The MITEY guide to...

Recruiting men into early years education
**Endorsements**

“Getting more men into childcare has always been a tricky task. With its thought-provoking and practical approach, this well-presented and easy-to-follow book makes the ideal companion for owners and managers struggling to recruit and maintain male early years professionals.”  
*Michael Freeston, Director of Quality Improvement, Early Years Alliance*

“National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) fully endorses the Fatherhood Institute’s Men In The Early Years (MITEY) guide to Recruiting men into early years education. It is a fantastic and inspiring resource for nurseries across the country to use in order to attract a more diverse and balanced workforce.”  
*Stella Ziolkowski, Director of Quality and Training, National Day Nurseries Association*

“Early Education campaigns for every child’s right to the highest quality early childhood education. That means a workforce drawing on the talents of the whole population, and representing every part of the population. We welcome this very practical resource to help settings and schools address the under-representation of men in the early years workforce, and call on all our members to redouble their efforts to attract and welcome more men to work with our youngest children.”  
*Beatrice Merrick, Chief Executive, Early Education*

“We know first-hand the importance of recruiting more men into early years settings. The impact starts with the young people that they work with, and also helps early years parents, carers and communities ‘see’ that men can help educate and care for the children, offering a more diverse viewpoint for the sector. Plus it offers a fantastic career route for those males who love nurturing and developing young minds. This MITEY guide is an important part of the puzzle. Everyone involved in early years settings, from ITT providers to parenting networks and all in-between, needs to read and share this incredible resource.”  
*Nicole Ponsford FRSA, CEO and Co-Founder of The Gender Equality Collective*

“This excellent guide is brimming with clear, practical strategies to support the important mission of bringing more men into early years teaching. The guide also offers crucial insights into some of the barriers to men, along with great advice on how to avoid approaches and attitudes that can put men off applying. The Men and Boys Coalition wholeheartedly endorses this excellent guide to boosting the number of men in the early years profession.”  
*Dan Bell, CEO, Men and Boys Coalition*

“We need more men in early years so children may absorb a message that people of any gender can be a part of this crucial stage of their lives. This is a fantastic guide to what the authors acknowledge could be a ‘challenging journey’. Honest, thought-provoking, clear-eyed and accessible, it is a huge first step on the road to a truly representative early years’ workforce.”  
*Professor Gina Rippon, Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Neuroimaging, author of The Gendered Brain.*

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**Citation for this report**

Introduction

There are many challenges involved in running an early years provider organisation - managing and meeting the sometimes conflicting demands of children, parents, staff, Ofsted inspectors and local authorities, as well as governors, owners or shareholders, depending on your organisational set-up.

To juggle all this well, you need the best possible staff, and the right number of them. So whilst there are lots of reasons to promote your vacancies to men (set out in our MITEY Charter https://miteyuk.org/ sign-up-to-the-mitey-charter/ and 10 MITEY Myths https://miteyuk.org/ten-mitey-myths/), arguably the most fundamental one is that if you do so, you will double your pool of talent.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - an international body that tries to find evidence-based solutions to the world’s economic challenges - says there is a shortage of skilled early childhood education and care staff in most developed countries. And in its latest report (see Useful links, page 20) it identifies four factors that contribute to it:

• The workforce is ageing (this is less of an issue in the UK than in some countries, in fact; in Italy more than half of staff (twice as many as in the UK) are aged 50+)

• The industry is struggling to find sufficient skilled and qualified new entrants (with low pay and status key underpinning factors)

• Once recruited, staff don’t stay for long

• The workforce is overwhelmingly female, effectively halving the pool of available workers.

The UK’s recruitment challenges (as outlined in the National Day Nursery Association’s 2019 Workforce Survey https://bit.ly/2qi355K) are not unique, then, and it’s not just us at MITEY HQ who think the lack of men in early years could be part of the solution.

