescues Ronald-who is less than pleased at her un-princess-like appearance.

**This is Our House** by Michael Rosen: George says the other children can't play with the cardboard house because they're girls, or they're small, or they're twins. But when George goes to the toilet the others don't let him back into the house because he's got red hair. George finally agrees that the house is for everyone.

**The Different Dragon** by Jennifer Bryan: This bedtime story about bedtime stories shows how the wonderful curiosity and care of a little boy, with some help from one of his moms, can lead to magical and unexpected places. Join Noah and his cat, Diva, on this night time adventure and you too will leave with an unforgettable new dragon friend!

**The Sissy Duckling** by Harvey Fierstein: Elmer is not like the other boy ducklings. While they like to build forts, he loves to bake cakes. While they like to play baseball, he wants to put on the halftime show. Elmer is a great big sissy. But when his father is wounded by a hunter's shot, Elmer proves that the biggest sissy can also be the greatest hero.

**Piggybook** by Anthony Browne: Mr Piggott and his two sons behave like pigs to poor Mrs Piggott – until, finally, she walks out. Left to fend for themselves, the male Piggotts undergo some curious changes!

**Red Rockets And Rainbow Jelly** by Sue Heap & Nick Sharratt: We are introduced to a young Nick and Sue, who have very different tastes: Nick likes red apples, Sue prefers green pears; Nick likes orange hair, but Sue likes purple hair. We learn at the end of the book that, despite their differences, Sue likes Nick and Nick likes Sue. A book about the importance of friendship.

**Princess Smartypants** by Babette Cole Princess: Smartypants does not want to get married. She enjoys being a Ms. But being a rich and pretty princess means that all the princes want her to be their Mrs. Find out how Princess Smartypants fights to preserve her independence in this hilarious fairytale-with-a-difference.

**Amazing Grace** by Mary Hoffman: Grace loves to act out stories. Sometimes she plays the leading part, sometimes she is 'a cast of thousands.' When her school decides to perform Peter Pan, Grace is longing to play Peter, but her classmates say that Peter was a boy, and besides, he wasn't black... But Grace's Ma and Nana tell her she can be anything she wants if she puts her mind to it...

**Dogs Don't Do Ballet** by Anna Kemp: Biff is not like ordinary dogs. He doesn't do dog stuff like peeing on lampposts, scratching his fleas or drinking out of toilets. If you throw him a stick, he'll just look at you like you're crazy. No, Biff is no ordinary dog. Biff likes moonlight and music and walking on his tiptoes. You see, Biff doesn't think he's a dog, Biff thinks he's a ballerina, which is all very well ... But dogs don't do ballet - do they?

**Horace and Morris but Mostly Dolores** by James Howe: Horace, Morris, and Dolores have been best friends forever. They do everything together - from sailing the seven sewers to climbing Mount Ever-Rust. But one day Horace and Morris join the Mega-Mice (no girls allowed), and Dolores joins the Cheese Puffs (no boys allowed). Is this the end? Or will Horace and Morris but mostly Dolores find a way to save the day - and their friendship?

**The Princess in Black** by Shannon Hale: Princess Magnolia is having hot chocolate and scones with Duchess Wigtower when... Brring! Brring! The monster alarm! A big blue monster is threatening the goats! Stopping monsters is no job for dainty Princess Magnolia. But luckily Princess Magnolia has a secret - she's also the Princess in Black, and stopping monsters is the perfect job for her!

**10,000 Dresses** by Marcus Ewert: In her dreams, Bailey is a young girl. Every night she dreams about magical dresses. Unfortunately, when Bailey wakes up, nobody wants to hear about her beautiful dreams. This is because Bailey is a boy and shouldn't be thinking about dresses at all. Then Bailey meets an older girl who is touched and inspired by Bailey's dreams and courage. Eventually they start making dresses together that represent Bailey's dreams coming to life.

**The Flying Diggers** by Ian Whybrow: Teddy and Ruby set out on a fantastic flying adventure! Shows girls and boys equally at home in their hardhats and diggers. Encourages children to feel free with their role play.

**The Boy With Pink Hair** by Perez Hilton: Life is not easy being pink, as the boy with the pink hair discovers. Adults stare at him, children giggle behind his back and some kids are just mean. But because he has a supportive best friend and parents who are loving and supportive, he can do just about anything!

**The Big Brother** by Stephanie Dagg: Will Dara know what to do when the new baby comes? If only he could have a doll to practise. An absolutely brilliant challenge to gendered ideas about children's toys. Please note - Not all books, toys and resources need to be explicitly countering stereotypes - look out for resources that just treat girls and boys as equals, e.g. having the same number of male and female characters, with a range of personalities regardless of gender.





# Appendix 3 – Gender equality policy examples

## Example policy from Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre, Glasgow

### Gender Friendly Policy (2018)

#### Rationale

It is vital that, for children to reach their full potential, they are happy, healthy and safe. However, sometimes society limits what children can do, be and become. Some limits are obvious and for good reason. Others are subtle and unjust, and may even mean children growing up less happy, confident and self-assured than they should be. Almost half of primary school teachers say pupils in their school experience homophobic bullying and seven in ten hear homophobic language. Nine in ten teachers say they want to tackle the problem but lack the training and support to do so. Children learn from the world around them. Gender stereotypes perpetuate inequality and reinforce difference between men and women, rather than individuals being people first and equals.

