

Improving Gender Balance and Increasing Diversity in England's Early Years Education (EYE) Workforce

Executive Summary

- The UK Early Years Education workforce lacks gender balance; at only 2% male, the UK is below the European average and has not improved over 20 years despite efforts from within the sector.
- The lack of diversity in Early Years Education is not unique to the sector; there are other workforces characterised by gender imbalance. But it is extreme, and of particular concern given the importance of this workforce for 'modelling' gender diversity to future generations. Other traditionally female-dominated professions are significantly more gender-balanced, for example primary school teaching and nursing¹.
- The UK Government's plans to provide 30 hours of free Early Years Education for all 3 – 4 year-olds require an increase in the total workforce; ensuring good quality provision necessitates recruitment from the full talent pool, both male and female. Evidence suggests almost half of private and voluntary sector providers have vacancies.
- Countries that exceed the European average for males in the Early Years Education workforce have grasped the importance of this issue for the advancement of gender equality, and achieved improvements through concerted national campaigns to raise the status of the EYE profession.
- This report identified isolated cases of UK EYE providers bucking the trend for recruitment of male practitioners; however progress is piecemeal and there is no evidence of practice that could scale up to work on a national scale.
- Looking at other sectors, the UK is also below the European average for females in the STEM workforce. The Engineering sector has, unsuccessfully, applied self-determined interventions for over 30 years. The 'Year of the Engineer 2018', a national campaign, and an aspirational target for the sector of 30% of the STEM workforce female, is addressing the gender imbalance in STEM.
- The evidence clearly shows that the optimal approach to increasing the gender diversity of the EYE workforce comprises, as a minimum:
 - a national campaign and coordinating body to raise the profile of EYE as a career choice, harnessing the best ideas and talent within the sector to drive forward the agenda outlined in this document;
 - an aspirational target for the sector of 30% of the EYE workforce male by 2030;
 - Improved quality of careers advice for both students and career changers;
 - Improved training courses devised for a diverse intake.

¹ 11.4% of registered nurses were male in 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2017/mar/01/why-so-few-male-nurses>; 15% of primary school teachers were male in 2015 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/533618/SFR21_2016_MainText.pdf

Introduction

The Early Years Workforce Strategy published by the Department for Education in March 2017 stated that “*we want children in early years provision to have both male and female role models to guide them in their early years, and we want more men to choose to work in the early years sector*”²

Furthermore Professor Cathy Nutbrown’s report, Foundations for Quality³ highlighted the importance of early years staff having the appropriate knowledge and skills, to help them support the early learning of young children and enable them to progress to further study.

Currently England recruits from only half of the talent pool, with only around 2% of practitioners being male. Recruiting from the full talent pool will result in raising the average capability and productivity of the workforce, while creating a more balanced Early Years Education (EYE) workforce - a key building block for a more gender-equal society.

The Gender Diversity Task and Finish group was convened in the last quarter of 2017 in response to the identified need to attract, recruit and retain a gender balanced and diverse workforce in Early Years Education.

The group comprised representatives from Early Years organisations, trade unions, academic researchers, subject matter experts and external advisers. This report is the result of the group’s collective knowledge, experience and deliberations. This report was produced by:

- David Wright, Owner of Paintpots Nursery, Southampton, founder of Southampton Area Men in Early Years network, and Chair of the Gender Diversity Task & Finish Group
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²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596884/Workforce_strategy_02-03-2017.pdf

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutbrown-review-foundations-for-quality>.

Proposals

Our proposals, listed below, aim to recruit more males to Early Years Education (EYE) careers in order to:

- improve the gender balance and diversity of the workforce and thereby provide children with both male and female caregiver-educator role models, to allow them to internalize the concept of gender equality in society;
- recruit from the full talent pool of the population, in order to optimize the capabilities and skills of the EYE workforce, which would be expected to lead to improved educational outcomes for children.

We recommend that overall responsibility for coordinating government action on this agenda, including for collecting and reporting on progress against targets (as outlined in Proposal 2 below) be shared by the Department for Education and the Government Equalities Office. It is imperative that the lack of men in Early Years, and the current failure of Government/the EY sector to take a strong stand on the workplace discrimination faced by some men in the sector, be recognized and responded to as examples of serious and institutionalized gender inequality.

Proposals to increase the numbers of males recruited and retained in the EYE workforce

Proposal 1 : Raise the professional status of EYE careers in order to attract, recruit, retain and develop males as an under-represented group in the EYE workforce through:

- a national campaign, including a national Diversity in Early Years Education branding, to raise the status of EYE by:
 - emphasizing the focus on **education** and reducing the prevalence of gender stereotypes;
 - promoting positive examples of a diverse range of male practitioners working in Early Years Education;
 - counteracting suspicions of men around children;
- a suite of recruitment resources – online and hard copy - to attract a diverse range of people including men and boys:
 - given out by schools, training centres and EYE providers to potential recruits at any age;
 - using language more effectively eg using the People Like Me⁴ approach, to enable males to see that they will 'fit in' to the EYE environment;
- targeted, clearly differentiated recruitment campaigns for under-represented groups in the EYE workforce including:
 - boys;
 - apprentices;
 - fathers and father-figures attending Early Years services;
 - career changers;
- incentives to schools, jobcentres and training organisations to promote Early Years Education as a career option, including as a career change, for men as well as women.