In this guide for leaders and managers in the early years sector, we draw on ‘best practice’ internationally and from within the UK - and on our understanding of ‘what works’ in engaging with men - to propose some strategies that could help you attract more male staff.

We cannot promise that our ideas will solve your staff shortages overnight, but we are confident they can help. If you have other tried-and-tested approaches, please share via https://miteyuk.org/contact/.

Dr Jeremy Davies, MITEY Project Lead, the Fatherhood Institute
1. Define your goals

Before you do anything else, you should get clear in your mind what you want to achieve from your male recruitment strategy, and why.

The what matters because you need to set a realistic target for what you can achieve, and ‘take your colleagues with you’ on what might be a more challenging journey than you first expect.

Start by accepting that you are operating in a world that is fundamentally not geared up to push boys and men towards early years careers. Then chip away at things in your own individual setting, working where needed with key local partners (schools, colleges and Job Centres, for example).

If you have no men in your setting, there is something to be said for aiming to recruit not one but TWO men.

Why two? Managers who have made good progress towards a mixed-gender workforce, say that having two or more men in the same setting protects against feelings of isolation, which can help keep them in post for longer. So don’t just stop at one; and once you have reached two, try to double your numbers, and so on.

The why matters too, because clarity about this will help you create recruitment
messages that really reflect your vision and aspirations as an organisation.

This can be harder than it sounds, because there are lots of possible ways to frame the ‘need’ for more men. Some emphasise gender difference, as if we need male staff to act as ‘role models’ or make up for fathers absent from children’s (especially boys’) lives. But think carefully: would you load such expectations onto a female staff member, or just ask her to be an excellent practitioner, doing the job to the best of her ability? What ‘role’ do you want men to model? Why only for boys? (Also, are fathers really absent? How do you know?)

‘Essentialising’ gender differences can be problematic. We recommend that instead, you focus on improving representation - reaching out to men because you want your workforce to better represent the community it serves, not because you want men to bring some special, gendered ingredient. This way, you open your team to the many, diverse skills and perspectives that men, like women, offer. And yes, the children get to spend time with caring male practitioners, which can be hugely beneficial! For more on this, read 10 MITEY Myths https://miteyuk.org/ten-mitey-myths/, and section 4 below.

2. Sign up to the Charter

The MITEY Charter is a pledge for nurseries, pre-schools, childminders and other early years education settings across the UK. Signing up to it is a great way for you to show that you value men’s ability to contribute positively to the care and education of young children, and that you are taking steps to bring them into the workforce. And it’s free: we’ve made sure of that because we want as many organisations as possible to sign up.

Our hope is that you will find ways of using the Charter as an active resource, rather than just sticking it up on the wall and forgetting about it. There’s plenty to get your teeth into in a team discussion, for example - or to use as the basis for a consultation event with parents.

But it can also be useful as a declaration to show potential recruits (male and female) what you believe in and aspire to, even if they can see that your team remains, for the time being, mostly female. So why not make a point of mentioning that you’ve signed up to the Charter, on your website?

Explain to parents and other website users that you value any male practitioners you already have, why you think their presence is good for the children you serve, and what you’re doing to recruit more. If you already have male staff, you could publish an interview with them, where they share their early years story. This can make things feel much more real and accessible for parents, and for any men who might be interested in the work.
Case study: Selling a lifestyle, not just a job

Here is Little Forest Folk’s generic careers information, from its website http://www.littleforestfolk.com/, with our comments in italics:

We are always looking for special staff who understand our passion and our vision to get more kids outdoors. Send in your CV with the subject Careers if you’d be interested in joining our team.

We spend from 9:30am to 3:30pm outdoors, year round, no matter the weather. We employ people with a zest for life, a love of the outdoors and a passion for the importance of kids playing and being outside.

Note the use of strong words and phrases like ‘special’, ‘passion’, ‘vision’ and ‘zest for life’, that describe aspects of a potential practitioner’s character. This helps build a picture of inclusion that is free of gender, and puts the focus on the qualities of the individual candidate, rather than their particular qualifications or experience.

