

Men in childcare



Heather Rolfe

National Institute of Economic and Social Research



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The childcare sector employs an estimated 275,000 paid staff across a wide range of settings, including day nurseries, playgroups and after-school care. Not only is it a large employer, it enables women with children to participate in the labour market and is therefore important to the achievement of gender equality. The childcare workforce has been a key area for Government employment policy in recent years, with particular emphasis given to recruitment of new workers into the sector. Yet, all sources of data on the childcare workforce show men at around 2 or 3 per cent. This figure has remained steady in the last decade despite national and local recruitment campaigns aimed at men.

The Equal Opportunities commission (EOC), commissioned this review in order to examine how the employment of men in childcare can be increased. The review explores the evidence for the under-representation of men in childcare and identifies current initiatives and projects that aim to change this. Finally, strategies to increase the participation of men in the sector are identified.

The review included an analysis of literature on men in childcare, written from a research or policy perspective. It also covered the current activity of the national childcare recruitment campaign, carried out by local authorities, and the work of other initiatives and projects.

The under-representation of men in the sector

Men are a small minority of childcare workers. All sources of data on the workforce show men at around 2 or 3 per cent. This figure has remained steady in the last decade. Men are also a small minority of childcare trainees.

Data from other European countries shows some variations. Denmark has the highest proportion of male childcare workers, where they are 8 per cent of the workforce, but men are usually well under 5 per cent of childcare employees.

Men are a higher proportion of playworkers in after school care, where they are almost 10 per cent of the workforce. This has been explained with reference to men's preference for working with older children and it has been suggested that particular attention should be focused on recruiting men into this area of childcare.

The predominance of part-time jobs in the sector is thought to deter men who are more likely to seek full-time employment. There is evidence that men are piecing

together part-time jobs to obtain full-time employment. If this were made easier, more men might find childcare work a more realistic proposition.

There are indications that some men are likely to choose childcare as a 'second chance career', sometimes following a period of unemployment and a review of options. Therefore, it has been suggested that older men are a potential recruitment pool for the sector.

The case for increasing the participation of men in the sector

The argument that has received most support in the literature is that a mixed workforce challenges stereotypes and demonstrates gender equality to young children. In doing so, it is seen to enhance the quality of childcare. It is likely that men will bring different experiences to the work, reflecting their own gendered up-bringing and culture.

An argument frequently made in support of the employment of men in childcare is that men provide role models for young children, particularly boys. Although this idea has been criticised, research suggests that employers and parents see this as a benefit of employing men.

As well as the perceived benefits to children, the workforce itself is seen to benefit from gender diversity. There is evidence from employers that recruiting more men would improve the image of the childcare sector, be good for business and help in solving skill shortages.

Research involving parents has found that the majority are in favour of men working in childcare.

Childcare workers are known to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction and studies that have asked men about their experiences of working in the sector have found these to be highly positive. Positive features of childcare work include the variety within the working day, the satisfaction of helping children to learn, particularly through play, gaining understanding of a child's perspective and the relationships formed with children, families and other workers.

Barriers to men's employment in childcare

Studies report that employers, local authorities, childcare employees and the general public all see low pay as a deterrent to men. Levels of pay for non-supervisors in the sector are little above the minimum wage. Low pay has been found to lead to high turnover in the sector. The role of pay in turnover among men who work in the sector is not known, and statistics are not available on rates of turnover by gender.

The childcare sector has also been found to offer poor terms and conditions of employment, such as pension rights and sick pay, poor career structures, and lack of consistent training, all of which may deter men from childcare work.

Apprenticeships are a potential entry point for young men. However, a number of barriers to entry through this route have been identified, including a shortage of employer placements in the sector. Few childcare employees enter as apprentices, and completion rates are low.

The perception of childcare as 'women's work' is seen to deter men. Research refers to the conceptual link between childcare and 'mothering', whereby childcare is seen as an extension of women's traditional role as homemaker. Therefore, while childcare is seen as important, its status is diminished by its association with housework and is under-valued. There is a need to raise the professional status of childcare work, through emphasis on training and qualifications.

Research on attitudes to working in the childcare sector is limited, but findings support assumptions that many men do not see it as an option. There is some evidence that interest in working with children increases with age. Research with young men suggests that higher percentages are interested in childcare work than the current proportion of men in the workforce.

Although boys and girls have been found to have positive views towards men working in childcare, it is also seen as 'women's work'. Research also suggests that young people are not given adequate information or advice about non-traditional options. There is a need to improve the quality of information young men receive about childcare. Careers information associates childcare work with parenting and efforts to disassociate the two, and emphasise skills and knowledge instead would reduce this barrier. More boys might consider working in childcare if misconceptions and stereotypes were challenged and if childcare, among other non-traditional choices, were encouraged through work experience programmes.

Some men have found they enjoy working with children 'by accident' and pursue it as a second career. Male childcare workers have been found to lack the initial support of family and friends. They have experienced feelings of isolation, which may lead to turnover. They also report being questioned on their motives.

Opposition to increasing men's participation in the sector is rarely expressed, but literature on childcare cites some concern that men might take senior positions and that the risk of sexual abuse might increase. Although cases of sexual abuse in childcare are extremely rare, media attention to paedophiles may have engendered

suspicion of men in childcare. A degree of concern has been found among employers about parents' attitudes but they do not see this as a reason not to employ men, who they generally see as an asset.

Approaches, initiatives and projects

Initiatives to increase the employment of men in childcare have come largely from the work of campaigns and charitable organisations and from the work of local authorities, directed by the national recruitment campaign. Research suggests that many employers do not see the achievement of a more diverse workforce as their responsibility but that of Government or careers education.

The Sheffield Children's Centre aims to employ equal numbers of men and women and has recruited men through a range of approaches and activities. Having recruited a number of men, the Centre found it easier to recruit more and reports low turnover.

Local authorities have delivered the national recruitment campaign since 2000, under the direction of SureStart. The current focus of the campaign is on effective advertising and recruitment methods. A joint project between SureStart and the Daycare Trust is addressing a number of gaps in earlier work on men in childcare: the views of local employers, the views and experiences of men, and work with Connexions and schools.

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.

Some local authorities have targeted their activities more closely at men in areas of high unemployment, black and ethnic minority men and father and toddler groups. Others have provided men-only introductory courses. The effectiveness of these is not yet known. In recognition of the need for additional support, a number of local authorities offer new male childcare workers or trainees a male mentor.

The slightly stronger presence of men in childcare occupations in some other European countries, notably Denmark and Norway, is explained partly with reference to recruitment campaigns aimed at improving the proportion of men entering the sector as students of childcare and early years. Moreover, the nature of the work is more knowledge-based and educational than childcare within a British context.

Conclusions and implications

The review concludes that the benefits of employing more men are widely recognised and include demonstrating gender equality to children, and enriching children's

experiences of care. However, 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. 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. There is evidence that childcare employers regard men as a positive addition to their workforce, particularly in providing male role models for children. However, they are not proactive in increasing male participation. Men working in the sector have been found to lack support, and this is likely to result in high turnover.

There are a number of gaps in evidence in literature on men in childcare. There are areas where evidence is limited and where it is simply absent. These are:

- the benefits of a mixed-gender workforce;
- the role of employers' recruitment practices in maintaining a segregated workforce;
- the experiences of men working in childcare;
- the effects of locality on men's recruitment to childcare;
- turnover among male workers; and
- detailed knowledge and attitudes of young people towards childcare employment.

There is a range of barriers to greater recruitment and retention of men in childcare. Reliance upon marketing and advertising childcare work to men is proving insufficient on its own. The research suggests that strategies for increasing the proportion of the childcare work force may need to include a range of measures:

- improving low pay and conditions;
- remodelling jobs by enhancing the knowledge-base and educational nature of the work;
- targeting recruitment more closely to men in local labour markets;

- providing appropriate careers information for boys and young people about training and progression opportunities in childcare with an emphasis on the knowledge and skills elements of the work;
- improving the quality of training and range of opportunities for men to participate;
- encouraging employers to widen their recruitment pool ; and
- increasing support to men working in female dominated settings in the sector.

