The Gender Friendly Nursery
Nursery Support Pack

A resource to support Early Years Establishments to achieve Gender Friendly Nursery status

December 2018
What is this Resource for?
This resource aims to assist Early Years Establishments to understand the impact of gender stereotyping in early years settings and offers support for the implementation of gender friendly policies and practices across the nursery. It is intended to support establishments to achieve ‘Gender Friendly’ status.

While the importance of gender awareness and good practice in the early years is recognised, managers and staff may not have time to do extensive reading on this topic. There is a wealth of research and learning available from studies and projects across the UK and worldwide which this pack aims to bring together and condense.

This pack draws particularly on the extensive experience and knowledge of the Gender Friendly Nursery partner agencies, which include Zero Tolerance, Fathers Network Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland, respectme and Men in Childcare among others. This experience and knowledge is used to guide nurseries on some of the practical decisions about how they can become ‘Gender Friendly’ and build confidence that the appropriate steps are being taken.

What’s in Each Section?

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Note:
The authors of this pack have endeavoured to ensure that it reflects relevant guidance from informed sources which are current at the time of publication. Websites are suggested for this purpose, but not endorsed by any of the agencies involved with production of this resource.
SECTION 1: The Gender Friendly Nursery Award

Why ‘Gender Friendly Nurseries’?

During the respectme ‘Gender is Everybody’s Agenda’ conference an idea was suggested for the development of a Gender Friendly award for early years establishments. A group of organisations and stakeholders came together to discuss the idea further. The group included NHS Health Improvement, respectme, LGBT Youth Scotland, Men in Childcare, Fathers Network Scotland and Zero Tolerance. The Gender Friendly Nursery award was developed from these discussions as a way that early years establishments could demonstrate to parents, communities and funders that they were not only aware of the impacts of gender stereotyping but were actively taking steps to improve practice in this area within the nursery.

What is the vision for Gender Friendly Nurseries?

We believe that a Gender Friendly Nursery is one in which children, staff and families are not limited by the social expectations placed upon them because of their gender, and where everyone can be protected from the many limiting negative consequences of gender inequality and discrimination.

We live in a society where children do not start life on an equal footing. Historically, males have held positions of power, control and authority over females and children in the home, in the workplace, in politics and the law. In today’s Scotland much has changed which has allowed women to have better and protected rights, a voice in politics, and a career. But we can still see the power imbalance in every area of life from the low number of women in politics and the gender pay gap to the continuing problems of domestic abuse and the portrayal of women and girls in films. This imbalance also affects men and boys negatively because it limits their options in terms of being able to express emotions and follow interests and career paths traditionally seen as ‘female’.

Gender stereotyping reinforces the differences between men and women and has wide ranging and long lasting impact. Children are taught from an early age about the social expectations placed upon them because of their gender and are expected to act in particular ways. The result is a strong influence on children’s aspirations; their confidence in expressing themselves, their opinions and preferences, and on the mental health and wellbeing of those who do not fit easily with these prescribed roles. These impacts continue throughout the lifecourse.

We believe that gender equality is more than just treating everyone the same way and so our project is a positive challenge to the status quo and a preventative approach to gender inequality in early years. We want to:

- provide the tools to begin to redress the balance
- grow nurseries where, regardless of gender, children are nurtured in a way which allows them to reach their full potential, and which offers limitless opportunities for all
- celebrate and champion gender equality in all aspects of nursery life

The Gender Friendly Nursery allows early years establishments to be recognised for being ‘gender friendly’. This would mean they take a ‘whole school approach’ to reducing gender inequalities, incorporating leadership and management, environment and resources, ethos, curriculum and partnership with mums, dads and carers.
How does a Nursery become Gender Friendly accredited?

There are a number of simple steps involved in becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery. We have tried to ensure that certain minimum standards are being met so that sufficient meaningful changes are made, but to still allow flexibility in the approach nurseries take.

Step 1: Register interest in becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery and attend a train the trainers session.

Step 2: On completion of the train the trainers, deliver training to the rest of your staff as soon as possible. Support and guidance will be provided.

Step 3: Follow up with a whole staff discussion about what needs to happen. Complete the audit and next steps agreement and return to the GFN team, along with your evaluation materials.

Step 4: We will follow up after 3, 6 and 12 months to see how you are getting on. Once you have completed the tasks on your next steps agreement, you will receive your GFN award. We are on hand at any point during that period and beyond to offer advice and support.

Step 5: Celebrate! Let everyone know what you have achieved, and keep sending us examples of good practice that we can share with others.

How does a Nursery maintain Gender Friendly status?

Following a period of three years we will ask you to complete the audit again and look at whether any further actions need to be taken. It could be that staff changes mean there is a need for further training; old habits may have crept back in; or you may feel you would like to take things a step further. We will discuss with you whether anything needs to be done and once we are satisfied that the Nursery is continuing to be Gender Friendly, you will receive an updated award.

How does the Gender Friendly Nursery fit with A Curriculum for Excellence

“Learning through health and wellbeing promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. Because of this, it is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and development in this area.” Building the Curriculum 1

The promotion of positive health and wellbeing is the responsibility of all nursery staff. When we understand that good physical, emotional and social health require the freedom to express oneself, explore and learn in a safe environment, then we can see how the Gender Friendly Nursery meets many of the experiences and outcomes set out in A Curriculum for Excellence.