We welcome applications from practitioners qualified to NVQ Level 3 or above in Early Years childcare but also accept applications from non-qualified candidates who share our desire to reconnect children with nature. Any Forest School qualifications or experience are a bonus but not a requirement, as we train in-house.

Again, there is a clear sense that anyone with the right qualities, regardless of gender or background, could apply and be successful.

To show our appreciation for your dedication we pay above industry average. We offer an incomparably beautiful setting for your days. We guarantee you’ll be working with incredibly friendly and like-minded colleagues. And at Little Forest Folk we don’t believe you should work on your birthday!

Here the organisation sells the attributes that mark it out as special: above-average pay and conditions, an outdoor setting and a focus on teamwork.

Why work at Little Forest Folk? We asked some of our team...

A 3-minute video features male and female practitioners talking to camera, in their own words, about what they enjoy in their role.
The five statements in the MITEY Charter are as follows:

- We value men’s capacity to care for and educate children, both within families and as professionals

- We value the benefits to children of being educated and cared for by a diverse, mixed-gender early years workforce

- We acknowledge that early years education should benefit from the talents of all, so we are actively seeking to create a workforce that includes men, women and people with other gendered or non-gendered identities

- We are committed to removing the obstacles that stand in the way of a mixed-gender early years workforce, including low pay and status, limited career progression and gender-discriminatory treatment

- We view early years education as a critical context in which to address gender inequality and stereotypes, for the benefit of children and wider society.

If you would like to sign up, please follow the instructions at this link https://miteyuk.org/sign-up-to-the-mitey-charter/. Once we have sent you the PDF of the Charter, we will add you to our list of MITEY Charter signatories, which appears at the bottom of the MITEY website. You can sign up behalf of a single setting, or that of an organisation.

3. Mind your language

Think carefully about the words, phrases and ideas you use in your job adverts, job descriptions, person specifications and promotional content.

‘Feminised’ job titles like ‘nursery nurse’ are old-fashioned and may be off-putting (or at least not encouraging) to potential male recruits. Are there ways you could re-label things to be more immediately relevant to men as well as women? ‘Early years practitioner’ or ‘Early years educator’ sound much more gender-neutral and professional. Some employers have even gone one step further and use the word ‘teacher’ for all senior practitioners.

When you are defining or describing a job - or thinking of ways to ‘pull them in’, try to put yourself in the shoes of a potential male recruit. What might his motivations be for wanting to work in your setting or organisation? If you have any men on your team, or know any other men who work in the sector, ask them why they are there, and what they like about the work. What brought them into early years as a career? What are the challenges they face? What would they say to a boy or man who might never have thought about early years education as a possibility?
Sharing men’s stories in their own words, via video clips or written case studies, can be a great way to help other men ‘connect’ with your organisation and the job you are trying to fill. But even if your men are not willing to be featured in this way, asking them about their experiences can help give you a better understanding of male perspectives.

Bear in mind that some men (and women) will be looking for a full-time career that they can immerse themselves in, rather than a one-off job; they will know that early years is not the best-paid career in the world, but are likely to be more attracted by employers who emphasise long-term prospects and professional development.

Some men will have worked in very different contexts previously; they may have done a ‘9-5’ office job, or may have pursued some other more traditionally male career route. What they value about working in early years education may be the ability to work differently; to be more of an independent, self-motivated professional. Some early years men emphasise their love of spending their days with small, free-spirited people, which can feel like the polar opposite of working for a demanding boss, or doing a job where your impact is measured in money. Many value the ability to ‘make their mark’ by changing children’s lives. Some may enjoy outdoors play, creative aspects of the job, and the sense of playing a part in shaping children’s minds.