The development of these strategies may be enhanced by closer collaboration between organisations with an interest in gender issues and employment in childcare.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The childcare sector employs an estimated 275,000 paid staff across a wide range of settings, including day nurseries, playgroups and after-school care (MORI, 2004a). Not only is it a large employer, it enables women with children to participate in the labour market because women's decisions to take up paid employment depend in part on the availability of childcare (Dex, 2003). The childcare sector is, therefore, important to the achievement of gender equality. Increased participation of mothers in the labour market reduces child poverty and improves educational outcomes for children (see Penn *et al*, 2004). For these reasons the childcare workforce has been a key area for government employment policy in recent years, with particular emphasis given to recruitment of new workers into the sector.

As previous EOC papers have pointed out, the childcare workforce is currently almost exclusively female (EOC, 2003). Men are an even smaller percentage of the childcare sector than in other female-dominated sectors such as hairdressing and health and social care. The EOC has expressed concern that childcare continues to exist as a 'gender ghetto' and that it should '...become a modern service, drawing on the diverse talents of a broad cross section of men and women' (EOC, 2003:3).

The childcare sector has experienced difficulties recruiting staff, which has been explained with reference to low pay, among other factors. Rates of turnover in the sector are also known to be high (see IDS, 2001; Rolfe *et al*, 2003). The workforce has low educational qualifications, few have 'A' levels or degrees (see Cameron *et al*, 2002), and levels of vocational qualifications are considered too low (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000). The former training body for the sector, the Early Years National Training Organisation (EYNTO), identified numerous skill shortages and gaps, at local and national level. These include skills gaps in training and assessing playworkers and in business, finance and administration (see Miller *et al*, 2004).

Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff have been the impetus behind campaigns aimed at increasing the employment of men in the sector in recent years, as well as concerns about equal opportunities. The aims of the Government's recruitment campaign, linked to the National Childcare Strategy, included an increase in the proportion of men in the sector. This has been pursued by raising the profile of childcare as a career, among other activities at national and local level. It has been argued that the recruitment of men is essential to meet the expansion of provision. Some research has suggested that the sector's traditional reliance on young women with low qualifications is becoming unsustainable as they seek other employment opportunities (Cameron *et al*, 2001a). Therefore, the recruitment of men can be seen

as a matter of necessity, so that the sector can expand to meet demand, as well as ensuring equality of access to employment opportunities.

1.2 Purpose of the review

The purpose of the review was to examine how the employment of men in childcare can be promoted, in order to reduce current high levels of gender segregation. The review was commissioned to feed into the EOC's investigation into occupational segregation.

The review aimed to assess literature which can contribute to our understanding of the employment of men in childcare, and specifically of the barriers to their employment and how these might be overcome. Specifically, the review addressed five main issues:

- the pattern of gender segregation in the childcare sector;
- the case for increasing the participation of men in the sector;
- benefits to employers, children and parents;
- the barriers to men working in childcare;
- efforts and initiatives to recruit men into childcare jobs.

It was intended that the review should draw out the implications of the findings of existing research and reports for further research and policy development.

1.3 Sources of data, research and information

The review included an analysis of literature on men in childcare, written from a research or policy perspective. Research on the childcare workforce is not extensive. As Scott and colleagues have pointed out, research has focused more on the role of the sector in enabling women to participate in paid employment (Scott *et al*, 2000). A second strand of literature focuses on the relationship between workforce issues, such as staffing and training, for the quality of care provided. It is within this literature that much of the exploration of gender issues is found. All types of research were included in the review: quantitative survey data, qualitative research, case study reports and papers written from a policy perspective. The focus was on publications produced in the last ten years. Literature pre-dating this period was not explicitly excluded, but it is sparse and of limited relevance to current debates on gender equality. The review also included recent policy reports and plans, for example from the national recruitment campaign.

As part of the review, all local authority childcare lead officers were contacted and asked for details of their current activity in relation to men in childcare. The request, which was by email, received a good response. Chief Executives of Connexions partnerships were also contacted, but feedback on the activities of Connexions was more limited than that provided by local authorities.

Much written work on the issue of men in childcare is speculative: there are few childcare settings employing substantial numbers of men, making it difficult for the benefits of employing men to be explored; and some aspects, such as benefits to children are difficult to research because they may be long term or attitudinal. Many studies of childcare employment are small scale and may not be representative of the sector as whole and experiences of employees. However, it is possible to identify recurring themes and issues and possible explanations for the under-representation of men in the sector. The review has therefore taken full account of case study reports and evidence of a more anecdotal nature, in considering the barriers to men's employment in the sector, and the benefits of increasing their participation.

1.4 Structure of the report

The main report is divided into five chapters: Chapter one looks at the pattern of gender segregation in the sector, and at whether this information can help to explain reasons for the under-representation of men. The chapter looks at the situation in the UK, and draws some comparisons with other European countries. Chapter two explores the case for increasing the participation of men in the sector, including the benefits to employers, parents and children as clients of childcare, and employees themselves. Chapter three looks at what is known about the barriers to men working in childcare, focusing on the key issues of pay, terms and conditions, and the status of childcare as 'women's work'. While Chapters one to three draw largely on the findings of research, Chapter four looks at projects and initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of men in the sector. Finally, Chapter five draws some conclusions and makes a number of recommendations for policy and action in relation to men in childcare.

2 WHAT IS THE PATTERN OF GENDER SEGREGATION IN THE CHILDCARE SECTOR?

2.1 Introduction

The range of childcare occupations is wide. Childcare workers are employed across a range of settings and services (see Penn and McQuail, 1997; Cameron, 2004). The boundaries of childcare as an occupation are unclear, particularly where children are cared for in educational settings such as schools. In addition, many childcare workers are home-based, self-employed or part-time. There are three main types of childcare providers: the private, public and voluntary sectors. The private sector encompasses the privately owned daycare sector while the voluntary sector consists largely of sessional pre-school playgroups. The public sector includes schools and has recently expanded with the provision of part-time places for three and four year olds and SureStart funded projects.

As Cameron points out, the size of the childcare and early years workforce depends on which occupations are included (Cameron, 2004). For the purposes of this review, the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) has worked with a broad definition of childcare and early years as including all who work with young children in a caring role, but has excluded school teachers and support staff. Therefore, we have included occupations in daycare, playgroups, childminding, after-school and holiday care.

The principal sources of data on the childcare workforce, using this definition, are the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Childcare Workforce Surveys and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The Childcare Workforce Survey is a large sample survey, covering more than 6,000 providers across the sector. It has been carried out three times since 1998 to help monitor the progress towards meeting childcare recruitment targets set by the National Childcare Strategy (see IdeA, 1999; SQW/NOP, 2002; MORI, 2004a-i). It is the most reliable source of quantitative data on the childcare workforce, and can be used to monitor change over time. The most recent survey shows a total of just over 279,000 in the sector, including 111,100 in daycare, 69,600 playgroup workers and 72,900 childminders (see MORI, 2004).

The other main source of data is the LFS. This contains valuable data on the childcare workforce as a whole. The most recent analysis of the LFS shows a total of just over 308,000 employed in the sector, excluding school teachers and support staff (see Cameron, 2004). As a sample survey, it is unreliable for examining the position of men in the sector since their numbers are very small.

2.2 The under-representation of men in the sector

All sources of data on the workforce show men at around 2 or 3 per cent. This figure has remained steady in the last decade despite national and local recruitment campaigns aimed at men. In this respect, the sector is similar to others in the EOC investigation into Apprenticeships: construction, engineering and plumbing, which have seen no significant reduction in gender segregation in the last decade (see EOC, 2004c). As Table 1 shows, the most recent Childcare and Early Years Workforce Survey (2002-3) found men to be only one or two percent of workers in all settings except for after-school care. This includes full daycare, playgroups, nursery schools and childminders (MORI, 2004a).

Table 1 Paid workforce composition

	Male	Female
	Per cent	Per cent
Childcare		
Full daycare	2	98
Playgroups	1	99
Out of school clubs	9	91
Childminders	1	99
Early Years		
Nursery schools	1	99
Primary schools with nursery and reception classes	1	99
Primary schools with reception classes	2	98

Source: MORI, 2004a:18

Table 2 Modern Apprenticeships in childcare 2002-03

	Females		Males	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Foundation MAs				
England				
Early years care and education	5,151	97	170	3
Scotland	-	-	-	-
Wales	533	97	14	3
Advanced MAs				
England				
Early years care and education	3,975	98	98	2
Scotland				
Childcare services (FE)	236	97	7	2
Early years care and education (WBL)	915	98	16	2
Wales	318	98	5	2

Source: Miller, 2004:95

Data on trainees in childcare also shows men to be a small minority. In Modern Apprenticeships (now known as 'Apprenticeships') they are only 3 per cent (EOC, 2004a; Miller *et al*, 2004). As Table 2 on page 5 shows, not only are they a small percentage of childcare and early years trainees, they are small in number because of a shortage of apprenticeships in the sector.