Proposal 2 : Create and monitor targets to demonstrate improvements in diversity in the workforce including:

- a target of 30% increase in male practitioners by 2030 ("30 by 30") to be set for the sector; data to be collected from the sector and published annually by Government, to create a clear context within which all other actions in this document take place;

⁴ See page 12, and associated references, for more details.

- a target for the number of settings achieving a ‘kitemark’ of good practice in welcoming/increasing diversity in the workforce;
- annual collection of data on diversity in the Early Years workforce (ie the number of male practitioners working directly with children) to demonstrate progress against targets;
- workforce diversity to be included and assessed in the Ofsted Inspection framework.

Proposal 3 : Encourage and celebrate practices that promote a culture of inclusion and equality, including gender diversity, in Early Years settings in order to reduce turn over in the workforce including:

- an accreditation (‘kite mark’) scheme to recognise the support for and promotion of diversity including gender diversity in Early Years settings. This could resemble the successful Athena SWAN scheme in STEM;
- resources and training for practitioners to promote the benefits of employing a gender diverse workforce (and curriculum) among Early Years sector leaders;
- annual attitudinal survey of parents and practitioners to men working in EYE.

Proposal 4 : Improve the content and delivery of Early Years training courses in order to reflect the different needs of diverse practitioners joining at any age:

- review of both the content and the delivery practices of training courses for Early Years Education to ensure appropriate language use, gender equality and inclusion;
- review completion and achievement rates of males and females to ensure equal added value;
- create a ‘fast track’ entry route for mature career changers;
- provide young men with work experience in EYE settings, and offer free/heavily subsidized places on early years courses⁵;
- elevate EYE to a graduate level career as has happened with nursing, to increase status.

Proposal 5 : Develop a national ‘voice’ and shared objectives / branding / coordination for men in Early Years networks in order to retain men in the EYE workforce:

- establish and provide core funding for an independent national Men in Early Years organisation, to maximise the potential for peer-to-peer support, mentoring, case study and media/speaking opportunities, etc. in order to maximise retention of males in the workforce.

Proposal 6 : Evaluate the impact of more men in the Early Years workforce in order to identify the value of further actions:

- an annual survey on gender attitudes;
- longitudinal research comparing mixed versus single-gender Early Years workforces with regard to their influences on various child outcomes.

***Discussion of research evidence behind these proposals is found in Section 1
Discussion of methodology for undertaking these proposals is found in Section 2***

⁵ The Scottish Government is already trialling this approach <http://www.meninchilcare.co.uk/Courses.htm>.

Section 1 – Published research evidence on males in EYE

Where are we?

There are national shortages of practitioners in EYE⁶:

Early Years Providers are concerned they are unable to deliver on the Government's 30-hour funded childcare policy, as well as struggling to provide support for children with additional needs due to current difficulty recruiting staff. Two-thirds of nursery managers report being unable to recruit suitable staff to replace those that have left, due to a shortage of candidates (Gaunt, 2018).

Retention of staff is undermined by current pay levels:

The NDNA 2017/18 Workforce Survey of 500+ nurseries, indicated qualified staff are leaving the EY workforce because of endemic low pay, which is hitting recruitment and retention.

- 80% Level 3 staff leaving EYE last year found jobs outside early years and childcare;
- almost half of graduate staff and early years teachers leaving found jobs outside EYE;
- 86% nurseries reported losing staff in the last 12 months, some reporting Level 3 staff leaving to work for supermarkets or call centres.

Lack of detailed data makes it difficult to assess trends in recruitment and retention

For example:

- Is the percentage of male practitioners is growing/reducing?
- Is the percentage of BME practitioners particularly low/high?
- Are numbers in training growing/reducing?
- Do boys/men outperform/underperform females in training?
- Are boys/men are more/less likely than females to drop out of training?
- Are boys/men are more/less likely than females to enter EY on qualification?
- Are boys/men who undertake work experience in EYE are more likely to enter EY

The UK also lacks data on sector attitudes to gender diversity, which are likely to be key to improving recruitment and retention. See Appendix 1 for more detail.

Diversity in the EYE workforce has remained stubbornly poor for decades:

The percentage of males in EYE in the UK has remained at (estimated) 2% for over 15 years though the UK is not significantly worse than in other European countries. Brody (2014) indicates 2-3% as the global figure while Peeters et al (2015) indicate Norway, Denmark and Turkey as over 5%.

Males are entering non-traditional areas – but not EYE:

The Equal Opportunities Commission (2003) noted that "Men are an even smaller percentage of the childcare sector than in other female-dominated sectors such as hairdressing and health and social care.' childcare continues to exist as a 'gender ghetto' and it should '...become a modern service, drawing on the diverse talents of a broad cross section of men and women' "

Number of men in EYE lags behind the growth in men's hands-on caring for their own children:

Recent estimates show only between 3.8% and 7% are full-time 'home dads', although Burgess & Davies, (2017) shows that men's hands-on involvement in looking after their children has been growing significantly since the 1970s. A 2009 YouGov survey for EHRC (cited in Burgess & Davies, 2017) found:

- 21% of fathers of under-fives solely responsible for their care at some point during the working week;
- 43% of fathers of school-aged children providing solo care before or after school.

⁶ Throughout this report we refer to 'early years education' and EYE, to mean provision of early education and care to children aged 0-4 (pre-Reception). We also refer to it as 'early childhood education' (ECE).

A 2016 Working Families survey (*ibid*) containing a relatively high proportion of dual-full-time-earner parents, found:

- one third of fathers reported being the 'first port of call' when childcare breaks down;
- 70% of those aged 26-35 drop their children off at school either every day or more than half the time.