You need to prepare your team to work alongside men. Ideally you might offer unconscious-bias or other gender-sensitivity training, and at the very least you should keep any eye on workplace ‘banter’: loose talk about men being ‘useless’ with children or women being better at caring and multi-tasking should be challenged. And the staff room needs

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**Men’s motivations for early years work/1 (see also page 20)**

“Being a part of a little person’s first years of life is so valuable and you can play a massive part in that.” Charlie Parker, Pre-school Room Supervisor, Lincolnshire

“I have a passion for early years and want children to be hungry to learn rather than conditioned to learn. Early years is where this happens and then seems to get lost with the pressure of curriculum in school. My other passion is Forest School, which sounds all Bear Grylls and survival, but is about nurture and positive reinforcement, encouraging children to learn vital life skills for themselves in an outdoor environment. Watching the faces of three- and four-year olds as they watch you cut down (safely) a dead tree is amazing.” Julian Sandford, Early Years Educator, Barnet
to become a mixed-gender space, says June O’Sullivan, CEO of London Early Years Foundation: “The women need to stop talking about women-only stuff sometimes: he’s there and it’s not ok to force him into being the ‘honorary woman’.”

Bear in mind also that language matters in terms of how you communicate about, and with, the children - your everyday word choices have the effect (intended or otherwise) of promoting or challenging gender stereotypes. Contact us via https://miteyuk.org/contact/ to find out about our **Building a Mixed-Gender Workforce** course (available from March 2020).

### 4. Aim for diversity and inclusion

Try to acknowledge how different and isolating a man’s experience of working in early years education might be, compared to a woman’s experience. MITEY men are the equivalents of female engineers, plumbers and soldiers: they are pioneers.

Then break this down. How might different men experience early years education differently *from each other*? What if the man is black? Or gay? Or black and gay? What if he is disabled? What about different women’s experiences, too? Women are not all the same, either!

Opening up your workforce to include men can be a step towards accepting and celebrating diversity in a more general sense - and understanding the ‘intersectionality’ between different types of disadvantage and privilege is part of the journey. The short version is this: no two people are the same, and each individual brings their own unique skills and experience to the table as a potential early years practitioner. Building on this insight, an employer who values diversity looks to recruit individuals who are great at doing the job, and represent society at large.

The example advertisement from Little Forest Folk (see page 6) makes no explicit mention of any of this, but it does a really good job of clarifying exactly the ‘type’ of person required, and casts its net wide, to include people who might not have

### Diversity and inclusion: further reading

Building Inclusive Workforces: CIPD
https://bit.ly/2q86bZM


worked in the field before but who share the right qualities and are willing to learn.

Diversity in the early years workforce is important for representation, as well as being good for productivity and the ‘bottom line’.

5. Take positive action

In many fields it is standard practice for employers to include a clear statement in job advertisements, that they welcome applications from people in under-represented groups – usually women and/or people from black and minoritized ethnic communities.

In the UK this is permitted under the Equality Act, but while there can be little doubt that men are under-represented in early years education, it is almost unheard-of for employers in this sector to include such statements in their advertising. Our audit of early years employers’ advertising shows that even those we know are ‘switched on’ about the MITEY agenda are not including such statements in their advertisements.

‘Positive action’ statements are, on their own, unlikely to solve the problem of male under-representation, but making use of them gives everyone a clear message that you have acknowledged and are concerned by, the lack of men in the workforce. They may even in some cases be enough to persuade a man to go ahead and send in his application. The fact is, you won’t know about their possible impact unless you try them - and you have nothing to lose by doing so. Here’s an example: ‘We particularly welcome applicants from men, as they are under-represented in our workforce.’

And positive action does not stop at adding a line to your adverts. The Equality and Human Rights Commission says ‘positive action’ can include a range of steps to encourage people from groups who share a ‘protected characteristic’ to apply for job.

There are nine such characteristics, according to the Equality Act: *age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation*.