A Curriculum for Excellence: Experiences and Outcomes relating to Gender Equality

Health and Well Being

- I am aware of and able to express my feelings and am developing the ability to talk about them. HWB 0-01a / HWB 1-01a / HWB 2-01a / HWB 3-01a / HWB 4-01a
- I know that we all experience a variety of thoughts and emotions that affect how we feel and behave and I am learning ways of managing them. HWB 0-02a / HWB 1-02a / HWB 2-02a / HWB 3-02a / HWB 4-02a
- I understand that my feelings and reactions can change depending upon what is happening within and around me. This helps me to understand my own behaviour and
the way others behave. HWB 0-04a / HWB 1-04a / HWB 2-04a / HWB 3-04a / HWB 4-04a

- I know that friendship, caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships. As I develop and value relationships, I care and show respect for myself and others. HWB 0-05a / HWB 1-05a / HWB 2-05a / HWB 3-05a / HWB 4-05a

- I understand the importance of mental wellbeing and that this can be fostered and strengthened through personal coping skills and positive relationships. I know that it is not always possible to enjoy good mental health and that if this happens there is support available. HWB 0-06a / HWB 1-06a / HWB 2-06a / HWB 3-06a / HWB 4-06a

- I am learning skills and strategies which will support me in challenging times, particularly in relation to change and loss. HWB 0-07a / HWB 1-07a / HWB 2-07a / HWB 3-07a / HWB 4-07a

- I understand that people can feel alone and can be misunderstood and left out by others. I am learning how to give appropriate support. HWB 0-08a / HWB 1-08a / HWB 2-08a / HWB 3-08a / HWB 4-08a

- As I explore the rights to which I and others are entitled, I am able to exercise these rights appropriately and accept the responsibilities that go with them. I show respect for the rights of others. HWB 0-09a / HWB 1-09a / HWB 2-09a / HWB 3-09a / HWB 4-09a

- I recognise that each individual has a unique blend of abilities and needs. I contribute to making my school community one which values individuals equally and is a welcoming place for all. HWB 0-10a / HWB 1-10a / HWB 2-10a / HWB 3-10a / HWB 4-10a

- Representing my class, school and/or wider community encourages my self-worth and confidence and allows me to contribute to and participate in society. HWB 0-12a / HWB 1-12a / HWB 2-12a / HWB 3-12a / HWB 4-12a

- Through contributing my views, time and talents, I play a part in bringing about positive change in my school and wider community. HWB 0-13a / HWB 1-13a / HWB 2-13a / HWB 3-13a / HWB 4-13a

- I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations. HWB 0-14a / HWB 1-14a / HWB 2-14a / HWB 3-14a / HWB 4-14a

- In everyday activity and play, I explore and make choices to develop my learning and interests. I am encouraged to use and share my experiences. HWB 0-19a

- I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play, both outdoors and indoors. HWB 0-25a

- I am aware of how friendships are formed and that likes, dislikes, special qualities and needs can influence relationships. HWB 0-44a / HWB 1-44a

- I understand positive things about friendships and relationships but when something worries or upsets me I know who I should talk to. HWB 0-44b / HWB 1-44b

- I am aware of the need to respect personal space and boundaries and can recognise and respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication. HWB 0-45b / HWB 1-45b / HWB 2-45b / HWB 3-45b / HWB 4-45b

- I know that there are people in our lives who care for and look after us and I am aware that people may be cared for by parents, carers or other adults. HWB 0-45a / HWB 1-45a

- I recognise that we have similarities and differences but are all unique. HWB 0-47a / HWB 1-47a

- I am aware of my growing body and I am learning the correct names for its different parts and how they work. HWB 0-47b / HWB 1-47b
• I am learning about respect for my body and what behaviour is right and wrong. I know who I should talk to if I am worried about this. HWB 0-49a / HWB 1-49a
• I am able to show an awareness of the tasks required to look after a baby. HWB 0-51a / HWB 1-51a

Social Sciences

• By exploring my local community, I have discovered the different roles people play and how they can help. SOC 0-16a
• I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others. SOC 0-17a
• Within my everyday experiences and play, I make choices about where I work, how I work and who I work with. SOC 0-18a

Religious and Moral Education

• As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and the importance of caring for, sharing and cooperating with others. RME 0-05a
• As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and why caring and sharing are important. RME 0-09a
• I am developing respect for others and my understanding of their beliefs and values. RME 0-07a / 1-07a / RME 2-07a / RME 3-07a / RME 4-07a

The Health and Wellbeing framework describes features of the environment for learning which will support and nurture the health and wellbeing of children and young people, including a positive ethos and relationships, and participation in activities which promote a healthy lifestyle.
SECTION 2: What do we know about the impact of gender stereotyping in the early years?

Scotland is a diverse and multi-cultural country, home to people from different backgrounds, race, faith and gender. More and more we are learning, working, socialising and mixing with a broader group of people and we must be open to the different perspectives, opinions and needs that this brings.