2.3 The European childcare sector

Data from other European countries shows some variations but men are usually well below 5 per cent of the workforce (see Cameron *et al*, 2003). Denmark has the highest proportion of male childcare workers, where they are 8 per cent of the workforce. As in the UK, they are almost absent in settings for the under-threes, but have a much stronger presence in centres caring for older children (Cameron, 1997; Christie, 1998; Cameron, 2004).

A review of international research evidence on formal early years and childcare services for the DfES remarks on the extent of gender segregation found in the sector, and the concentration of men in centres caring for older children (see Cameron, 2004). The slightly stronger presence of men in childcare occupations in some other European countries, notably Denmark and Norway, is explained partly with reference to recruitment campaigns aimed at improving the proportion of men entering the sector as students of childcare and early years. Norway has a target of 20 per cent male pre-school workers by 2010 and has put networking measures in place to promote the employment of men and to retain new entrants. 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 have the effect of raising the status of both the training and the occupation, and therefore increase their attraction to men.

2.4 Men in after-school care

Men are a higher proportion of playworkers in after-school care, where they are almost 10 per cent of the workforce. Larger after-school settings, those in London and other high-density areas are more likely to employ men (MORI, 2004b). The higher representation of men in after-school care has been explained with reference to the nature of the work and the recruitment of men with experience in youth or community work (Scott *et al*, 2000). It may also be explained by the higher average pay rates in local authority play work. Local labour markets may also reflect the shortage of attractive employment opportunities open to men living in deprived areas. For example, research by the Trade Union Research Unit at Caledonian University

reports that some out of school childcare projects have been set up to provide employment opportunities and this has encouraged some men in areas of high unemployment to consider childcare as an alternative to traditional employment options for men (see Scott *et al*, 2000 and Chapter 4). The presence of men in larger settings may also be a result of a 'steam-roller' effect, with men attracted to settings employing other men. However, even in the after-school sector, the proportion of men has not increased in recent years, but has undergone a slight decline (Mori, 2004a). It has been suggested that attention should be focused on recruiting men into centres that include play and education and that include school-age children (Cameron *et al*, 1999; Owen, 2003a).

2.5 Full-time and part-time posts

Many jobs in childcare are part-time. The Childcare Workforce Survey shows marked variations across the sector, but that most employment is part-time, temporary or through self-employment (see MORI, 2004b-i). Almost all staff in pre-schools and playgroups work fewer than 30 hours a week, with the average at only 16 hours. Similarly, most staff in out of school care work fewer than 30 hours a week. Childcare and early years workers in primary and nursery schools are part-time, with the exception of teachers and nursery nurses. In these settings and elsewhere, much work is temporary, during term time, or in the case of holiday care, out of term-time. Childminders, who account for 26 per cent of childcare workers, are self-employed and therefore regulate their own hours. The Childcare Workforce Survey shows their hours to be diverse, with some working very long hours, and others working part-time (see MORI, 2004f).

The predominance of part-time working in the sector is partly accounted for by the relatively short hours of much childcare provision in Britain. Many childcare settings offer sessional care, usually a number of morning or afternoon sessions of up to three hours each. These settings, which include playgroups, crèches and nurseries, often employ part-time staff for reasons that include cost and flexibility (see Rolfe, *et al*, 2003). At the same time, the availability of part-time employment in the sector suits many women in the sector, a number of whom work in childcare while their children are young. This motivation has been found to be particularly strong among childminders, who work on a self-employed basis (see Mooney *et al*, 2001a&b).

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: LFS data shows that more than a third of men in the sector are full-time students, and are likely to include those who are studying for a qualification in childcare or playwork or funding their studies. Other men in part-time jobs are likely

to have two or three such posts and to be in effect working full-time. This pattern of working is likely to be found among women as well as men in the sector (see IdeA, 1998; Scott *et al*, 2001). Therefore, the fact that men are found to be in parts of the sector offering part-time rather than full-time opportunities does not suggest that shorter hours are an attraction of the job.

Evidence from a number of research studies has reported hours of work as a source of dissatisfaction among female childcare workers. Scott and colleagues found that half of the women they interviewed, across a range of childcare settings, were unhappy with the hours available to them. Others said that the part-time hours of work offered to them fitted in with their own childcare needs, but resented the lack of opportunity to extend their hours of work, when this suited them (Scott *et al*, 2000). Previous research by NIESR has also identified mixed views on the hours of work offered in the childcare sector, with some workers preferring to work short and dispersed hours and others finding them awkward (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003). These findings suggest that the hours of work offered by some childcare settings may not suit people seeking full-time work. This may be viewed as a disadvantage by many men, and one which could be reduced if settings were to combine part-time jobs to create more full time positions.

2.6 Childcare as a 'second chance' career for men

There are indications that men are 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). This mirrors the choice of many women to work in the sector while their own children are young (see Mooney *et al*, 2001a&b). On the basis of the experience of a project in the Strathclyde region of Scotland, Hill argues that 'Older men and women often have valuable insights and experience to contribute'. (Hill, 1990:38). He 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. This does not mean that other groups of men are not potential sources of recruitment, but that men in this group are both available for work and may be willing to undergo the necessary training and preparation for childcare work. Experience of projects such as this, and others reported in Chapter 4, might be used to target recruitment of men more closely and to greater effect. At the same time, general campaign work might be used to attract men from a wider range of backgrounds, as well as school leavers.

Key points

- Men are a small minority of childcare workers. All sources of data on the workforce show men at around 2 or 3 per cent. This figure has remained steady in the last decade despite national and local recruitment campaigns aimed at men. Data on trainees in childcare also shows men to be a small minority. In Modern Apprenticeships (now called 'Apprenticeships') they are only 3 per cent.
- Data from other European countries shows some variations but men are usually well under 5 per cent of the workforce. Denmark has the highest proportion of male childcare workers, where they are 8 per cent of the workforce. They have a stronger presence in centres caring for older children.
- Men are a higher proportion of playworkers in after school care, where they are almost 10 per cent of the workforce. This has been explained with reference to men's preference for working with older children and the recruitment of men with experience in youth or community work. It has been suggested that attention should be focused on recruiting men into this area of childcare.
- The predominance of part-time jobs in the sector is widely believed to deter men, who are more likely to seek full-time employment. Although men are found in part-time jobs in childcare, there is evidence that some combine this work with study or combine a number of part-time posts. The part-time hours offered in many parts of the sector do not suit people seeking full-time work. The disadvantage this presents to many men could be reduced if settings were to combine part-time jobs to create more full-time positions.
- There are indications that men are more likely than women to choose childcare as a 'second chance career', sometimes following a period out of paid work and a review of options. It has been suggested that older men made redundant as a result of industrial restructuring are one potential recruitment pool for the sector. At the same time, men from a broad range of backgrounds, including school leavers, may be attracted to childcare work.

3 WHAT IS THE CASE FOR INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF MEN IN THE SECTOR?

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the case for increasing the number of men employed in childcare occupations. Literature has focused on a range of perceived benefits, particularly to children, but also to the workforce and for men themselves. As Cameron and colleagues note, there are few studies of early childhood workers (Cameron *et al*, 2001). Because the sector employs so few men and there are very few examples of a mixed-gender workforce, these have not been examined empirically. This review found no studies which explored the benefits of a mixed gender workforce through empirical research. Rather, the benefits identified are largely indicative and based on anecdotal evidence. This suggests a need for focused research on mixed gender workforces in childcare, to more accurately identify the benefits to children, parents and the workforce.

3.2 Perceived benefits to children

The case for employing more men in childcare is made in literature on the childcare workforce and focuses on the benefits to children in receiving care from both men and women. Much research cites the benefits identified by Jensen, a Danish writer on childcare. These emphasise the benefits to the quality of care of being cared for by a mixed-gender workforce. Jensen also believes there are benefits for children of lone mothers, on the grounds that they 'lack a male figure to identify with at home and a male worker can be such a person' (Jensen, 1996:21). She also makes a number of controversial assertions, including that gender differences between boys and girls, for example in choice of activities, can be more easily recognised and met by a mixed-gender workgroup; that men and women have different 'caring cultures'; and that many women cannot show interest in 'rough or wild' games (Jensen, 1996:22).