These findings make the lack of men in EY even more remarkable.

Conclusions :

- The UK needs more high quality EYE practitioners. By failing to recruit from the male half of the workforce the EYE profession is missing out on half the UK's talent;
- The proportion of UK male EYE practitioners is stubbornly low and this may be impacted by a lack of joined-up gender policies at government level;
- The UK's male EYE workforce has not grown in line with men's greater involvement in looking after their own children;
- Better data on male recruitment and retention in EYE, would lead to better understanding of recruitment trends affecting the sector and inform further action.

Does it matter?

Male role models aren't the solution to 'dysfunctional society':

"Critics have emphasised that initiatives designed to improve boys' academic achievement through the provision of 'male role models', operate as a re-gendering of society rather than a de-gendering and contribute to a backlash against gender equality (Martino and Rezai Rashti, 2012). A re-gendering of society emphasises the traditional gender binary whilst a de-gendering of society implies moving beyond this" (Warin 2017).

No research to date shows an immediate advantage in increased male presence in EYE:

Carrington and Skelton (2003), say that 'research has shown that matching young people and their teachers by gender and ethnicity makes little impact on pupil's attainment', whilst Cushman (2008) draws attention to a number of studies that have found that the qualities learners value in teachers are non-gender specific (Skelton, 2001; Lahelma, 2000; and Sumsion, 2000).

But the benefits of a mixed-gender EYE workforce are likely to be longer-term in nature:

Rolfe (2005) notes that "The assertion that men and women have different caring styles, which can benefit children, has been questioned" and "it could be seen as particularly unreasonable to expect male staff only to fulfil specific roles, such as father figure and playmate". However, research studies have focused on short-term immediate impacts rather than long term influences (see Warin, 2017). Longitudinal research comparing mixed-gender and single-gender workforces on their influences on various child outcomes including children's career aspirations would be valuable.

....and broadening the talent pool must improve overall quality and standards:

Increasing the pool from which the workforce is drawn would allow EYE providers to access the academic and other talents of the currently-missing half of the population, potentially increasing the average capability and productivity of the workforce, and improving outcomes for children.

The EYE workforce should reflect modern society:

Warin (2017) explains the "clear social case for gender balance in EYE – but only if both genders exercise gender flexible roles. If EYE practitioners default to gender stereotyped roles, this perpetuates the problem of gender imbalance across society". Warin describes the exemplary staffing policy of a children's centre in Bradford where the staff team is not only gender-balanced but deliberately includes a representation of the religious, racial and cultural groups who live around it. (Warin, 2017)

Improved gender diversity is a worthy goal in its own right...

“In order to achieve gender equality (in society) it is necessary for learners to witness men in roles with young children. However, this can only occur if the male teacher and his female colleagues are dedicated to upholding equity and de-gendering society. Otherwise they may find they are contributing to a re-gendering of society”. (Warin 2017)

...and greater gender diversity in society overall helps diversity in EYE

Countries with joined-up gender policies (eg parenting leave systems which actively seek to create greater equality between mothers and fathers in the workplace and at home) e.g. Norway and Denmark, have higher percentages of males in EYE. This suggests that men are more comfortable taking traditionally female roles in societies where there is more support for less gendered behaviours (Cremers et al, 2010).

Parents value males in EYE

The majority of parents in England are in favour of more male educators in early years education (see Gaunt 2009, Rolfe 2005) and male educators make EYE more attractive for many parents – including providing inspiration to rethink their child raising approach (Cremers et al, 2010). However Cameron et al. emphasize that mothers frequently put more trust in female educators than in male educators (see Cameron et al. 1999, pp. 99 ff) and 5% express huge scepticism regarding male educators in EYE – so providers seeking to recruit more male workers may encounter opposition from a small percentage of mothers.

Conclusions :

- Boys and girls need both male and female adult role models. Providing male role models should not be seen as a simple ‘catch-all’ way to improve boys’ behaviour and achievement;
- There is a societal case for a diverse workforce in EYE: a more diverse EYE workforce would benefit society by normalizing equality and inclusion;
- There is an educational case for a diverse workforce in EYE: a more diverse EYE workforce would draw on the full talent range of the UK population instead of on only half of it;
- Gender balance in EYE will demonstrate to children that adult roles are not gender specific;
- Broader representation of difference is at least as important as the gender balance eg BME representation.

Why do so few males choose EYE?

Pay may be important:

Childcare students and nursery workers most frequently cite inadequate pay among reasons for dissatisfaction and for wanting to leave a nursery job (Cameron et al, 2001; Rolfe et al, 2003). Men in couple households are more likely to be the sole or main breadwinner in their family (Burgess & Davies, 2017), so low pay and/or the lack of full-time work may be a factor for some/many men. Low pay is cited as a problem by employers, in both recruiting and retaining childcare workers, although some research from Germany indicates that low pay isn’t necessarily the barrier.

Low status may particularly turn men away from careers in EYE:

Rolfe (2005) notes that “low pay, the predominance of part-time work, the low status of childcare and its status as ‘women’s work’ all deter men from working in the sector” and “the predominance of part-time opportunities in the sector is widely believed to deter men, who are more likely than women to be seeking full-time employment. Although men are found in part-time jobs in childcare, there is evidence that some combine this work with study”.

But the vast majority of males never consider EYE as a career:

There is evidence that children’s career aspirations are highly gendered at a very young age (Chambers et al, 2018).