Gender stereotyping affects people of all ages and on many levels. The sections below show some of the areas where it is particularly problematic.

Gender Based Violence

‘Violence against women … reflects an imbalance of power between men and women and also more general gender inequalities. Such abuse cannot be eradicated until there is an equal balance between men and women in society and relationships.’

‘Violence is preventable. The more we gather knowledge about it, the better off we are to contribute to its minimization in society.’

Gender Based Violence is an umbrella term for men’s violence against women and girls. While it recognises that some abuse is directed by women against men, the vast majority of cases are perpetrated by men. It is caused by deeply held patriarchal attitudes that place men in positions where they can exert control, and that justify the use of a variety of forms of violence to maintain this. Gender Based Violence includes domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, stalking and harassment, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced and child marriage and so-called honour crime. Other issues include gender based bullying, and online and social media behaviour such as sexting and intimate image abuse, also known as revenge porn.

Research shows that while children are often aware of traditional gender stereotypes, and that while in today’s society there is more freedom of choice, they still display attitudes that show these stereotypes are alive and well. The case study below illustrates this and looks at how deeply entrenched values and attitudes serve to uphold and justify violence against women. Children were shown to justify controlling and coercive behaviour.

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1 Preventing Violence Against Women: Action Across the Scottish Executive, 2001: 3
2 Stanko et al. 2003: 11
Case Study: Children, Construction of Gender and Understanding of Violence.
Research with Glasgow Primary School Pupils

Research conducted by Dr Nancy Lombard from Glasgow Caledonian University in several Glasgow Primary Schools showed that children, even at this early age subscribed to naturalised definitions of masculinity to explain (rather than question) why men (and boys) were violent. The children defined ‘real’ violence as physical acts done by men that had legal consequences. As such, much of the violence experienced or perpetrated by themselves, as young people, was minimised, normalised and regarded as ‘unreal. Children justified men’s violence against women using gender stereotypes and a rigid understanding of adult relationships framed by heterosexuality and marriage.’

“it’s not ok to hit a girl, but it’s ok if they annoy you”

“She’s been cheating on him, so she deserves it”

Young girls had ambition and felt, presently, there were few restrictions to achieving their goals. However they saw this as changing dramatically when they were married and had children.

During the training we will explore how attitudes and language are part of a sliding scale of violence that can result in physical violence and murder. This is to challenge the idea that sexist or gendered language or jokes are harmless.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)**

The pressure children and young people experience to conform to binary gender definitions affects all children, but has a particular impact on LGBT young people. Attitudes towards LGBT people reflect the difficulty many people still have in accepting the range of gender identities that exist. Much work has gone into eliminating bullying in schools, increasing safety and ensuring LGBT people feel able to report hate crimes. However prejudice still exists and has a damaging effect. The 2017 *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People* report ³ showed that:

- 71% of all LGBT young people and 82% of trans young people had experienced homophobic bullying in school
- 84% of all LGBT young people and 96% of trans young people felt they had experienced a mental health problem
- 50% of LGBT people and 63% of transgender young people experienced suicidal thoughts or behaviours

³ https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/Life_in_Scotland_for_lgbt_young_people.pdf
By creating a safe environment where children feel they can express themselves and explore their identity, the Gender Friendly Nursery reduces the pressure to conform. Although children will experience this pressure in many other areas of their lives, it is important to create safe spaces in order to make our society more tolerant and accepting.

### Impact on Men and Boys

There is much discussion about the pressures on girls and women to look, think and behave in certain ways. This can also be the case for boys and men. Boys are encouraged (whether by parents, grandparents and other carers; at school and in extra-curricular activities; in the media including television, magazines and computer games; in toy shops, bookshops and clothes shops) to act in ‘masculine’ ways: being adventurous, brave, active, in charge and in control. This is often at the expense of being caring and considerate, and being comfortable with their emotions.

The impact of this can influence the choices boys make as they grow up and become aware of what is deemed acceptable by society. From rejecting playing with dolls and dressing up to abandoning an interest in dance in favour of something more socially acceptable such as football, this can develop later in life into setting aside an interest in traditionally ‘feminine’ subjects at school, and trying to appear emotionally ‘strong’ in the face of difficult life events. Men still face barriers when they show an interest in following a career in childcare, or want to take time off work to spend time with their children or perform caring duties.

We know that mental health affects men and women in different ways. In 2016, the suicide rate in Scotland for males was more than two-and-a-half times that for females.

Becoming Gender Friendly is one way to help change attitudes and practise, bringing about a society that is more open, caring and fair for everyone.

### Educational Attainment, Employment and Income

It is well known that women and girls’ participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is poor, and that this is due to a number of factors including sexism in the workplace as well as the perception that STEM subjects are more suitable for boys and men. Just as poor is boys’ and men’s participation in caring subjects and professions such as nursing and childcare. In addition we have evidence that girls outperform boys academically across all stages and subjects, yet this does not translate into equality in the workplace.

A number of factors contribute to this including behaviour, peer pressure and attitudes towards learning. However it is accepted that breaking down gender stereotypes is one way to encourage children and young people to engage in education and to choose subjects based on interest and ability rather than peer pressure.