A mixed gender workforce

The argument that has received most support in literature on the childcare workforce is that a mixed workforce challenges stereotypes and demonstrates gender equality to young children. In this way, it is seen to enhance the quality of childcare (see Cameron *et al*, 1999; Moss, 2000). Some research presents the views of adults associated with childcare, for example college lecturers and parents, that children benefit from seeing men in non-traditional roles (Thurtle *et al*, 1998; Daycare Trust, 2003). Such benefits are difficult to prove empirically because this would involve surveying young children who are unlikely to be able to articulate such complex beliefs and views. Therefore, the debate suggests the likely benefits to children of a mixed-gender workforce, rather than providing evidence. For example, Jensen

argues that the quality of childcare is enhanced for children because it exposes them to different styles of caring, playing and instructing (Jensen, 1996:21).

The assertion that men and women have different caring styles, which can benefit children, has been questioned in literature on the childcare workforce. Moss refers to debates in Norway, which has a target of 20 per cent men in the childcare workforce, on whether there are feminine and masculine ways of caring (see Moss, 2000:12). This argument is criticised by Christie as assuming essentialist concepts of male and female behaviour (see Christie, 1997: 8). However, while stereotyped notions of male and female qualities might be questioned, it is likely that in practice men will bring different skills to the work, reflecting their own gendered upbringing and culture. The literature frequently states that such diversity enriches children's experiences.

Male role models

A second argument found in literature on gender in childcare is that men provide role models for young children, particularly boys and children of lone mothers (see Ruxton, 1992; Jensen, 1996; Murray, 1996). It is suggested that children can benefit from seeing a man in a caring and responsible role, particularly in terms of their behaviour and relationships with others. This view is found among the general public (see Daycare Trust, 2002), in campaign literature and in media coverage of men in childcare (see for example, Children Now, 2004).

While it is almost universally accepted that children would benefit from being cared for by men as well as by women, the idea of male childcare workers as role models has been questioned by a number of childcare researchers. This is on a number of grounds:

- it is not clear what model male workers should present;
- it is difficult for one individual to represent men in general;
- challenging stereotypes should be the responsibility of the whole workforce;
- children of lone mothers may not lack male role models.

In the first place, there is some confusion about what model male childcare workers are to provide (Cameron *et al*, 1999:163). While female childcare workers may see themselves as 'professional' role models, delivering a high standard of care, men are seen as representing 'masculinity' or even fatherhood, and sometimes a confused picture is apparent. As Owen states, it is not clear whether men provide role models by being 'traditional' males in a female environment, for example by engaging in 'male' play activities such as sport, or by challenging stereotypes by adopting a more

traditionally 'feminine' and caring role (Owen, 2003b). Other contributors to the debate do not see this as a contradiction and argue that it is the combination of an interest in 'traditional male pursuits', such as sports, and a caring attitude which can be most valuable in reducing sex stereotyping in childcare settings (see Hill, 1990:37).

A second, and related, objection to the view of male workers as role models is that such arguments see men as representing men as a category. The expectations placed on male childcare workers to both represent men in general and to challenge traditional notions of masculinity is somewhat demanding. It could be seen as particularly unreasonable to expect male staff to fulfil various roles, such as father figure and playmate (see Cameron, 2001). It is also contrary to current childcare policy which emphasises the need for a professional childcare workforce (HM Treasury, 2004). A more reasonable and effective approach might be for the whole staff group to challenge gender stereotypes rather than expect male workers to adopt certain roles and behaviour (see Jensen, 1996:26, Cameron, 2001:442).

Finally, opinions differ on the question of whether the presence of male childcare workers is a benefit to children of lone mothers, or offer stability to children with 'ever-changing fathers' (Jensen, 1996:21). Christie argues that some 'present' fathers have little involvement with their children, while some who do not live with their children provide emotional and other support. He argues that men are not 'absent' in the lives of most women lone parents and their children and that 'All children are likely to have some contact with men and respond to the numerous images of men present in the media' (see Christie, 1997:6). Clearly, many such images may reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes. However, as Christie suggests, it may be wrong to assume that a child lacks a 'father figure' or other type of role model simply because they do not live with their father. Furthermore, it may not be reasonable to expect a male worker to fulfil this role when such expectations are not placed on female childcare workers.

Although the concept of men as role models may be flawed, it is supported by childcare employers, by parents and the general public (see Daycare Trust, 2002). Previous NIESR research found that perceived benefits to children of lone mothers and role models for boys were factors that positively disposed employers to recruit men (see Rolfe, *et al*, 2003). Many who support the idea of men as role models may not have thought through the implications for men who work in childcare, particularly the additional demands and pressures it may bring. They may simply believe that the presence of men in the childcare workforce is good for children, because it demonstrates gender equality and brings some diversity to childcare settings.

Therefore, the concept of male childcare workers as role models may need to be clarified rather than discarded.

3.3 Perceived benefits to the workforce and to employers

As well as the perceived benefits to children, the workforce itself is seen to benefit from gender diversity. Literature on gender in childcare refers to a mixed-gender workforce as providing a more 'balanced' team, a concept criticised by Christie for assuming essential 'masculine and feminine characteristics' (Christie, 1997:10). He argues that it is wrong to assume that only when men and women are working together that the full range of human qualities are represented. A stronger argument in favour of a mixed team, made by Ruxton, is that 'excluding men makes projects unlike real life' (Ruxton, 1996:20). Both the workforce and children may benefit if their working and learning environment reflects the wider society.

It has also been argued that the gendered nature of employment in childcare both reinforces the notion that it is like 'substitute mothering' and at the same time renders gender issues invisible (see Moss, 2000:12). It has been suggested that a mixed-gender workforce would challenge perceptions of childcare as an extension of women's work in the home and bring issues of gender and gender difference to the fore. Moss describes how, in Norway, the presence of men in the workforce has led to debates on whether there are feminine and masculine ways of caring (Moss, 2000:12). It is possible that more discussion of gender issues in the workforce might in turn lead to improvements in childcare practice, for example in challenging stereotyping in relation to toys and activities.

Benefits to employers are referred to in debates about current childcare policy, in relation to the need to recruit more childcare workers. As stated in Chapter 1, some research has suggested that the sector's traditional reliance on young women with low qualifications is becoming unsustainable as they seek other employment opportunities (Cameron *et al*, 2001a). Therefore, the recruitment of men is seen as a matter of necessity, so that the sector can expand to meet demand. The EOC (2004) has argued that recruiting from one half of the workforce is inefficient and simply not the best use of human capital. Fuller and colleagues found that the majority of employers agree that recruiting more young people of the non-traditional sex into their sectors would help solve skills shortages (Fuller *et al*, 2005). In addition, childcare employers agreed that recruiting more men would improve the image of their sector and be good for business.

3.4 The views of parents

Research involving parents has found that the majority are in favour of men working in childcare. Benefits identified by research involving parents include the advantages

for boys receiving care from men, as well as from women, and the presence of male role models (Cameron *et al*, 1999; Peeters, 2003). The views of parents on men in childcare are presented in work by the Thomas Corum Research Unit (TCRU) and the Daycare Trust.

The TCRU conducted research in nurseries where at least one man was working and interviewed parents of children attending those institutions. Of the 52 women and 25 men interviewed, 80 per cent were in favour of male workers, with the main benefit identified in providing role models for boys, demonstrating gender equality to children and giving children of lone mothers contact with men. Although most parents said there was no difference in male and female workers, some parents believed men and women had different skills in childcare, with men more able to engage in physical and fun activities, and women seen as more skilled in caring, nurturing and planning (see Cameron *et al*, 1999).

The Daycare Trust commissioned MORI to include questions on men in childcare in its regular survey of the general public (Daycare Trust, 2002). The sample included 2,021 adults, of whom 632 were parents. The survey found 77 per cent of respondents were in favour of more men working in childcare, and 84 per cent of parents willing to place their child or children in a setting which employed a male childcare worker (only 10 per cent were unwilling). Respondents were asked to choose from a list of possible benefits and barriers to men working in childcare. The main benefits of having men working in childcare were:

- 'children being cared for in a mixed gender environment' (57%), and
- 'providing positive male role models for children' (53%).

While the main barriers were:

- 'risks of paedophiles working with children' (57%), and
- 'people could be suspicious of a man working in childcare' (56%).