In each case, you can use ‘positive action’ methods where you ‘reasonably think’ (in other words, where there is good evidence) that people who share the protected characteristic in question, have different needs because of it; have a past track record of disadvantage connected to it; or have a history of low participation. You can take proportionate action to:

• enable or encourage the group in question to overcome or minimise disadvantage
• meet the group’s different needs, or
• enable or encourage participation among the group.

The evidence is clear that men’s participation in early years education is disproportionately low (their sex being the ‘protected characteristic’ that they share). Here are the figures, in case you need to cite them:

In England & Wales only 3% of staff working in early years education are male; in Scotland it’s 4%. This is not the only ‘caring’ sector where women dominate, but it is easily the most extreme example (see chart above). In nursing, the figure is 11%; in social work, 14% and in primary education, 15%.

So…how can you use ‘positive action’? Equality law allows you to take positive action before or during the job application stage.

Steps you can take include encouraging the under-represented group (in our case, men) to apply; you could even offer them extra help (like training or other support) not available to other applicants - to help them perform to the best of their ability at interview, for example.
Equality law says that the steps you are allowed to take as part of positive action must relate to the level of disadvantage that exists, and not simply be for the purposes of favouring one group of people over another, where there is no disadvantage or under-representation in the workforce.

So you could not use positive action to attract female applicants for an entry level primary teaching post where women already made up 70% of the teaching workforce, for example. Such steps would not be being taken to overcome a disadvantage or under-representation, and so this would be unlawful direct discrimination.

You must also not have a blanket policy or practice of automatically treating people who share a protected characteristic better than those who do not have it, for recruitment purposes. You must still appoint the best person for the job, even if they do not have the particular protected characteristic being targeted by the positive action.

But you can, in a tie-break situation, appoint an applicant from a group sharing a protected characteristic rather than an equally qualified applicant who lacks it, if you reasonably believe this group to be disadvantaged or under-represented in the workforce, or if their participation in an activity is disproportionately low.

Although it is most likely that you would use the tie-break provisions at the end of the recruitment process, you could even treat an applicant more favourably at any earlier stage of the process (for example shortlisting a male candidate over an equivalent female one) - but again, only if it is a proportionate way of enabling or encouraging people from the disadvantaged or under-represented group to overcome or minimise the disadvantage of that group.

Norway has been using positive action as part of its strategy to boost its male

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Open days

Open days are a great tool if you want to attract people with little or no experience of early years work, allowing them to spend time observing some of the daily routines of your setting, and ask questions of managers and staff. This can help people build up a picture of what it might be like to work in early years education, and whether it feels like a 'good fit' for them.

Under equalities legislation it would be legal for an organisation or setting which can clearly demonstrate male under-representation in the workforce, to organise an open day targeted specifically at men.
proportion of kindergarten staff, since 1998; at 10% male, its workforce is the most gender-diverse in the world.

6. Use diverse images

Geena Davis, star of Hollywood movie ‘Thelma and Louise’ and founder of the eponymously named Geena Davis Institute for Gender in the Media in the US, has this to say about the importance of positive images in challenging stereotypes:

"Negative images can powerfully affect boys and girls, but positive images have the same kind of impact. We know that if girls can see characters doing un-stereotyped kinds of occupations and activities, they're much more likely as an adult to pursue unusual and outside-the-box occupations. I really believe that if you can see it, you can be it."

That same idea, “If you can see it, you can be it”, holds true if we want to persuade boys and men to consider entering feminised occupations like early years education and care. We need to show them that men are already doing this kind of work (even if in small numbers) and that they are effective, valued and successful in such roles.

Especially at the beginning of your journey towards creating a mixed-gender workforce, finding examples to illustrate these points may not be straightforward. So, if you have no male staff to photograph and use in recruitment materials, what can you do? And even if you do have male staff, how can you address the diversity that exists among men, who may differ in so many ways, including their, ethnic or religious background, sexual and gender identity and whether or not they have disabilities, for example?