The gender pay gap is still with us. Girl’s aspirations, attitudes towards women returning to work and to older working women contribute to this. According to the Fawcett Society, 54 000 women are forced to leave their job early as a result of poor treatment after they have their baby each year; women are more likely to be in low paid and low skilled jobs, face workplace discrimination, and make up just five of the Chief Executives in the FTSE 100.

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4 http://www.scotpho.org.uk/health-wellbeing-and-disease/suicide/key-points
5 http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk
Other areas affected by gender stereotypes

Parenting: the roles of dads and mums are influenced by society’s expectations. Although we now recognise the importance of dad within the family and the positive influence they have in their children’s lives, many men still feel under pressure to be football-playing, bread-winning, strong, silent types. Additionally, despite being more involved than ever before, many dads report feeling unwelcomed or even ignored by children and family services. Questions may still be asked about mums who choose to return to work early, or who do not conform to the traditional, nurturing mother role expected of them by society.

Perinatal mental health: the pressure on women to fit the stereotypical image of motherhood can also cause problems with mental health. Compounded by a lack of social and peer support for mothers, this has been shown to be a risk factor for post-natal depression, as has gender based violence.

Breastfeeding: women thinking about breastfeeding can face various barriers. One contributing factor can be the double standards that prevail around women’s bodies, leading to some breastfeeding women feeling the need to hide.

Health behaviours: we know that girls drop out of sports in their teens and that one of the reasons for this is embarrassment about their body shape and about sweating. Many women also face sexist comments at the gym, swimming pool or when out running. This has a knock-on effect on women’s health and fitness. Insecurities about body shape can contribute to eating disorders. It is also commonly known that generally men seek help and use health services less frequently and much later than women do.
SECTION 3: Creating a Gender Friendly Nursery

What are the key elements of a gender friendly nursery?

There are many ways in which nurseries can promote gender equality. It is our vision that a comprehensive approach would include consideration of the following:

- **Staff attitudes, understanding and awareness**: Staff are challenged through the Gender Friendly Nursery training to consider their own and other’s attitudes towards gender. Staff will have raised awareness of the damaging impact of gender stereotyping and an understanding of how subtle changes in practice can have a big impact.

- **The nursery environment**: This includes the display of resources (see Resources, p19), as well as the layout of the space available and ways in which spaces are made available to all rather than being restrictive.

- **Nursery Management**: A Gender Friendly Nursery will have leadership that believes in the importance of promoting gender equality and understands the impact of gender stereotyping. Management will support staff to understand this, to make changes to their practise, and will reflect Gender Friendly attitude in policy, communications and practise.

- **Resources**: This includes a review of resources on display and being used within the nursery. A list of Gender Friendly resources is included in Section 4.

- **Developing practices that challenge gender stereotypes**: This ranges from careful consideration of language used and activities promoted, to how challenges from children, parents, carers, staff and visitors are handled. There are many ways in which we all unconsciously display gender biases so this is about becoming more self-aware and making changes wherever possible.

- **Communication and engagement with parents and the wider community**: how we can address mums, dads, carers and visitors to the nursery, both verbally and on paper, can have a huge impact on how included they feel, and can help to either break down or perpetuate stereotypes. A Gender Friendly Nursery will give consideration to this ensuring that traditional, caring duties are not portrayed as a female only role.

We have created a Gender Friendly Nursery audit tool (see Appendix A) which establishments can use to gain a better of sense of where they are at with gender friendly nursery practices. The audit can then be repeated following the accreditation process as a way of identifying progress made.
Staff attitudes, understanding and awareness

The Gender Friendly Nursery staff training session is the cornerstone of the Gender Friendly Nursery award, and an essential part of the accreditation process. This is the primary mechanism through which staff will be able to consider their attitudes and values towards gender, increase their knowledge and understanding, and learn strategies for changing their practice.

It is hoped that by participating in the training, staff will feel equipped and inspired to take this work forward.

Offering the training to all staff means that attitudinal change can be experienced together and issues can be explored as a group so that the changes your staff identify as being necessary can begin straight away, and staff can support each other in the process. You could consider extending the training offer to include support staff as well.
The nursery environment can be a key way in which gender roles can be unintentionally reinforced and is a key area for all Gender Friendly Nurseries to consider.

### Dos and Don’ts for a Gender Friendly Nursery Environment

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<th>Don’t</th>
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<tr>
<td>✔ Consider colours and decoration. A pink home corner gives off a strong message that this area is for girls. Consider using a variety of colours across the nursery.</td>
<td>✘ Divide children into groups by sex. Think of other ways of doing this such as the month they were born, random numbering, or assigning different colours to different groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔ Use gender neutral activities and toys. Toys such as blocks, paints, and crafts are gender neutral and are a better starting point than dolls and cars. You will still have to work at how children use them and encourage boys and girls to get involved.</td>
<td>✘ Create unintentional segregation. The presence of a home corner for example may unconsciously segregate boys and girls. Think about how the home corner is used. You could place the toys which are often seen as “boys’ toys” in the home corner and put the dolls among the blocks.</td>
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<td>✔ Suggest alternatives for role-play. Too often the storylines and ideas for children play can reflect the rigidly defined gender roles in many children’s TV programmes and films. The power of the media should not be underestimated. Suggest new storylines – daddy looking after the baby, heroic princesses saving the day, boy nurses caring for patients, girl explorers discovering new places.</td>
<td>✘ Promote particular ways of being girls/boys, men/women. Ensure that books and materials portray positive images of both sexes and challenge gender and other stereotypes. (see resources section for suggestions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔ Allow free choice in dressing up. Make it clear that all the children can dress up in whatever they want. Try to avoid making assumptions based on gender about what boys and girls will want to dress up as.</td>
<td>✘ Allow gender stereotyping or discrimination to go unchallenged. Listen and look out for language and behaviour which shows signs of sex discrimination. Use these opportunities to discuss with the children about how they understand gender and sexism and explore alternative views.</td>
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Nursery Management