- One in four 14-15 year old boys surveyed agreed that a career in caring ‘sounds interesting’ (Fuller et al, 2005);
- One in eight 14-15 year old boys would be interested in working with children (Cook, 2005);
- Men’s enthusiasm for careers in these areas increases with age, and is particularly noticeable among males who retrain (Rolfe, 2005).

....and teacher/careers advisor expectations and biases restrict boys’ choices:

Careers advice rarely supports boys into caring professions while boys are often sent to ‘masculine’ work experience, and are never supported to think about ‘non-traditional’ careers like EYE. Males can face discrimination and marginalisation in these areas, which is rarely addressed (Kouta & Kaite, 2011; Cameron, 2006; Cameron et al, 1999).

Clear routes into EYE careers are not promoted:

Even for adult males who have appropriate work experience and a passion for child development, appropriate career paths are not visible. Few EYE providers have considered actively promoting EYE roles to men, or who those men might be (fathers/father-figures collecting children from the nursery), or how they might contact them, and how to communicate key messages. The Gatsby Standards initiative, aimed at improving school-based careers advice mentions gender equality as an area of focus, but only in terms of encouraging girls into traditionally ‘male’ careers (Gatsby Foundation, 2018).

EYE training is based on an outdated model:

There is an urgent need to review childcare training curricula and delivery of training to support men into childcare, particularly a fast track system for those entering as career changers (Vandenbroeck & Peeters, 2008).

Boys/men (like girls/women) are sensitive to others’ opinions and perceptions:

There is evidence that non-stereotypical behaviours displayed by boys are more likely to be met with negative reactions from peers (<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-education-and-training>). A TCRU study reported that, while women were supported by family and friends in their choice of childcare, men experienced a mixed reaction, often of surprise (see Owen, 1999:105). 50% of male childcare workers are worried about what others might think - peer pressure, false accusations, parental negativity about male intimate care (London Early Years Foundation, 2012). Research for the EOC found that while 80 per cent of girls would be willing to learn to do a nontraditional job, for boys the percentage is only 55%, (Fuller et al, 2005).

Fear of suspicions of child abuse:

International research evidence presents the ‘risk anxiety’ that boys and men experience about potential allegations of paedophilia (Martino and Berrill, 2003; Jones, 2004). This issue is mentioned frequently as a factor in job dissatisfaction, and may therefore also impact retention (BVZ Frankfurt 2006; Vandenbroeck/Peeters 2008; Watermann 2006).

Job titles can contribute to the ‘feminising’ of EYE work:

“Some childcare and early years job titles are also seen as barriers to men’s participation in the sector. ‘Nursery nurse’ and ‘nanny’ are the most strongly gendered job titles (Thurtle et al, 1998), while ‘child care’ implies a job requiring little skill or status” Men also reported teasing from friends who suggested that they merely sit around all day, emphasizing the low status of the profession.

...and males may avoid roles where they may be the only/’token’ man:

“... men are attracted to a nursery that already has a good proportion of men (Johannesen, 2010) as they are less likely to experience the vulnerabilities of being in a complete minority (Sumsion, 2010 ; Warin, 2006; Burn and Pratt-Adams, 2016).

....while boys fear being thought of as gay, and acknowledge that EYE is seen as ‘women’s work’

Interviews reveal that, alongside the role model of male family breadwinner, the stereotype of male educators being gay or the education of children being a matter for women, acts as an inhibitor in career choice orientation among young men (Cremers et al (2010)).

...but these effects may reduce with age

The Daycare Trust found that a considerably higher proportion of adult men than boys say they would consider working in the childcare sector (Daycare Trust, 2003). This suggests that attitudinal barriers among men to working in childcare decrease with age, or that older men with experience of looking after children may find careers in EY more interesting.

Families have influence on career choices but aren't aware of EYE opportunities:

"The positive aspects of childcare, including job satisfaction, and the skills and knowledge involved, are not sufficiently recognised by the general public, including many potential male childcare workers" (Rolfe 2005).

Conclusions :

- Low pay and status in EYE may put off men particularly if families depend on them as the sole or main breadwinner;
- Males considering a career in EYE must challenge the cultural opprobrium of crossing into a female-dominated world with limited status;
- Gender-stereotyping, bias and lack of appropriate information, guidance and support for possible male EYE recruits, including among teachers and careers advisers from secondary school upwards, are significant barriers to male recruitment.

What are the important factors in influencing choice for males?

Status matters:

Denmark's experience suggests that policy aimed at increasing the professional status of childcare work, through emphasis **on training and qualifications**, may change such conceptions and increase the popularity of childcare work among men (Cameron, 1997a). However Moss (2000:17) states: "...the process of professionalisation can serve to make early childhood work more exclusive, to the potential disadvantage of many women and children". (2000:17).

But EYE is often a 'career change' choice:

"... men are more likely than women to choose childcare as a 'second chance career', sometimes following a period of unemployment and a review of options (Cameron et al, 1999; Scott et al, 2000; Owen, 2003; Peeters, 2003)."

Hill suggests that older men from working class backgrounds, unemployed as a result of industrial restructuring, are a potential recruitment pool for the sector, if they are given the necessary training and support" and 'Older men and women often have valuable insights and experience to contribute'. (Hill, 1990:38). This may be a function of age/experience but is also likely to be affected by parental status and whether or not one has hands-on experience of bringing up children.