#### Statement

In Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre, we are committed to promoting gender equality and tackling discrimination. In promoting equality in all areas, we hope to tackle stereotyping and discrimination, and raise children who can participate fully in the world.

#### Key establishment procedure

- Gender equality is reflected in the centre's Visions Values and Aims.
- In line with the centre's equal opportunities policy, all children, parents, carers, staff and service users are treated equally irrespective of their gender.
- Management understand and encourage a Gender Friendly environment.
- All staff have received Gender Friendly Training and therefore have an understanding of gender issues.
- There are three delegated Gender Friendly Champions in the centre.
- Four members of staff have attended LGBT training.
- A member of staff has attended Stonewall Scotland Train the Trainer.
- Staff use gender-neutral language and do not use gender stereotypical language.
- The staff have very good communication with parents and are able to provide information and support relating to gender issue.

- There is a gender friendly information board for children, parents, carers, staff and visitors.
- The staff are working towards gaining gender friendly accreditation.
- The planning is non-stereotypical in that the experiences are planned for all children, and are not gender specific
- All children have equal opportunity to take part in all experiences and are encouraged to access all areas of the curriculum.
- The staff offer extra encouragement for girls and boys to take part in non-stereotypical roles, for example, girls taking part in football and boys dancing.
- In the role play area, there are a wide variety of costumes and the children can wear what they want irrespective of gender.
- Children have opportunities, and are encouraged, to talk about different roles and experience them during role play.
- The children are encouraged to talk about their emotions and know that it is ok for girls and boys to cry when upset.
- All resources reflect a gender balance and are gender neutral.
- We have purchased a variety of gender friendly books, some of which show people in non-traditional roles.
- We invite non-stereotypical visitors to the centre, for example, female firefighters and male nurses.
- Staff use non-stereotypical language, for example do not call girls princesses and boys soldiers.
- Staff do not group boys together and girls together, rather they encourage a mixture of children.
- We take care to ensure that our displays include boys, girls, women and men.
- All children's toilets are unisex.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Head of establishment**

To ensure that the policy is up-to-date and adhered to at all times. To ensure that staff receive the appropriate training relating to gender issues and that they are putting theory into practice.

### **Child development officers**

To ensure that they are aware of and adhering to the policy.

### **Key documents**

Just like a Child, Zero Tolerance

Equal Opportunities Policy, Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre

Train the Trainer, Stonewall Scotland

# Example policy from Milton Community Nursery, Glasgow

## **The Gender Friendly Nursery Policy (2018)**

### **Rationale**

Children learn from the world around them. Gender stereotypes perpetuate inequality and reinforce difference between men and women, rather than individuals being people first and equals. Gender stereotypes encourage ideas of what it means to be a boy or a girl; man or woman, which limit men and women alike. 'Just like a Child. Respect gender equality in the early years.' Zero Tolerance 2013

### **Aim**

To promote gender equality and tackle discrimination.

### **Objectives**

- New nursery staff and students will be informed of our gender friendly status during induction.
- We will ensure that all resources within the nursery environment are provided as gender neutral.
- Books purchased by the nursery and borrowed from libraries will be audited by staff
- Staff will be supportive during imaginative play to support children and challenge their thinking through discussion on traditional roles, for example police officers, builders, hairdressers, professional sports...
- Children can choose new names in traditional songs and games with specific gender names e.g. 'Peter Hammers....', 'Mary Mary Quite Contrary', 'Polly put the Kettle On.'
- Staff will use language that does not promote gender bias, girls being complimented on how they look and boys on what they are doing.
- The playroom will be regularly monitored to ensure that all areas and associated resources are being used by boys and girls.
- Staff and students will be good role models for children.
- All children regardless of gender will be encouraged to engage in STEM activities.
- Parents and carers will receive regular information through newsletters, social media and the nursery blog on gender friendly activities.

Success criteria: That staff have the skills to challenge gender discrimination and support children's rights to equality and a life free of discrimination.

# Acknowledgements

Zero Tolerance and the Care Inspectorate would like to thank all of the ELC professionals who took part in the project and submitted their practice examples. Everyone who completed the survey and worked with our working group members on development of good practice examples made a significant contribution. Special thanks also go to the staff and senior management at all of the partner organisations (below) for supporting the project from the beginning.

## Working group partners



## Services providing practice examples

Aberlour Family Support Centre  
Arcadia Nursery  
Emma Mechan, The Monkey House Childminding  
Hamiltonhill Family Learning Centre  
Lara Haken, Childminder  
Milton Community Nursery  
Pitteuchar East Nursery Centre  
RBS Nursery (Gogarburn)  
Shaw Mhor Early Years Centre  
Southdale Primary School Nursery  
TASC  
The Corstorphine Nursery

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