Things A Nursery Manager Can Do to Help Create a Gender Friendly Nursery

1. **Attitude** – Give off the right signals. If it seems like you place importance on gender, then others will too.

2. **Keep it on the agenda** - Place gender at the heart of nursery life and ensure it receives the same attention and focus as other areas of nursery management. Consider adding the GFN to your Nursery Improvement Plan.

3. **Walk the walk** – Lead by example by ensuring your own practices and the way the nursery is managed are gender friendly.

4. **Encourage, but be realistic!** – Many staff may need extra support and encouragement when it comes to changing practice (and attitudes) towards gender. Understandably, attitudes and practices around gender can be deeply engrained so change may take time.

5. **Evaluate** – keep on checking back to see whether you are making change where change is needed. Collect evidence showing how this has made a real difference. Celebrate your achievements!

**Gender friendly nursery policies**

Most if not all nurseries will have an Equalities policy as well as policies on positive behaviour, recruitment and induction and other areas that will relate to the themes here. However in order to be truly advocating gender equality, a policy should state this specifically and where possible give examples of what this means in practise. For example, a private nursery could look at the pay and conditions of its lowest paid staff (who will usually be female). A policy should show that there is an understanding of the roots of gender inequality. The policy should also make it clear that ‘equality’ does not mean treating everyone the same but taking measures to ensure everyone has equal access to opportunities.

**Recruitment and male staff**

There are now more men than ever before involved in childcare, both in the home and from an employment perspective. Parental leave policies and organisations such as Men In Childcare and Fathers Network Scotland have supported this, and have helped promote a shift in attitudes towards the role of male carers. This in turn has helped women to remain in, or return to employment when they become mothers, and can only serve to raise girls’ aspirations.

If you have male staff in your nursery it is important to consider the ways in which they are viewed by other staff, children and parents/carers alike. It is easy to fall back on gender stereotypes where male staff carry out heavy lifting, technical and outdoor activities and female staff change nappies, prepare food and give cuddles! Male staff provide the perfect opportunity to put an end to these stereotypes.

Be mindful of how your language, environment and practice can encourage, or discourage, men from working with you or from becoming more involved in their child’s education.
15 questions for Nursery Managers to consider

1. How are male staff placed and used within the nursery?

2. Are staff encouraged to challenge gender stereotypes through day to day supervision?

3. Consider the physical layout of the nursery. E.g. are cloakroom areas separated by gender?

4. Is it made clear to visitors to the nursery that no distinctions are made re boys and girls when being addressed?

5. Do male and female staff within the nursery interact in a positive and supportive way?

6. Does your nursery strive to present all children with positive role models such as brave, active, thinking females and caring males, and a balanced view of everyday life where people of all descriptions are seen in a variety of roles and activities?

7. During group activities how are children addressed? Good morning boys and girls/everyone/other?

8. Do you feel your staff hold any stereotypes or preconceptions about what boys and girls can and cannot do?

9. Has curriculum planning / monitoring been overseen to check content, learning resources etc for gender?

10. How are parents addressed in nursery correspondence?

11. Does the nursery have a clear policy with regard to gender and does this permeate all aspects of nursery life?

12. Are the children ever separated by gender for specific activities?

13. Do male and female staff interact and speak to one another to reflect a gender neutral tone or do they treat each other differently according to their gender? Are staff aware of the example this sets for children?

14. Is there a dress code for staff working at nursery? What does this say for male and female staff?

15. How will you as a nursery manager challenge behaviours which contradict the ethos of a Gender Friendly Nursery?
Developing practices that challenge gender stereotypes

What are practices that challenge gender stereotypes?

- Thinking about how you speak to children and using inclusive language
- Talking about gender roles and providing a variety of role models for all children
- Using “unisex” toys, games and activities
- Using pictures and stories which depict men and women in a variety of and non-traditional roles
- Encouraging all children to use all toys and areas
- Having books and other resources which are anti-sexist and which challenge some of the unwritten rules
- Question! Don’t just accept that boys are slower/less interested in starting to read than girls – question why this might be by looking at their experiences at home and in the nursery, the provision of reading materials and the attitudes of grown-ups to using them. If girls appear to be ‘bossy’, question whether this is really the case or whether they are asserting themselves in a different way from boys, and why this might be.

The Importance of Language and Communication

As outlined in the Gender Friendly Nursery training, the importance of language and ways of communicating in teaching children about gender cannot be underestimated.

As well as being aware and changing your own language, tone and ways of addressing children it is important to challenge inappropriate language and communication when you hear it.