Research has suggested that there may be further benefits for parents in the contact with male workers. It has been argued that fathers will become more interested and involved in their children's care through relating to a male worker (Hill, 1990; Ruxton, 1992; Jensen, 1996), although evidence for this is largely anecdotal.

3.5 The views and experiences of childcare workers

Research on the views of childcare workers, has also found support for more men in the sector. In addition to challenging stereotypical views of men, workers refer to the benefits of a mixed gender team (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003). One of the main potential benefits in increasing male participation is the job satisfaction for men themselves. Evidence for this is found in a number of studies on the childcare workforce and a small number of studies which have looked at the experiences and perspectives of men working in the sector.

Childcare workers are known to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction through working with children. Surveys on job satisfaction have found childcare workers to be more satisfied than workers in most other occupations. Analysis of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) places childcare workers among the most satisfied occupational groups (see Rose, 2003). Although sample sizes are small, data from the survey shows nursery nurses, educational assistants and other childcare workers all among the top ten most satisfied employees (see Table 3). Studies of childcare workers confirm that levels of intrinsic job satisfaction are high (Cameron, 1997; Rolfe *et al*, 2003). The small number of studies that have asked men about their experiences of working in the sector have found these to be highly positive (Penn and McQuail, 1997; Peeters, 2003). There are indications that intrinsic levels of job satisfaction are particularly high and that negative aspects concern factors such as the reactions of others (see Chapter 3).

Table 3 Overall job satisfaction in major UK occupations

N cases	Occupation	Per cent
		(scores above average median)
		Higher scores
64	Miscellaneous childcare and related work	75
24	Caretakers	71
27	Hairdressers, barbers	70
49	Educational assistants	69
22	Farm workers	68
23	Gardeners, grounds staff	65
23	Managers in building and contracting	65
138	Care assistants and attendants	64
118	Misc. secretaries, personal assistants, typists	64
42	Nursery nurses	63
50	All employees	50

Source: Rose (2003:515)

A number of studies have noted that the routes taken by many male childcare workers are different to those of women working in the sector. There are indications

that men are more likely to find they enjoy working with children 'by accident', while unemployed or as volunteers, and pursue it as a second career. Research by the TCRU, which included interviews with 11 men, found that six had become interested in childcare work after a period of unemployment (see Cameron *et al*, 1999). Studies that have looked at the experiences of men entering the sector in this way report high levels of job satisfaction, particularly with the intrinsic aspects of the work. The following examples, found in research on male childcare trainees (Penn and McQuail, 1997:26) are representative of this experience:

When I started taking by oldest to nursery school and they discovered I was at home and not working they asked me to help out. I started with one day a week but I was soon doing five because I enjoyed it. They said, 'you ought to go to college, you need a qualification to do this work.' I never realised. I thought it was just something women did to pass the time after their children were grown up.

I came on this course because I'd tried everything else. My mother was a nursery nurse and she said 'you'd be good at working with children.' ...I thought I'd give it a try. I won't lose anything, I can always leave. But it looks like I've found a career I can do and enjoy. This is it, childcare is a really fun place rather than anything else.

Other studies identify similar themes in men's experiences of working in the sector. These include the variety within the working day, the satisfaction of helping children to learn, particularly through play, gaining understanding of a child's perspective and the relationships formed with children, families and other workers. For some men, these sources of job satisfaction seem to outweigh the disadvantages frequently identified with childcare work, discussed in the next chapter.

Key points

- Because the sector employs so few men and there are very few examples of a mixed-gender workforce, these have not been examined empirically. The review found no studies that have explored the benefits of a mixed gender workforce through empirical research. Rather, the benefits identified are largely hypothetical and based on anecdotal evidence.
- The argument that has received most support in the literature is that a mixed workforce challenges stereotypes and demonstrates gender equality to young children. In doing so, it is seen to enhance the quality of childcare. The view that men and women have different caring styles and abilities has been questioned in literature on the childcare workforce. However, it is likely that in practice men will bring different experiences to the work, reflecting their own gendered upbringing and culture, and that children will benefit from this diversity.

- An argument frequently made in support of the employment of men in childcare is that men provide role models for young children, particularly boys. This has been criticised on a number of grounds, but research suggests that employers and parents see this as a benefit of employing men.
- Research involving parents has found that the majority are in favour of men working in childcare, principally because of perceived benefits to children.
- The workforce itself is seen to benefit from gender diversity. Literature on gender in childcare refers to a mixed-gender workforce as providing a more 'balanced' team, a view found among childcare workers.
- Policy based literature emphasises the benefit to employers of a more diverse workforce. The sector's traditional reliance on young women with low qualifications may become unsustainable as they seek other employment opportunities. The recruitment of men may therefore be a matter of necessity. Childcare employers also see the recruitment of men as a positive development, which is good for its image and for business.
- One of the main potential benefits in increasing male participation is the job satisfaction for men themselves. Childcare workers are known to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction through working with children. The few studies that have asked men about their experiences of working in the sector have found these to be highly positive.

4 WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO MEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN CHILDCARE?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the barriers to men's employment in childcare. These come from a number of sources, including employer practices and employee preferences. Literature on barriers to men in childcare has focused on a number of key issues, including pay and the status of childcare as women's work. The chapter looks at evidence for these barriers, drawing on research evidence. As the chapter explains, this is not extensive, and there are few studies of employer practices and men's experiences. However, these do shed some light on the main barriers to men working in the sector.

4.2 Barriers to working in the sector

The key barriers to the employment of men in childcare are seen as low pay and poor career opportunities, the low status of childcare and the belief that it is 'women's work'.

Low pay

Childcare is widely recognised as a sector of low pay. As Table 4 shows, the Childcare and Early Years Workforce Surveys report pay levels for non-supervisory childcare staff at little above the minimum wage, which was £4.20 an hour at the time of the survey in 2003 (£4.85 from October 2004). Within the childcare sector some variation is found according to type of provider, with out of school care paying slightly higher rates. Pay levels among early years staff are higher than in childcare, reflecting public sector pay rates and qualification requirements in nursery and primary schools. However, the highest pay rates, found among nursery nurses in early years settings, were still only £7.50 an hour in 2003. As Smith and colleagues point out, in 2003 this compared to average hourly earnings in the UK of £9.66 and £8.33 for women (Smith *et al*, 2004).

Earlier research by NIESR, in which data was also collected directly from employers, found a similar pattern, with lowest levels of pay among part-time workers in playgroups, and higher levels in early years settings such as schools (see Rolfe, 2003:38). Research by the TCRU reports evidence of nurseries having to take action to raise wages with the introduction of the minimum wage (see Cameron *et al*, 1999). Other recent research on employment in childcare reports that many nursery workers are paid at the lower threshold of the minimum wage (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003; Smith *et al*, 2004), including the 'development' rate for workers aged 18-21 receiving accredited training, which is currently £4.10 an hour (from 1 October 2004).

Table 4 Hourly pay of childcare and early years workers (2001-2003)

Childcare	Staff	2001	2003
Full daycare	Supervisors	£5.50	£5.50
	Other staff	£4.50	£5.00
Playgroups	Supervisors	£5.50	£5.60
	Other staff	£4.50	£4.80
Out of school clubs	Supervisors	£6.00	£5.90
	Other staff	£4.90	£5.30
Early Years			
Nursery schools	Nursery nurses	-	£7.50
	Other staff	-	£6.30
Primary schools with nursery and reception classes	Nursery nurses	-	£7.50
	Other staff	-	£6.00
Primary schools with reception classes	Nursery nurses	-	£6.90
	Other staff	-	£5.90

Source: MORI, 2004a:19

Research has highlighted the role of low pay in problems of recruitment and retention in the sector (Owen, 2003b) and there is reasonably strong evidence that pay is a barrier to men's participation. Studies report that employers, local authorities, childcare employees and the general public all see low pay as a deterrent to men (Rolfe *et al*, 2003; Smith *et al*, 2004). Research by MORI for the Daycare Trust found that almost half of more than 2000 adults interviewed said that better pay would encourage more men to work in childcare (Daycare Trust, 2003).

Research by TCRU has found that most childcare students and workers live either with their parents or partner who is usually in full-time employment (Cameron *et al*, 2002: 582). This suggests that many childcare workers can only work in the sector because they are financially supported by someone else. Given the expectations on men to be the prime earner, it is perhaps not surprising that few men are employed in childcare. The report of the 2003 Childcare and Early Years Workforce Survey states that pay levels had changed very little from the previous survey in 2001 (see Mori, 2004a:18). Therefore, efforts to recruit more men have not addressed one of the key barriers identified by research.