Boys with family members in EYE are more likely to consider this option:

Cremers et al (2010) indicated that many of the interviewed male trainees and early childhood educators grew up in families in which the mothers and/or fathers also worked as educators or in other social professions. This may suggest that when boys see EYE work as 'normal', and understand what it really involves, they feel more relaxed about its potential as a career for them.

Undertaking EYE work experience positively influences boys' intention to enter EY careers:

Positive practical experiences in areas of social work obtained in the framework of practical placements at schools, voluntary child and youth work, the voluntary social service year or

compulsory civilian service are important factors for men in deciding to become educators (Cameron et al. 1999; Uhrig 2006; Vandenbroeck/Peeters 2008; Watermann 2006).

But careers advisors limit boys' ambitions to enter non-typical careers:

Boys are receiving limited or no careers advice, or stereotypical (negative) advice, on these careers from careers advisors (City & Guilds, 2014).

Conclusions :

- Pay is a factor, but is likely to be so for all employees, not just men. However men's more common role as sole bread winner makes this a particular factor for them;
- Status is important - men often seek status and opportunities for career progression particularly as a means of providing for dependents;
- Families and friends are important sources of advice for males who might consider a career in EYE including as a career change;
- Young men's openness to potential careers in EYE can be restricted by poor quality/ stereotyped careers advice and limited, gender-proscribed teacher expectations including work experience opportunities.

What doesn't work in making EYE careers more attractive?

Advertising EYE careers doesn't, on its own, increase recruitment:

Activities of local authorities have included advertising in venues frequented by men and holding dedicated recruitment events. These approaches have raised the profile of men in childcare, but have not yet increased male employment. Rolfe (2005) observed that "The emphasis of the Government's SureStart recruitment campaign has been on advertising and promoting childcare as an option for men, and other groups who are underrepresented in the workforce. There appears to be a growing recognition that this may not be sufficient to attract men to work in the sector and that barriers such as low pay and poor career prospects must be overcome".

Employers' recruitment practices may be getting in the way:

A major gap in evidence concerns the recruitment process and its role in maintaining a segregated workforce. Research shows the prevalence of informal recruitment methods, including 'word of mouth' amongst EYE employers. This is likely to disadvantage men, who are often less connected to childcare circles (Rolfe 2005).

Conclusions :

- Blanket advertising is unlikely, on its own, to increase recruitment of men;
- Current employer recruitment practices fail to engage with men.

What does work in making EY careers more attractive?

Targets help:

Target setting has had a patchy history in the UK (Burn and Pratt-Adams) but the country with the greatest success on the inclusion of male staff, Norway (just under 10% of males in EYE) has set targets throughout their gender equality action plans. The 2014 action plan (the most recent) set the target of 20%.

Increasing status (and pay) play a part:

"There is evidence that it is not purely advertising and support which attracts and keeps men in childcare in other European countries, but the *nature* of the work, which is more knowledge-based and educational than childcare within a British context. In Norway and Denmark trained

‘pedagogues’ are able to work across a range of settings with children and young people aged up to 18 (see Cameron et al, 2003). This may raise the status of both the training and the occupation, and therefore increase their attraction to men (Rolfe 2005).

Developing EYE work placements for boys/men:

In Germany the New Paths for Boys project through short-term practical placements in so-called women’s professions, strives to expand the range of career choices for boys. Around one third of all short-term practical training placements completed by boys throughout the country within the scope of New Paths for Boys take place in EYE and after-school care clubs.

Extending the range of roles in EYE:

In Norway, the so-called “open-air kindergartens”, which place the emphasis of their educational work on adventures and natural experience already exceed the benchmark figure of 20% in qualified male personnel (see Friis 2009, p. 32). Kolding College integrates sports, movement and outdoor classes more strongly into its training course in order to attract more men into educator training. Male presence in the EYE workforce is highest in after-school and holiday provision, according to latest available DfE figures.

Targeting career changers and the unemployed:

“Publicity aimed at recruiting men was also circulated to venues visited by men, such as leisure centres and working men’s clubs. Although the response was initially slow, the response of men living in the city’s large council estates was positive and a number of men were recruited. These included men who had been made unemployed as a result of the decline of traditional industry in the city. The centre management believes that this was a result of a change in gender roles as women were becoming the main earners while men took responsibility for childcare (Meleady, 1998).

The wider context of comparable jobs:

Sak et al. (2015) tell us that Norway has the highest proportion of male practitioners in Europe, at 8.7%, with Turkey having a figure of 5.35%, due to a rapid increase over the last decade. Turkey is unusual because there has been no explicit recruitment drive there. Instead, the higher-than-average number of male workers is attributed (by Sak et al, who are Turkish) to the greater ease of finding a first job in EYE compared with primary school teaching, as the hours are longer in EYE. There is also a perception that it is relatively easy to access managerial positions in EYE (Sak et al, 2015).

Offering fast track programmes:

The Daycare Trust advocated ‘fast-track’ programmes which can help men into childcare employment quickly. Colleges need to develop marketing strategies to recruit men to childcare courses (Rolfe 2005).

Mentoring and mutual support can help:

Men-only courses at both introductory level and for childcare qualifications may help men to feel less isolated. The support of mentors both during training and while in employment, may help men to share experiences and deal with problems and set-backs. (Rolfe 2005).

Strong leadership is essential:

There is a need for a strong leadership position in relation to male staff, to protect them from unwarranted public and parental suspicion. Leaders need to offer an unequivocal position advocating men’s performance of all the care duties that women staff also perform such as nappy changing.