The Importance of Challenge

Gender stereotypes are so deeply ingrained that it can be very difficult to stop using them. It might be necessary to remind staff who have been trained of the need to be vigilant and perhaps support each other to keep being ‘Gender Friendly’.

You will also come across many children, parents or carers, visitors to the nursery and others who will do or say things that do not fit with the Gender Friendly Nursery ethos. A visitor might appear shocked or surprised to see boys playing with dolls; a child might exclude another child from a game on the basis of their gender; or a grandparent might remark that a little girl is ‘not very ladylike’ because she has mud on her dress.

Part of the Gender Friendly Nursery training is about preparing for and being ready to challenge these kinds of attitudes. A throwaway comment may seem harmless but its impact, as part of a steady drip of comments, actions and expectations, can be huge and can influence a child for the rest of its life.

A good idea would be to use the ‘challenges’ exercise in the training as a starting point and develop a series of responses that the staff are comfortable with, to be used in different situations. This could be added to as time goes on and more situations crop up.

SOURCE: Adapted from Just Like a Child, Zero Tolerance
Engaging Parents/Carers and the Wider Community

Communication with parents is key and so parents should be, and have a right to be informed of changes to nursery practices and policies, and specific initiative and approaches being taken by the nursery. They need to know what is happening and why. Ideally parents should play a central part in any decision making process.

What do parents think about the role of nurseries around gender?

In 2015/2016 Zero Tolerance surveyed 1386 parents of young children in Scotland. Over half of parents surveyed said that they would like to receive support to challenge gender stereotyping from their child’s nursery. Parents reported that they recognised gender stereotyping in commercial settings, in the attitudes of other parents and children, and in the media.

“As a parent of two small boys it shock me how widespread gender stereotyoes are in society”

“I’ve been horrifi ed at the pretty pink process clothes and toy culture. We want her to choose her interests, not have very limited choices imposed on her.”

“Gender stereotyping is everywhere, and from a young age is subconsciously conditioning children to conform to these pointless gender roles.”

What do parents want to know?

The Zero Tolerance research suggested that parents would welcome:

• Research and facts which challenge assumptions about gender
• Strategies to challenge stereotyping when they encounter it in real life
• Ideas about what to say when challenging other people
• Ways of speaking to children about gender
• Ways of teaching children to challenge gender stereotyping
• Gender neutral toy or book recommendations

Ideas for engaging with parents:

• Include parents views at the start of the Gender Friendly Nursery process and involve them in the development of any new initiatives or policies
• Consider equality themed children or parents events perhaps with relevant speakers from partner agencies.
• Display relevant materials at parents night and use the opportunity to inform parents of developments.
• Consider using some of the provided, adapted training materials for a session with parents/carers groups
• Include relevant information and updates in nursery newsletters
• Is there potential to create or develop a supportive network of parents where parents can discuss and receive support around gender?
• Run a campaign around gender equality that both parents and children can be involved in
• Use social media as a tool to link parents to online videos, podcasts and resources
• Try to engage with all parents, not just the usual suspects
• Provide a written guide for parents which includes suggestions on how they can communicate about gender to their children
• Invite parents to be helpers at specific events
• Develop relevant case studies to help place gender in context and improve parents knowledge and understanding
• Be creative with how you involve parents. The more interactive and engaging the approach the more likely they will want to be part of it
• Follow up and feedback. After an event or meeting, let parents know how the issues raised will be taken forward. A simple action plan can work well. And remember to inform them of progress on the actions later.

Involving Dads and male carers

The value of dads within both the home and the nursery environment is increasingly evident. Families as a whole benefit from involved fathers. As such nurseries need to be sure to include and not exclude dads in all aspects of nursery life.

• The feel of a place is important and should give off the message that this is a place for all, not just for mothers. Consider public areas in the nursery. Are the resources on display intended for both women and men. If reading materials are available are these suitable for all?
• Displays, leaflets, posters and other materials convey a powerful message. Nurseries should ensure that materials include positive images of fathers being actively involved in both home life and life within the nursery.
• Language is extremely powerful. Research from Fathers Network Scotland suggests that when the word “parent” is used, the societal default understanding is that parent equals mother. Nurseries need to ensure that the language used when communicating with families is inclusive to families of all descriptions. “Mums and dads” may suggest an assumption that families have two, heterosexual parents – and don’t forget carers. What about “grown-ups“?

NB ‘Father-proofing’ the nursery is as much about stopping presenting women and mothers as the sole carer or the one with sole responsibility for child-rearing and the health, wellbeing and welfare of children.
SECTION 4: Resources and Links to further information

Please see the resources section at the end of *Just Like a Child (Zero Tolerance)* – see below for a comprehensive list of books, films, toys, crafts and clothes that are gender neutral, promote gender equality or explore gender themes. *Just Like a Child* also contains sections on Further Reading and Websites. The following resources are either too new to have appeared in *Just Like a Child*, are local to Glasgow or have been recommended by our other partners in this work.

### Pupil Facing Resources

Talk 2 – your local library has a range of Talk 2 books which support parents and carers to talk to their children about relationships and sexual health in an age appropriate way. Several books explore gender issues. Call your local library for more information.