Feel free to link to the case studies on the MITEY website. It is possible to borrow images from commercial photo libraries, and even to use free ones from sources such as Creative Commons, but the choice tends to be quite limited: indeed, the lack of gender (and other) diversity in early years education is captured beautifully by the almost total absence of male early years practitioners in commercial photography! The GenderEYE study, led by Dr Jo Warin at Lancaster University (see https://gendereye.org/) has produced some great images of male practitioners, and we hope to produce more.
If you live in an area where there is a local MITEY network, you could approach them and see if they have any photos you could borrow. Or contact us at MITEY UK and we could put a call out to our database and social media contacts, to see if anyone has an image you could use, that fits your requirements. Obviously in all cases you need the appropriate consents – not just for the men themselves, but also for any children featured in the images.

Try to think creatively, too. You could use cartoons or images that don’t directly feature men but are also not inherently gendered - try to remove pink and floweriness, for example.

7. Reach out to boys and men

To really change the gender composition of your workforce in the long term, you must go to where the men and boys are, to let them know you actively want them on your team. You must sell them the idea that working in early years education is a ‘normal’ male activity, and be prepared to break down the stigma that exists around men caring for young children.

Sometimes, even if they are interested and feel they might have something to contribute, they will need careful coaxing to reach the point where they commit to pursuing an early years career.

So…where are they? The answer is ‘everywhere’, of course - including in your own family - and you will need to work in numerous contexts to change the narrative about early years education and caregiving being ‘women’s work’.

Awareness is growing that if we want to create a more gender-equal society, we need to challenge children’s gendered assumptions about who does what – both inside and outside the home.

Starting them young

Bear in mind that stereotyped ideas about possible careers are formed very early in life: the Drawing the Future report (see page 20 of this guide for a link) found big differences between boys’ and girls’ career aspirations at the age of 7, which suggests - as Professor Gina Rippon has shown in
her book *The Gendered Brain* (see page 20) that children start boxing themselves in with gendered ideas about future roles almost from Day One.

Most children grow up in households where women do more of the caregiving, and if they spend time in early years provision, they will be cared for and educated by an almost entirely female (97%) workforce. Given children’s propensity to draw on people they know (and especially those who share their gender identity) when developing their career aspirations, it comes as no surprise to find that girls aged 7 to 11 are nine times more likely than boys to say they would like to be a teacher!

To address the lack of male early years educators by changing your conversations with 3 to 5 year old boys may seem a very ‘long game’ to play, but if we don’t start to open our youngest boys up to the possibility that men can care and educate, how can we hope to expand our supply of male early years educators in future?

You may feel like you are in a Catch-22 situation: how can you inspire boys to value their potential role as caregivers and educators, if none of your caregivers and educators are male?

It certainly poses more of a challenge, but if your pedagogy emphasises children learning beyond the constraints of gender stereotyping, and if your female practitioners are fully on board with what you are trying to achieve – which they should be if you have supported them to jump onto the gender-diverse bandwagon you have started rolling - you will be in a much better position.

In recent years, various gender stereotype-busting programmes aimed at primary school-aged and even younger children have emerged, and these can be really beneficial. They include the Gender Action Schools Award, Lifting Limits, You Be You and the Gender Friendly Nursery (see page 20 for links). After one term of lessons provided by You Be You, staff reported a 46% increase in pupils agreeing that “it’s ok for boys to like playing house or families”.

Try to find ways of participating in, or drawing from these approaches, in ways that make sense for your setting. Check out the Gender Equality Collective to find ideas, share your own and make useful connections (see page 20).

And remember that even without external help, many opportunities exist for you to help children identify and reflect on the gendered behaviours and stereotypes that may inform their career aspirations. Try to discuss a diverse range of jobs and careers with children, and if possible draw on diverse voices when you do so.
Teenagers and young men

There are various national initiatives that aim to support young women to consider careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and medicine), such as Stemettes and the WISE Campaign.