Pay has also been found to lead to turnover in the sector. Research on the destinations of childcare students and nursery workers found inadequate pay among the most frequently cited reasons for dissatisfaction and for wanting to leave a

nursery job (Cameron *et al*, 2001; Rolfe *et al*, 2003). Low pay is also recognised as a problem by employers, in both recruiting and retaining childcare workers. The NIESR study found that, while childcare providers, including day nurseries, believe that low pay contributes to the high staff turnover they experience, they feel they cannot increase pay without raising fees, which would lose them custom. American research has suggested that low pay is less a factor in retention than in recruitment because staff are aware of low pay when they take up work in the sector (see Manlove and Guzzel, 1997). However, this ignores turnover which occurs because of workers' changing circumstances. This may be a particular issue for men, yet there is no data on rates of turnover among male childcare workers. The data shows only the gender of current childcare workers, not those who join and leave. The Childcare and Early Years Workforce Surveys collect retention statistics from employers, but these are not broken down by gender. The absence of this data leaves some uncertainty about where the problem lies, whether with recruitment or retention of male staff.

Poor terms and conditions of employment

The childcare sector is also reported to offer poor terms and conditions of employment, such as pension rights and sick pay, poor career structures, and lack of consistent training (Vernon and Smith, 1994; Bertram and Pascale, 2000; Daycare Trust, 2001). Research by the Thomas Corum Research Unit has found that only 10 per cent of the childcare workforce are members of an occupational pension scheme (see Cameron *et al*, 2002: 582).

Scott and colleagues refer to the casual nature of employment in many parts of the sector and what they see as the exploitation of un-unionised female labour. They state that many workers do not receive sick pay, holiday pay, have protection against unfair dismissal. A number of studies, including one of 35 childcare providers and 130 interviews with employees and management (Smith *et al*, 2004) have found that many childcare workers work on temporary employment contracts or no contract at all (see Scott *et al*, 2000). Scott and colleagues refer to the informal and insecure nature of much employment in the sector, which is likely to deter many men. As they state:

The picture, which emerges from workers, policy officers and unions, is of insecure work, very informal work arrangements, low pay, variable working hours as the main characteristics of childcare employment. (2000:12).

Research refers to poor management as a factor in staff turnover, with the day nursery sector identified as particularly problematic. Staff in this sector have reported 'lack of respect' from management as contributing to staff turnover and high levels of stress, resulting in 'burnout' (see Cameron *et al*, 2001b). This includes being ordered to carry out tasks such as washing dishes, and to take babies' cot linen home to

wash (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003:68). Research which looks at employer practices through managers' own accounts adds an additional and useful perspective on staff turnover. This has found poor training opportunities, low priority given to staff development, poor planning and staff supervision and limited non-contact time for administrative work and staff discussions (see Vernon and Smith 1994).

Although existing research suggests that poor terms and conditions of employment and poor management practice in the childcare sector make a significant contribution to turnover, attention has also been drawn to the predominance of women in the workforce and the role of factors such as family and personal reasons, for example pregnancy and house moves, in decisions to leave (Cameron *et al*, 2001a). These findings suggest a need for family friendly policies (see Cameron 1997) and also to the potential benefits of creating a more diverse workforce, particularly through an increase in male childcare workers.

Few Apprenticeship opportunities

Apprenticeships are a potential entry point for young men. However, a number of barriers to entry through the Apprenticeship route have been identified. The report of phase one of the EOC's investigation into gender segregation and Apprenticeships reports a shortage of employer placements in the sector. This is seen to result from the introduction of technical certificates requiring off-site training, an arrangement that many childcare employers do not favour. In addition, many employers prefer not to recruit workers aged below 18. As a consequence, few childcare employees now enter through the Apprenticeship route (EOC, 2004c). Data available from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on success rates of apprentices suggests that fewer young men than young women complete full training leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or the full framework qualification. However, the number of male apprentices is too small for statistical analyses to be reliable.

The low status of childcare

Although pay is seen as a key factor in deterring men from the sector, a number of researchers have remarked that men are still a small minority of childcare workers in countries with higher pay rates and more full-time employment opportunities (see Moss, 2000; Bertram and Pascale, 2000). Therefore it is argued that other factors deter men, in particular the low status of childcare. The perception of childcare as 'women's work' is seen as a major deterrent to men. Research refers to the conceptual link between childcare and 'mothering', whereby childcare is seen as an extension of women's traditional role and is under-valued (Penn and McQuail, 1997). As researchers at the TCRU point out, the fact that childcare work is equated with mothering, and has low pay and status, makes it difficult for many workers to see it as a career (see Cameron *et al*, 1999). 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 (see Thurtle *et al*, 1998).

Although the status of childcare as women's work may be a deterrent to men, issues of pay and status are not unconnected. As the EOC pointed out in its submission to the work and pensions select committee inquiry, childcare is a low paid and low status occupation, a situation which reflects the general undervaluing of caring in our society, whether paid or unpaid (EOC, 2003:3). Therefore, the low pay of childcare work reflects the low status of the work. It may be necessary to raise the status of the work and pay rates in order to attract men.

The experience of Denmark 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). As Cameron explains:

It would appear from the example of Danish childcare centres that where the work has been re-evaluated as valuable, and as appropriate for a mixed-gender workforce, the perception of 'mothering and childcare equals low value work' no longer holds as a principal motivation for employment in childcare work (1997a: 64-65).

At the same time it has been pointed out that to increase the status of childcare work, by upgrading training and qualification requirements, may cut off an important area of employment to young women with low educational qualifications but with experience with children and an enthusiasm for the work. As Moss 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).

However, he concludes that early childhood training and work should not be kept at a low level for this reason. He suggests that recruitment practices should continue to give due consideration to prior experience of work with children, so that those with more limited academic achievement are not excluded.

4.3 Childcare as an employment choice

Although the barriers to working in childcare are well documented, less is known about the extent to which these affect decisions about working in the sector. As discussed in Chapter 2, working in the sector also holds a number of attractions in terms of intrinsic job satisfaction. Although research on attitudes to working in the childcare sector is limited, survey findings tend to support popular assumptions that it is a more attractive option to women than to men. Research by MORI for the Daycare

Trust found 70 per cent of men said they would not consider working in the sector. However, at the same time 27 per cent said they would consider working in the sector, a figure which is considerably higher than the percentage of men in the workforce. It might also be considered to be remarkably high if barriers to working in the sector are taken into account. Respondents to the survey saw these as including suspicions of men's motives, low pay and the low status of childcare as a profession (Daycare Trust, 2003).

There is little research on young people's attitudes towards working in the childcare sector. However, studies suggest that girls are considerably more interested than boys in working with children and that male interest in childcare increases with age. However, research commissioned by the EOC, involving a survey of 1,802 young people aged 14-15 found that 25 per cent of boys agreed that a career in caring sounds interesting (Fuller et al, 2005). A survey of 212 pupils aged 14 and 15 found 12.5 per cent of boys were interested in working with children, compared to 66 per cent of girls (see Cook, 2005). Such percentages are considerably higher than the current proportion of men in the workforce. Moreover, as explained above, a considerably higher proportion of adult men say they would consider working in the childcare sector (see Daycare Trust, 2003). suggesting that attitudinal barriers among men to working in childcare decrease with age.

Research on interest in childcare careers among young men suggests a level of interest in working in the sector which is currently untapped. Given the barriers to working in the sector discussed in this chapter, this potential resource is likely to remain under-used without targeted careers education and guidance. Moreover, as phase one of the EOC's investigation into gender segregation and apprenticeships reports, Connexions partnerships do not appear to be actively promoting non-traditional career choices, including childcare for boys (EOC, 2004c). Existing research findings provide some useful indicators about perceptions of childcare and the inclination of boys to pursue non-traditional career options. This might be used by practitioners in careers education and guidance to develop strategies to tackle gender segregation in career choice. Of particular interest is the greater tendency among boys to gender stereotype jobs and, in relation to childcare, their misconceptions about the work.

4.4 Young people's perceptions regarding work in childcare

The reasons for wanting to work with children, and also for not wanting to, may differ between adults and young people, and it is important that any such differences are identified if boys are to be encouraged to consider childcare as a career option. Cook found that liking children was the most common reason for wanting to work with them, an interest expressed by more girls than boys, followed by a desire to help

children to learn (Cook, 2005:148). Cook also found a tendency among young people to see working with children as preparation for parenting, therefore viewing childcare as an extension of mothering. However, both boys and girls expressed positive attitudes towards men who wanted to work in the sector and did not regard discrimination as a major barrier for men working with young children (Cook, 2005:147).