See the Let Toys Be Toys campaign for more resources – details in Just Like a Child. There are also similar online campaigns on books and clothes:
- Let Clothes Be Clothes [https://www.letclothesbeclothes.uk/](https://www.letclothesbeclothes.uk/)

### Resources for staff/parents


Early Protective Messages: an extension of the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting agenda for early years staff, setting out guidance and best practice around child protection messages such as correct naming of body parts and consent. Includes parent workshops. Contact your QIO or Leader or Early Learning for more information.

Improving Gender Balance Scotland: 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 sciences, technologies, engineering and maths (STEM). Gender stereotyping is everywhere in our culture, but schools can make a real difference both by becoming more aware of potential issues themselves, and by helping young people become more aware. The page contains links to research and resources to help practitioners identify and tackle issues of gender stereotyping in their classrooms and schools, including early learning and childcare settings. [http://www.bit.ly/NIHIGB](http://www.bit.ly/NIHIGB)

Fathers: The Fathers Network Scotland website ([http://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk](http://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk)) has a wealth of research, guidance and resources which can be utilised by nurseries on their journey to becoming gender friendly. Under resources for services there are a series of factsheets which include guidance on father-proofing services and engaging with dads.
Parents @ Sandyford: information and advice for parents on talking to and supporting their children with sexual health, gender and other issues. See under ‘Useful Websites’.

**Further Reading**


*The Trouble with CBeebies* – a Guardian article discussing gender stereotyping in children’s programmes: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/02/gender.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/02/gender.uk)


See also Dr. Nancy Lombard’s website (under Partners) for a wealth of research into gender and sexuality, attitudes towards gender and violence against women.
Useful Websites

Sandyford: the specialised sexual health service for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, including both clinical and health improvement elements. The website includes lots of helpful information for professionals, parents and young people. Parents @ Sandyford [http://www.sandyford.org/parents-sandyford]

The checkout – information on consumer choices including this YouTube clip on gendered marketing [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JDmb_f3E2c]

TED talks: TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). Many of the talks discuss gender issues – try searching ‘gender’. [http://www.ted.com] TEDx talks are independently run and include talks held in Glasgow. [http://www.ted.com/about/programs-initiatives/tedx-program]

A Mighty Girl: a website dedicated to promoting books, toys and films for ‘smart, confident and courageous girls’ [http://www.amightygirl.com/]

Michael Kaufman: a public speaker, writer, and consultant, who aims to engage men and boys in promoting gender equality and transforming men’s lives. He is the co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women. He wrote the training program on sexual harassment used by tens of thousands of staff at the United Nations: [http://www.michaelkaufman.com/]


The Gina Davis Institute: contains a wealth of research into gender disparities in the film industry, and discussions on how this impacts on the public: [https://www.seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/]
More information on our partners

Fathers Network Scotland http://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/
LGBT Youth Scotland https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/
Men in Childcare http://www.meninchildcare.co.uk/
respectme http://respectme.org.uk/
Zero Tolerance http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/
Dr. Nancy Lombard https://www.gcu.ac.uk/gsbs/staff/drnancylombard/
### SECTION 5: Appendices

#### Appendix A: Gender Friendly Nursery Audit Tool

**The Gender Friendly Nursery Audit Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nursery Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Member(s) Completing Audit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Does the nursery environment reflect a gender balance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we do well?</th>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where could we develop?</th>
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</table>

**SPECIFICS**

**Toilets**

**Cloakroom**

**Displays**
- Are boys/girls shown equally engaging in active/sedentary/science & technology/caring etc. activities?
- Do pictures of parents include dads & grandads?

**Activity corners**
- Do staff encourage both genders to play at eg. house/building?
- How do you ensure themed areas aren’t dominated by children of one gender?

**Toys**
- Do the toys available for children reflect a gender balance?
- How do you ensure toys aren’t grouped in ways that promote stereotypes?

**Staff Room**
- Is the staff room welcoming for all grown ups?
### 2. How gender neutral are our resources?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we do well?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where could we develop?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### SPECIFICS

**Books**
- Do they encourage stereotypes or equality?
- Do ‘alternative’ relationships feature?
- Who chooses books to read & what influences the choice?

**Dressing up**
- Is there a wide range of costumes, including gender neutral?
- How do staff encourage free choice/experimentation?

**Arts & crafts**
- What do boys & girls make?
- What influences their choice?

**Technology**
- How do boys & girls participate?
- What influences this?
- Are girls encouraged to experiment and take risks?

**Other indoor toys...?**

**Outdoors**
- Are there gender differences in the ways children do outdoor activity? e.g. Active play/toys with wheels/gardening/adventure/house play/nature activities

**Celebrations**
- Christmas & birthdays – are presents given gender neutral?
- How does the nursery allocate nativity or other play roles?
### 3. Are our staff gender aware?