Ensure men can see that they will ‘fit in’:

Developing a ‘People Like Me’ programme to extend males’ views of how their natural aptitudes fit them for successful careers in EYE, could have the same positive impact as is seen in STEM.

Open University's independent review concluded that girls engaged with the PLM approach were more open minded about potential career options in non-traditional areas.

Diversity without inclusion is not enough:

It has been recognized in the context of getting more women into STEM professions, that creating an environment where all employees belong and feel valued for who they are is critical to achieving the benefits associated with diversity (Purity et al, 2017). It is likely therefore that to successfully advance the cause of men in children it will not be enough to simply get more men through the door...one will need to know how to support them to advance in their careers if they are to remain working in the field.

Conclusions :

- The nature and status of EY work, alongside pay, are major factors in attracting men to EYE;
- Providing evidence of opportunities for career progression, and for setting up one's own business, could help;
- Improving the quality of training and offering opportunities for a wide variety of men to try out work placements in EYE, might improve recruitment;
- Developing new/adapted roles and pathways (for example involving outdoor and sports-related activities) may attract a wider pool of recruits (including, but not limited to, men);
- Action to target recruitment closely to local labour market conditions, and to career changers, may be effective;
- Fast-track training, mentoring and other targeted support could also contribute to a successful male recruitment offer;
- A People Like Me approach could help outline to boys and men how they and their natural aptitudes might fit into the EYE sector.

Section 2: Recommendations from Professionals in the Sector

A series of 6 working group discussions were convened (see Appendix 1 for details) to consider the published research evidence above and to augment this with their experiences in the sector in order to generate ideas about how to bring about a significant change in the numbers of men working in Early Years Education. These 6 thematic discussions generated the 6 proposals listed in the Executive Summary, repeated here for ease, this section elaborates the recommended approaches from the working groups to achieving the proposals:

Working Group 1:

How do we attraction, recruit, retain and develop males in the Early Years Education workforce?

Proposal 1: Raise the professional status of EYE careers in order to attract, recruit, retain and develop under-represented groups, including males, in the EYE workforce including:

- a national campaign, including a national Diversity in Early Years Education branding, to raise the status of EYE by:
 - emphasizing the focus on **education** and reducing the prevalence of feminine stereotypes;
 - promoting positive examples of a diverse range of practitioners including men working in Early Years Education;
 - counteracting suspicions of men around children;
- a suite of **recruitment resources** – on-line and hard copy - to attract a diverse range of people including men and boys:
 - given out by schools, training centres and EYE providers to potential recruits at any age;
 - use language more effectively eg using the People Like Me approach, to enable males to see that they will 'fit in' to the EYE environment;
- **targeted, clearly differentiated recruitment campaigns** for under-represented groups in the EYE workforce including:
 - boys;
 - apprentices;
 - fathers and father-figures attending Early Years services;
 - career changers;
- **incentives to schools, jobcentres and training organisations** to promote Early Years Education as a career option, including as a career change, for men as well as women;

Recommended Approaches from Working Group 1

Discussions concluded that Early Years recruitment resources should follow a **nation brand** and employ carefully considered **language & imagery** to raise the status of the profession and appeal to a diverse range of men and boys. At the moment, language and imagery is essentially 'feminine' and, research shows, lead many males to understand that EYE is not for them. The People Like Me approach should be adapted for use with males in the EYE context.

Resources should be differentiated and **targeted separately** at:

- boys / young men considering first-time career options
- potential career changers eg older men including fathers and those not in work

We note the need to ensure men are not expected to perform stereotyped 'male' roles (e.g. sports, outdoor play).

Printed resources should include:

- flyers,
- posters,
- postcards,

On-Line resources should include:

- social media posts
- videos
- case studies featuring a diverse range of men

A central component of this should be a dedicated **website** hosting relevant information/evidence. The website should provide support or signposting for follow up on individual enquiries.

Appropriate distribution channels and follow up include:

- Job Centre Plus
- Community and Sports Centres
- Schools
- Careers services
- Word of mouth from current practitioners with men being 'hand-picked' for targeted communication

Resources and training should be provided to support EYE providers in engaging with fathers to encourage potential career changes to consider opportunities in Early Years Education and to offer 'taster' sessions in their workplace.

We note the need for the normalisation of the Early Years teaching profession as a career choice for both men and women and highlight the example of 'Teach First' as an example of an initiative to improve the status of teaching and increase male recruitment.

Feedback from one male early years practitioners on his experiences of visiting educational establishments to promote the role:-

'I have had the opportunity to go out to three different educational settings: a middle school, Senior school and a university. I had more positive feedback from the middle school children than I did from either of the other settings. Being able to explain the advantages and responsibilities of working in a nursery and even if it wasn't a choice of career the skills that they could learn from even being a temporary member of staff would hold them in good stead for any job they would wish to do in the future. I believe It is at this age where we can best start to show the new workforce that this is a job of choice and some time spent convincing them that it's not just bottle feeding babies.'

Careers advice in schools with respect to employment in the Early Years sector, is inadequate. There is ongoing evidence of stereotyping in the advice given. For example, girls may be directed towards 'hair and care'. Early Years teaching is not recognised or promoted by careers professionals as a high status profession or as suitable for males. Schools and careers advisors should be trained and incentivised to give less stereotypical advice – perhaps through Ofsted.