Research commissioned by Careers Scotland on gender stereotyping in career choice found that girls are significantly less likely to stereotype jobs and occupations than boys. This is reinforced by recent research for the EOC which found that 80 per cent of girls and 55 per cent of boys would or might be willing to learn to do a non-traditional job, (see Fuller *et al*, 2005). The Careers Scotland research, which included a survey of 2148 pupils aged 13 to 15 and interviews with 82, found that significantly fewer boys than girls felt they were suited to jobs in traditionally female occupations such as care assistant, nurse and teacher (see Employment Research Institute, 2004: 8). The research also found that gender issues are different for pupils working at different levels of achievement as well as between girls and boys. The findings of this research suggest that careers information and guidance should be targeted to take account of different perceptions of industries and occupations among groups of young people. Therefore, in the case of the childcare sector, work with boys might aim to dissociate childcare work from parenting and emphasise the skills and knowledge required.

Research commissioned by the EOC into gender equality in work experience placements, including a survey of 566 15 and 16 year olds, found that only 2 boys in the sample undertook a placement in childcare compared to 43 girls, (see Francis *et al*, 2005). However, the same study found that only 15 per cent of girls and boys in same sample of 566 pupils said they had received advice or information about non-traditional placements. This raises the question of whether they might have opted for one had it been on offer. Indeed, when asked whether they would have liked to try a non-traditional work experience placement, 36 per cent of the girls said yes and a further 33 per cent were undecided. 14 per cent of the boys said they would have liked to try a non-traditional placement and a further 38 per cent were undecided. These figures suggest that many young people may be interested in trying non-traditional work experience placements and that this degree of interest is not presently facilitated or developed by schools or Connexions. There is a clear requirement to provide boys with appropriate information, guidance and support to undertake childcare work experience placements.

4.5 The experiences of male childcare workers

Few studies have been carried out on the perspective of male childcare workers. Although these generally report very positive experiences of working in the sector (see Chapter 2), they also identify negative experiences of male childcare workers. These include lack of support from family and friends and suspicion about their motives for working with children. This may deter some men who might otherwise be interested in working in the sector. It might also result in high turnover among male entrants.

Because it is seen as 'women's work', men choosing to work in childcare have been found to lack the initial support of family and friends and that this can lead to feelings of isolation (see Thurtle *et al*, 1998:632). The TCRU study reported above found 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). Men also reported teasing from friends who suggested that they merely sit around all day. Although female childcare staff report such attitudes of others towards their work (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003), male childcare workers may be more sensitive to suggestions that they do not have a 'proper job' because their employment choice is more unusual for a man. Despite such problems, and the feelings of isolation they engender, the effects of any absence of peer or family support seem to diminish over time (Owen, 2003a). However, this may be because only the more committed or thicker-skinned workers stay.

One way in which the experiences of men and women working in the sector differ markedly is in the attitudes expressed by others towards their choice of employment. Men working with children report being questioned on their motives, and suspected of having perverse sexual intentions (Penn and McQuail, 1997; Rolfe *et al*, 2003). In a previous study by NIESR a young male nursery assistant in a private day nursery explained how his school friends, his parents and their friends had almost discouraged him from becoming a childcare worker, by suggesting that childcare was not a job for a 'normal' man. He also described people's reactions on hearing he works with children:

Older people (adults) look at you a bit funny, like you are a bit dodgy, a paedophile or something. It's more looks than what they say although they sometimes say to me, "isn't that a bit weird?" I just walk away and swear under my breath.
(Rolfe *et al*, 2003:51).

There are also reports of men being treated differently while on training courses. This includes being asked to provide the 'alternative' male viewpoint, which could draw unwelcome attention (see Thurtle and Jennings, 1998:637). Meleady, describes how

male workers at the Sheffield Children's Centre were questioned by training establishments on their motives for working with children, and asked whether it is an appropriate career for them. In contrast, gender was never raised as an issue for women trainees. Meleady reports that,

This made the male workers feel uncomfortable – they felt defensive immediately and were placed in positions of having to justify their interest in the field from a gender perspective.
(Meleady, 1998:229).

To help men manage such negative experiences, male workers at the centre have established a men-only support group where they can discuss their experiences and concerns. Other means of support are discussed in Chapter 4.

4.6 Objections to an increase in male childcare workers

Opposition to increasing men's participation in the sector is rarely expressed, but literature on childcare cites some concern that men might take senior positions and that the risk of sexual abuse might increase (Pringle, 1995; 1998).

On the first of these issues, Cameron (1997b) reports concerns among childcare lecturers that men entering the profession will take the senior positions. Respondents to a postal survey of all colleges in England offering childcare and early years courses supported the idea of a mixed-gender workforce, but had a number of concerns. These included potential effects on the career prospects of women in a traditionally female area of work. Respondents referred to the position of men in the professions of primary school teaching and nursing where it is believed that men are able to reach senior positions, such as headteacher, more easily than women. It has been argued that men might be motivated to seek promotion by their position of isolation in the workforce (Lammi-Taskula, 1998). Cameron questions the inevitability of this, on the grounds of the more limited promotion opportunities in childcare, compared to those in these other, more professionalised, areas like teaching (see Cameron, 2001).

Jensen, writing from a Danish perspective, addresses the objection that men might 'take over' women's jobs by arguing that, with the expansion of childcare services within Europe, some new opportunities will be given to men. However, this will leave many new opportunities for women and that efforts should continue to increase women's participation in male-dominated occupations and senior positions (Jensen, 1996:34). The same point is made by Thurtle and colleagues in presenting their research on students in a gender minority on vocational courses. They argue that:

Equal opportunity needs to be a two-way process, as women move into male dominated areas and are encouraged to aspire to management positions, men should be encouraged into childcare and education, so that male participation becomes the norm rather than the exception.
(Thurtle et al, 1998: 632)

The second objection to an increase in the number of men in the sector is that the incidence of sexual abuse in childcare settings might increase. This view, first put forward by Pringle (1995; 1998) has been challenged on two grounds: firstly, that cases of sexual abuse in childcare settings are rare; and secondly, that settings should take appropriate measures to ensure the safety and protection of children. This is seen as the role of recruitment and management procedures which can protect children from potential abuse from women as well as from men (Cameron *et al*, 1999; Owen, 2003).

Research involving parents, college lecturers and the general public suggests a level of concern about potential abuse from male workers (see for example, Thurtle *et al*, 1998; Cameron *et al*, 1999; Mori, 2002). However, it is not always clear whether respondents raise the issue spontaneously or whether they agree it is a concern when asked. Existing research does not allow for an assessment of the degree of concern among parents at potential abuse and whether this is an issue which could be addressed in recruitment campaigns.

There are a number of possible reasons for parental concern at male presence in childcare settings. The first of these concerns their novelty: it is possible that the scarcity of men in childcare settings makes them appear more unusual, and likely to be the target of interest and even suspicion. Interestingly, in Denmark, which has a higher proportion of male childcare and early years workers, the issue of potential abuse does not arise in debates about the childcare workforce (see Jensen, 1996:25).

The second possible reason for parental concern is media coverage over the issue of child abuse. As Owen points out, cases of sexual abuse in childcare are extremely rare, and do not all involve men (see Cameron, 2001; Owen, 2003: 4). However, media attention to paedophiles has included concerns that they may target childcare settings. This may have engendered suspicion and heightened concerns among some parents (see Owen, 2003:4). At the same time, there is also evidence that parents see child protection procedures at the recruitment stage as helping to ensure that only suitable workers are recruited (Cameron *et al*, 1999; Owen, 1999).

Little research has been carried out on the perspective of employers on this issue to gauge the effect of either media coverage or parents' concerns. However, previous

research by NIESR suggests that employers recognise that cases of abuse in childcare settings are rare but are concerned about parents' attitudes and potential allegations of abuse in their settings. Employers responded by establishing procedures which ensure that only suitable people are recruited. These were seen to be necessary to protect both employees and children from allegation and harm, and to reassure parents. In some cases this involved changes to staffing arrangements, for example working in pairs and making nappy changing and toileting the responsibility of female staff only. Some providers said that this had staffing implications and therefore might be a consideration in recruitment, but were reluctant not to employ men, since their presence was seen as a positive advantage (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003:51).