**What do we do well?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff awareness</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do staff have an understanding of gender issues/require training?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff gender balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any male staff – if so what is their role/how are they seen by colleagues, parents etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions with parents/carers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do staff deal with parent/carer issues around gender? Any good strategies?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions with children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do staff deal with children’s issues around gender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are girls complimented on appearance/boys on intelligence/courage etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does this take account of the interests and developmental needs of all children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your planning promote areas such as STEM for girls/emotional literacy for boys?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Do we manage/lead our nursery in a gender neutral way?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we do well?</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where could we develop?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**SPECIFICS**

**Recruitment**
- Are men encouraged to apply?

**Communication with Staff**
- Are nursery policy documents, staff newsletters etc written in a gender neutral way?

**Equal Opportunities**
- Does the nursery have an equal opportunity policy?

**Management Awareness**
- Do management hold strong views on or have an understanding of gender equality?

**Management interaction with Parent/carers**
- How do management deal with parent/carer issues around gender?

**Behaviour management**
- Are there differences in the way girls and boys are disciplined and the reasons they are disciplined?
### 5. Parents & carers/wider community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we do well?</th>
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<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Where could we develop?</th>
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</table>

### SPECIFICS

#### Communication
- Do our newsletters, letters, posters, displays encourage and celebrate male carer involvement?

#### Families
- Is there an assumption about heterosexual couples?

#### Dads
- Are dads fully included in nursery life?
- Do we specifically invite dads to nursery events?
- Do we record, know and use dad’s name?
- Do we consult with dads about how they want to be involved in the nursery?

#### Parent Interaction with Nursery
- Is there an active parent group or other opportunities for us to engage parents/carers in this work?
- Is there a newsletter or regular mailings home to parents?
- Is there a website or social media page that the nursery uses to communicate with parents?

#### Gender in the Community
- Are there any particular gender issues in the community?

#### Welcome meetings
- Are these used to promote equality?

#### Shared campus
- How is gender work continued?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>6. Curriculum, Learning &amp; Teaching</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do we do well?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Where could we develop?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPECIFICS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curricular packs in use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What curricular packs are used to promote emotional health (eg PATHS, Oh Lila), STEM, physical activity, healthy eating, SHRE, other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the nursery aware of gender differences and if so do they find ways to address them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visiting specialists &amp; partner orgs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do these encourage a variety of positive role models in varying genders (eg female fire fighters, male nurses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who promotes physical activity in the nursery?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there anything which has not been covered above?</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Way Forward Agreement

After completing your Gender Friendly Nursery training, staff from your nursery should set aside some time to agree the steps you will take together on your way to becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery. You must identify 10 actions you will take: five of these are mandatory and five should be identified by yourselves. These could have been identified through your nursery audit; they could be your own (or parents/carers, or the children’s) suggestions, or they could be taken from the list of suggestions below. Send a copy of this to the Gender Friendly Nurseries team.

Suggested actions:

• Have all staff read *Just Like A Child* – see resources.

• Reverse your colour scheme: if you have pink and blue versions of the same item, encourage children to experiment with using the version that is not the colour they might be expected to choose. When redecorating or buying new resources, be conscious of choosing colours with a view to reducing stereotypes.

• Have a staff ‘swear jar’ for gender stereotypes. Every time someone tells a girl she’s pretty or tells a boy to ‘be a brave boy’; makes a comment about ‘typical’ behaviour of boys or girls; they put a pound in the jar. The proceeds could go towards a gender-friendly resource or activity, or a night out for the staff. (Note: everyone has to consent to this one!)

• If you don’t already have this, consider having toilets/changing rooms/cloakrooms for children, rather than boys and girls.

• Change the way you locate play resources. Experiment with putting dinosaurs in the home corner, or ask children to build their own home corner and populate it with characters of their choice.

• Come up with a list of responses to gender stereotypical comments and actions from children, parents/carers and visitors. The staff group could practise using these on each other.

• Go on further training, or read up on some of the issues discussed on the training: how to help boys to be emotionally literate/how to encourage girls to be bold and confident; mental health issues; issues for people identifying as LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex); involving dads and male carers; gender based violence; and STEM.

• The staff could think about their own experiences as children and how these shaped the ways that they think and behave now.

• Appoint a gender ‘champion’ – someone who has a passion for this area of work and will be able to support the rest of the staff to move forward.

• Review the presents the children get from the nursery for Christmas/birthdays. Ensure they are promoting gender equality not stereotypes.
Our 10 Steps to becoming a Gender Friendly Nursery

Name of Early Years Establishment: __________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Who will be in charge?</th>
<th>Resources required</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Audit</strong>: Complete the audit and identify areas for development. These will be discussed at your progress visit.</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Policy</strong>: Ensure your policy reflects the following:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- gender stereotypes and gender equality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Recognition of the many different gender designations people may have and the need to allow children to experiment without fear of judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The need to be inclusive of mums, dads, carers, single-parent families, single-sex couples and people of different gender designations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The role of male nursery workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Inform</strong>: parents, carers, partner organisations and visitors to the nursery that you are an aspiring Gender Friendly Nursery, and where necessary provide information as to what this means.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Review</strong>: your communication with parents and carers to ensure there are no biases or assumptions about roles within the family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Review</strong>: your resources to ensure children are not subjected to gender stereotypes through books, toys and activities.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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Signed: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Please return a copy to: Barbara Adzajlic, North East Health Improvement Team, Eastbank Conference and Training Centre, 32 Academy Street, Glasgow G32 9AA.