Working Group 2: **Can Targets Make a Difference?** **And how do we ensure effective data collection?**

Proposal 2: Create and monitor targets to demonstrate improvements in diversity in the workforce:

- A target of 30% increase in practitioners from under-represented groups eg males and BME practitioners over 5 years;
- A target for the number of settings achieving a 'kitemark' of good practice in increasing diversity in the workforce;

- **annual collection of data on diversity in the Early Years workforce** ie the number of male practitioners working directly with children to demonstrate progress against targets;
- include workforce diversity in the **Ofsted Inspection framework**.

Responsibility for collecting and reporting on progress against these targets would be shared by the Department for Education and the Government Equalities Office.

Recommended Approaches from Working Group 2

Practitioners, academics and other interested parties attending the first national men's conference in Southampton in 2016 concluded that a target is a necessary strategy for pushing recruitment efforts (Warin, 2017).

Tracking targets relies on regular collection and publication of data and we believe this is a fundamental requirement of any commitment to change the gender balance of the workforce. At the most basic level, data about male practitioners from the early years and childcare survey should be published annually in order to demonstrate progress. The Ofsted Framework could be a useful vehicle here.

Other areas of information that could be interesting and useful to know about with reference to growth in male recruitment, are

- Is the percentage of male practitioners is growing/reducing?
- Is the percentage of BME practitioners particularly low/high?
- Are numbers in training growing/reducing?
- Do boys/men outperform/underperform females in training?
- Are boys/men are more/less likely than females to drop out of training?
- Are boys/men are more/less likely than females to enter EY on qualification?
- Are boys/men who undertake work experience in EYE are more likely to enter EY

The UK also lacks data on sector attitudes to gender diversity, which are likely to be key to improving recruitment and retention.

Further consultation with the Early Years sector to clarify what/how data might be gathered at minimum cost, and funding to facilitate data gathering/ research, might be necessary.

Working Group 3:

How do we promote a culture of gender diversity?

Proposal 3: Encourage and celebrate practices that promote a culture of inclusion and equality, including gender diversity, in Early Years settings:

- **an accreditation ('kite mark') scheme** to recognise the support for and promotion of diversity including gender diversity in Early Years settings. This could be based on the successful Athena SWAN scheme in STEM in Higher Education;
- **resources and training for practitioners** to promote the benefits of employing a gender diverse workforce (and curriculum) among Early Years sector leaders;
- **Annual attitudinal survey** of parents and practitioners to men working in EYE.

Recommended Approaches from Working Group 3

We believe that the key to successful recruitment and retention of males is an Early Years environment which does not tolerate any discrimination towards male practitioners. There are still reports of settings accommodating parental requests not to have intimate care routines conducted by a male practitioner and male practitioners not being allowed to cuddle children/have them sitting on their laps.

We recommend that the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage should explicitly reference the need for compliance with the Equality Act 2010 with respect to protected characteristics of the workforce, including gender, ie. providers must not discriminate on the roles conducted by practitioners of different genders, ethnicity etc.

Ofsted should consider within its inspection framework, a provider's practice with respect to gender diversity, reporting on opportunities for children to interact with men as well as women and noting good practice linked to the use of gender-diversity resources. A 'kite mark' would provide an incentive to providers to collect and publish the required data and demonstrate they are adhering to good practice in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce. The Athena SWAN scheme which has successfully tackled the employment environment and culture in Higher Education would provide a starting model.

It is important to address the issue of fear and the inappropriateness felt by some parents regarding men working with young children as this presents a barrier to entry for men into the workforce as they are aware that they are under suspicion by virtue of their sex and that their motives and actions are open to misinterpretation, potentially resulting in false allegations against them. This also creates a reluctance on the part of some providers to employ men due to the fear that the organisation's reputation might be tarnished through such allegations.

Campaigns highlighting the many positive examples of men working safely, successfully and beneficially for the sake of children and for whom managers, colleagues, parents and children have the highest regard, would counter these negative perceptions. An example of a national media campaign is being set up in Scotland⁷.

Phraseology within the profession should be de-gendered – for example 'nursery nurse, nanny and child care' are subliminally associated with the feminine and therefore indicate to males that they are unlikely to feel a sense of 'belonging' in the work environment.

We also believe it is important to understand attitudes as a measure of cultural beliefs, with respect to men working in Early Years. An annual survey of attitudes of both practitioners and parents and carers would provide this data.

Working Group 4: **Should we change Early Years training?**

Proposal 4: Improve the content and delivery of Early Years training courses to reflect the different needs of diverse practitioners joining at any age:

- review of both the **content and the delivery practices of training courses** for Early Years Education to ensure appropriate language use, gender equality and inclusion;
- review **completion and achievement rates** of males and females to ensure equal added value;
- create a **'fast track'** entry route for mature career changers;
- provide young men with **work experience** in EYE settings;
- Elevate EYE to a **graduate level career** as has happened with nursing to increase status.

Recommendations from Working Group 4:

Feedback from male practitioners on the language and approach employed by tutors on Early Years courses is that this feels 'female focused' and more work needs to be done on their

⁷http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15626143.A_major_push_to_recruit_more_men_into_childcare_roles/

promotion of the benefits of a diverse workforce, and the role of fathers. Most practitioners had (understandably) found that the majority or all of their tutors were female and there was a lack of positive male role models among the teaching community, as well as confidantes to reassure and support them given that they were in the minority in the classroom.