There is no equivalent programme aimed at supporting young men to consider traditionally ‘female’ careers like teaching (including early years education), nursing and care work – although NHS England has been doing some work to increase male recruitment into nursing. Supported by £50,000 of government investment, the Scottish Funding Council is doing some great work with FE colleges, to promote early years to boys and men (see their Lessons from North of the Border MITEY conference presentation: https://miteyuk.org/2019/09/17/mitey2019-conference-presentations/).

MITEY is not yet able to offer a national programme of schools-based careers talks, but we are keen to support such work. Our website holds information about career routes (including the new Education T-Level), and a listing of local MITEY networks. We know that within and outside these networks, many men who work in early years education are happy to speak at school events.
Our research suggests that the capacity of schools-based careers advisers to engage with young adults and promote early years education as a career to boys is limited:

- Early years education’s low pay and status makes it a less attractive option than primary or secondary teaching, so it is more likely to be ignored, or presented as an afterthought compared to either of these. This may be particularly the case when talking to boys, because teachers and/or careers advisers may assume (consciously or otherwise) that they will have greater need to earn breadwinner incomes when they grow up - and that early years education is therefore not ‘for them’

- Teachers and/or careers advisers may assume that girls and women make more ‘natural’ caregivers and/or are more interested in working with children, and therefore (consciously or otherwise) steer boys away

- They may also fail to recommend early years education as a career for boys because they assume (correctly) that it is overwhelmingly female-dominated, and therefore less attractive to males - rather than presenting ‘warts and all’ information and supporting boys to make their own, well-informed decisions.

MITEY will be producing a resource for careers advisers in spring 2020, and there are already case studies of MITEY men, along with information about career routes, and jobs from employers which have signed the MITEY Charter, on our website, at https://miteyuk.org/.

You can also commission us to help you run local campaigns and create authentic, local case studies for distribution in local schools, alongside relevant information about training, work experience, apprenticeships and career paths.

Try connecting with local schools and colleges, to show them you are interested in recruiting boys and young men for work experience opportunities and apprenticeships - and that you are interested in forming links that could support the professional development of men you work with.

Reach out into the local community via the places where boys and men congregate: Scouts groups, gyms, sports clubs, pubs, bars and social groups; maybe you could even put a poster up in the local barbers?

Team up with other early years settings in your area to present a ‘united front’; if there isn’t already a MITEY network in your area (check here: https://miteyuk.org/local-mitey-networks/), perhaps you could create one? Or maybe one setting or individual could volunteer to act as a ‘key contact’ who coordinates local efforts to attract and retain male staff?
Adult men

If you haven’t already, why not contact your local Job Centre to ask them to promote your vacancies – and make sure they are actively mentioning them to men as well as women?

This will require more than just sending them generic information about situations vacant, because Job Centre staff are just as likely as anyone else to assume that early years education is ‘women’s work’, so they will not be pushing such jobs to men. They may even feel that to do so would go against an early years employer’s wishes (and/or could be dangerous - such is the association in many people’s minds with the idea that men are ‘not to be trusted’ around young children!) so you may need to have a conversation where you make clear that you actively want male applicants, and explain why.

If you are signed up to the MITEY Charter, you can advertise your posts for free on our website and social media. Find out more at https://miteyuk.org/vacancies-try-our-jobs-board/.

Dad power

Nowadays it is much more common to see men picking up and dropping off children from settings – even if they are probably still in a minority. These fathers, stepfathers, older brothers and uncles all have the potential to be early years educators. Even if they work in completely different fields, they may have transferable skills and qualities. And if they are not interested, they could help spread the word to other men.

So just as you might mention vacancies, apprenticeships or open days to ‘the mums’ your setting deals with, why not start thinking of these men (and the others you may see less of, but could connect with via email or text message, assuming you value them enough as parents to have collected their contact information) as a ready-made ‘focus group’ from which to start building a male-friendly recruitment network?