For example:

- Perhaps due to a desire to seem inclusive, issues of gender and diversity in terms of the workforce are not discussed and it would be better to address this openly and discuss the benefits and how to overcome potential barriers.
- Content should be reviewed to include specific reference to the significance of gender in the Early Years. This could include a case study on a gender neutral nursery. In Sweden the national curriculum expects the challenging of children's gender stereotypes; mixed gender workforces provide a ready-made resource for doing this.
- In the unit covering equality and diversity there is an opportunity to focus on the benefits of a diverse workforce and examine strategies to enhance this.
- Teaching course literature must reference both male and female early educators throughout the course content accompanied by images of both male and females completing a range of roles, for example there are images of male practitioners feeding babies.
- The attachment/child development sections of the course do focus fairly heavily on the relationship between mother and baby, and there is an opportunity here to include more information on fathers and father-figures.

We strongly support the consideration of apprenticeships and the new T-levels (introduced 2020) in Child Care and Education as a vehicle for recruiting men into Early Years roles.

Furthermore raising some aspects of the profession to a graduate entry career, by associating the educational emphasis of EYE with focused training, would have the effect of raising the status of the profession as happened with nursing. See Working Group 1.

Working Group 5: **Do coordination and support networks make a difference?**

Proposal 5 : Develop a national 'voice' and shared objectives / branding / coordination for men in Early Years networks:

- establish an independent **national Men in Early Years organisation**, to maximise the potential for peer-to-peer support, mentoring, case study and media/speaking opportunities, etc.

Recommendations from Working Group 5:

We see the benefits of having an independent national support organization for men in Early Years in terms of consistency of approach and branding, coordinated activities and a recognized single point of contact / spokesperson. Examples can be found in New Zealand, Australia, US and Norway, with a representative for each part of the country to support the local networks.

We recognize the diversity of the existing UK local support networks (see Appendix 3). Funding and time constraints due to the lack of dedicated resource means that these endeavours exist, remain active and maintain a social media presence only through the goodwill and commitment of volunteers.

Future UK initiatives could build on work to date:

- The #MITEY (Men In The Early Years) hashtag is valuable and should be picked up by all support networks on social media.

- The adoption of a national Men in Early Years logo would create a unifying brand for promotional materials.
- Shared objectives similar to the existing National Men in Early Years Charter - <https://tinyurl.com/y76hsqud> should be adopted across the support networks to allow individual organisations to meet local need but ensure commitment to common goals.
- A new local support organisation should be able to reference existing objectives, framework and procedures without having to develop from scratch.

Working Group 6: **How do we make sure there's an impact?**

Proposal 6 : Evaluate the impact of more men in the Early Years workforce:

- an **annual survey on gender attitudes**;
- **longitudinal research** comparing mixed versus single-gender Early Years workforces with regard to their influences on various child outcomes.

Recommendations from Working Group 6:

We believe that getting more men into Early Years Education is about improving gender diversity in the sector and in society more generally, for the longer term benefit of children and society. We believe this is an important principle that needs to underpin initiatives and communications.

By recruiting from the full range of the talent pool, employers will be able to raise average capability and productivity of the workforce, particularly if expectation of training at HE level becomes an integral part of the profession.

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Appendix 1. Working group composition and briefs:

Working Group 1:

How do we attraction, recruit, retain and develop males in the Early Years workforce?

How can we widen recruitment of men into Early Years? Which men? How can we keep them in the sector once they've joined? What needs to change in our messaging, targeting, communication methods etc?

Sarah Mackenzie, Julian Grenier, James Bowen, Janine Ryan, Gregory Stewart Lane (LEYF)

What can we do to ensure boys and men at key stages are included in messaging about Early Years careers/training, and actively encouraged to consider this as a career?

Contributions from Averil MacDonald (chair), Julian Grenier, Janine Ryan, Sarah Mackenzie, Jamel Campbell (LEYF)

Working Group 2:

Can targets make a difference?

And how do we ensure effective data collection?

Evidence about men in the early years, and what we know/don't know from international literature about what works/what doesn't work in attracting more men to the sector.

Averil Macdonald and Jo Warin, with support from Jeremy Davies

Working Group 3:

How do we promote a culture of gender diversity?

Contexts in which early childhood education occurs (e.g. buildings/decor, staff attitudes, safeguarding policies) and how we might make them more inclusive of men

Present: Jeremy Davies (chair), Averil MacDonald, James Bowen.

Apologies, Ian Everitt, Julian Grenier, Janine Ryan, Imran Hafeez.

Working Group 4:

Should we change Early Years training?

Content and delivery of Early Years courses and how they can be made fit-for-purpose for developing a gender-inclusive workforce.

David Wright (chair), Julian Grenier, James Bowen, Sarah Mackenzie

Working Group 5:

Do coordination and support networks make a difference?

What works when setting up local support networks, and what doesn't? Is there scope for a national support network and how might that work?

Shaddai Tembo, David Wright, Imran Hafeez (Bradford), Mark Deyzel (LEYF)

Working Group 6:

How do we make sure there's an impact?

Appendix 2. Local 'men in early years' networks

Here we outline what we already have in terms of Networks. This isn't exhaustive but to our knowledge we cannot think of any more in England:

Location	Network	Lead
Bristol	Bristol Men in Early Years Network	Shaddai Tembo, Jay Ramsey, Craig Black
London	London Men in Childcare Network	June O'Sullivan
Southampton	Southampton Area Men in Early Years	David Wright
Bradford	#MITEY North Network	Imran Hafeez
York	Men into Childcare	Sam Smart
National/online	Fatherhood Institute #MITEY campaign	Jeremy Davies