This is exactly what happened to Julian Sandford, one of our MITEY men case studies: “When my daughter started at nursery, neither she nor myself were easy settlers. I spent a long time in the setting, listening to her crying, trying not to cry myself and sometimes playing with her. The head teacher came over and asked if I had ever considered working in early years. I think that was the moment that started the ball rolling.”
8. Support your male staff well

Organisations that are successfully building mixed-gender workforces don’t just pay attention to recruitment; they also make sure that men, once recruited, have opportunities to network with other male colleagues. This demonstrates clearly to male recruits that they are valued; combats isolation; and creates a space for peer-to-peer support.

Local support networks can be especially important in a sector which can sometimes feel alienating or even hostile, for example in cases (which are depressingly common) where parents object to men or make unwarranted allegations of sexual abuse (for more about this issue, sign up to our mailing list, to receive our forthcoming Guide to communicating with parents).

In some cases an individual organisation is big enough to create its own internal network. London Early Years Foundation (LEYF), which has 38 nurseries, has its own Men in Childcare network, for example. All male staff within the organisation are invited to be part of this, and managers release them from normal duties to attend network meetings.

In others, there is a regional or local effort to support greater male involvement in the workforce, and this leads to the creation of a network: the Bristol Men in Early Years (BMIEY) network and York Men in Childcare are examples of this.

Read more about LEYF and BMIEY in our case studies, in the Employers section of the MITEY website. There is also a listing of MITEY networks here https://miteyuk.org/local-mitey-networks/. Although we are not funded to provide a national peer support network, we may be able to bring together individual, isolated male practitioners online. Please invite any male staff to join the MITEY network by signing up to our mailing list.

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<th>Checklist</th>
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<tr>
<td>Define your goals</td>
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<td>Decide why you want men in your workforce, and set your recruitment goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign up to the MITEY Charter</td>
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<td>Use the Charter to publicise your position and provoke discussion</td>
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<td>Mind your language</td>
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<td>Tailor your job titles and recruitment messages so as to attract men; and support female staff to welcome men onto the team</td>
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<td>Aim for diversity and inclusion</td>
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<td>Acknowledge and capitalise on different ‘types’ of men</td>
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<td>Take positive action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use methods such as positive action statements and open days to actively improve your team’s gender diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use diverse images</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do your best to represent diverse men in all your publicity materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reach out to boys and men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with boys, teenagers/ young men and older men, to convince them that early years careers could be for them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support your men well</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create or tap into existing male-male support networks</td>
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Men’s motivations for early years work/2 (see also page 8)

“Looking after kids held no fear for me – but it was also just the exposure of understanding the work, which in my case happened through my wife (who works in early years) but could, I suppose, come from open days, Q&As with practitioners and so on.” Russell Hagan, early years teacher, Southport

“The best thing is seeing the children thrive. When you have a child that needs support with fine motor skills, say, they can’t feed themselves or put their shoes on. And you provide the activities and the environment so you see that child develop step by step.” Jamel Carly Campbell, early years educator, London

“I always wanted to work in a caring profession, from when I was quite small. I didn’t have any experience of looking after children, and was going to go into nursing, but a good (female) friend of mine wanted to work in a nursery and we ended up doing it together. Once I’d seen what the work involved and then later took on more responsibility, I was hooked.” Michael Walker-Takacs, nursery manager, Liverpool

Useful links

MITEY https://miteyuk.org
Gender Action Schools Award www.genderaction.co.uk
Lifting Limits https://www.liftinglimits.org.uk/
You Be You https://www.youbeyou.co.uk/
Gender Equality Collective https://thegec.org/
GenderEYE https://gendereye.org/
Foundation Years webinar about early years qualifications and apprenticeships https://bit.ly/2pEe8lj
Help MITEY by buying key books by Dr Jo Warin; Dr Simon Brownhill & David Wright, and Professor Gina Rippon through the MITEY website https://miteyuk.org/useful-links/.