Key points

- Employers, local authorities, childcare employees and the general public all see low pay as deterrent to men working in childcare. Levels of pay for non-supervisors in the sector are little above the minimum wage.
- Pay has been found to lead to turnover in the sector. Research on the destinations of childcare students and nursery workers found inadequate pay among the main reasons for dissatisfaction and wanting to leave. The role of pay in turnover among men who work in the sector is not known, and statistics are not available on rates of turnover by gender.
- The childcare sector has also been found to offer poor terms and conditions of employment, such as pension rights and sick pay, poor career structures, and lack of consistent training, all of which may deter men from childcare work.
- Apprenticeships are a potential entry point for young men. However, a number of barriers to entry through this route have been identified, including a shortage of employer placements in the sector. This is seen to result from the requirement for off-site training, which many childcare employers do not favour. Few childcare employees now enter as apprentices, and completion rates are low.
- The perception of childcare as 'women's work' is seen as a major deterrent to men. Research refers to the conceptual link between childcare and 'mothering'. Therefore, while childcare is seen as important, its status is diminished by its association with housework and is under-valued. The experience of Denmark suggests that policy aimed at increasing the professional status of childcare work, through emphasis on training and qualifications, may change such conceptions and make childcare work more attractive to men.

- Research on attitudes to working in the childcare sector is limited, but findings support popular assumptions that it is a more attractive option to women than to men. There is some evidence that interest in working with children increases with age, with more interest expressed by adults than young men.
- Liking children and a desire to help them learn have been found to be key motivating factors among young people. Although boys and girls have been found to have positive views towards men working in childcare, it is also seen as 'women's work'. This again suggests that careers work might aim to dissociate childcare work from parenting and emphasise the skills and knowledge required. Interest in childcare among young men is currently untapped because of inadequate careers education and guidance. More boys might consider working in childcare if misconceptions and stereotypes were challenged and if childcare, among other non-traditional choices, were encouraged through work experience programmes.
- Few studies have been carried out on the experiences of male childcare workers. However, there are indications that men are more likely to find they enjoy working with children 'by accident' and pursue it as a second career. Men choosing to work in childcare have been found to lack the initial support of family and friends and that this can lead to feelings of isolation, which may lead to turnover. They also report being questioned on their motives, and suspected of having perverse sexual intentions.
- Opposition to increasing men's participation in the sector is rarely expressed, but literature on childcare cites some concern that men might take senior positions and that the risk of sexual abuse might increase. Although cases of sexual abuse in childcare are extremely rare, and do not all involve men, media attention to paedophiles may have engendered suspicion and heightened concerns among some parents and employers. Research has found a degree of concern among employers about parents' attitudes and potential allegations of abuse in their settings. However, they do not see this as a reason not to employ men, who they generally see as an asset.

5 WHAT IS BEING DONE TO INCREASE THE EMPLOYMENT OF MEN IN CHILDCARE?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at initiatives and projects aimed at increasing the employment of men in childcare. It looks first at efforts by employers, highlighting the example of the Sheffield Children's Centre, which is unusual in its endeavours to achieve a mixed-gender workforce. The chapter then looks at the National Recruitment campaign, now directed by the SureStart Unit and carried out by local authorities. The chapter looks at the aims of the campaign and its work in relation to men in childcare. This is followed by an account of current local authority activity in relation to the recruitment of men, using data collected for this review through an email circular to all local authority childcare lead officers. The chapter then looks at the work of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and at organisations with an interest in men in childcare, including the national childcare charity Daycare Trust, the National Men in Childcare Support Network and Men in Childcare. The chapter then looks at the work of Connexions and other initiatives involving young people, and finishes with a short account of the position of men in childcare elsewhere in Europe.

5.2 Employer efforts to recruit men

There are few examples of employer activity aimed at increasing the number of male childcare workers. Research suggests that many employers would welcome a more diverse workforce, because of the perceived benefits to children and to overcome skills shortages. However, at the same time they do not see the achievement of a more diverse workforce as their responsibility but that of the Government, through advertising or through services such as careers education and guidance (see Rolfe *et al*, 2003). This has been recognised by some local authorities who have worked with employers to promote the employment of men. For example, North Tyneside Council's Early Years Training Team have developed and delivered a course on 'Helping organisations become more men friendly' in partnership with the Fathers Plus project in the area. The course is designed to cover a range of issues, including sources of support. It is aimed at daycare settings in the region and, because the course is aimed at exploring policy change, it is recommended that both managers/project leaders and their staff attend together. Because of poor attendance on the course from men, work was extended to audit how training is offered and promoted to men, and its delivery.

Many childcare workers are self-employed: just over a quarter of the childcare workforce are childminders working from their own homes. The proportion of men in the childminding workforce is very low, at only 1 per cent, although this is believed to be increasing. The National Childminding Association (NCMA) would like to see more

men registering as childminders and has been involved in local projects and initiatives with this aim (see below).

Examples of employers who have made a concerted effort to reduce gender segregation in their workforce are found in public sector provision. The Sheffield Children's Centre, which provides care and outreach work for children and young people of all ages, has had a policy of increasing the number of male staff since 1989. The centre's policy is to endeavour to employ an equally balanced male and female workforce, although with precedence given to who is best for the job, regardless of gender. This policy was formulated by staff and parents, with the additional involvement of the centre's older children. The policy had a number of objectives, including to promote positive gender role models and challenge stereotypes and to reflect the care provided at home.

The centre promoted its policies and practices through the circulation of literature in 12 community languages and a series of public meetings, seminars, training events and open days. A range of organisations were contacted, including men's groups, schools, training establishments, jobcentres and careers advisers. 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 (see Meleady, 1998).

The centre has established a number of support mechanisms: male applicants to the centre have been given male mentors, who also reflect their social and cultural backgrounds; the centre's induction programme also directly acknowledges their minority status in the sector. Having recruited a number of men, the centre found it easier to recruit more. Moreover, loss of staff to jobs outside the childcare sector has been found to be small.

The centre reports a number of benefits in employing men. These include perceived benefits to the quality of care and increased involvement of men in the centre's services, for example its support groups for men caring for children. These include young fathers groups and parenting courses.

The centre is considerably larger than many other settings, employing around 80 staff providing weekend as well as weekday care. Its size may have made it easier than other settings to pursue a mixed-gender workforce. Moreover, it seems likely that the

approach of recruiting a whole 'cohort' of men at least partly explains the success of the Centre in attracting male recruits, because this provides men with group support. It has been suggested that examples such as the Sheffield Centre could provide inspiration for other settings and avoid the 'token man' syndrome (Cameron *et al*, 1999).

5.3 The national recruitment campaign

In recognition of the crucial role of childcare in women's participation in the labour market and in outcomes for children, the National Childcare Strategy was introduced in 1998, with three main aims: to improve the quality of care; to enable more families are able to afford childcare; and to expand the number of childcare places and improve information about what is available (DfEE, 1998). The green paper, 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge', which introduced the strategy made explicit reference to the need to recruit men into the sector:

Working with children tends to be seen as a predominantly female occupation. Yet male carers have much to offer, including acting as positive role models for boys - especially from families where the father is absent. The Strategy will also encourage the recruitment of care workers from ethnic minorities, who can be positive role models for all children.
(HMSO, 1998)

In July 2000, the DfES launched a National Childcare Recruitment Campaign, aimed at raising the profile of childcare as a career through a television and press campaign. This has been followed by further campaigns, which have targeted men as well as other under-represented groups. Local authorities have also been delivering the national recruitment campaign since 2000, under the direction of SureStart. Having tested a number of ways of attracting men into childcare, the current focus of the campaign is on effective advertising and recruitment approaches (see below).

The objectives of the National Childcare Strategy and national campaign are delivered at local level by Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs), located within local authorities. These are staffed by local authority employees (or others on service level agreements) and have a consultative body¹. They act under the direction of the SureStart Unit. EYDCPs and providers are expected to help to meet the increased demand for early education and childcare places, and facilitate the new recruitment needed to achieve this. EYDCPs are required to run a Children's Information Service (CIS) and to provide advice, support

¹ EYDCP bodies have representatives from local childcare providers, such as nursery owners and playgroup leaders, as well as other organisations with an interest in the childcare strategy, such as voluntary organisations, the health authorities, employers, parents and local authority departments such as Education and Social Services.

and training for early years, play and childcare workers. This includes helping potential recruits to find work and training locally through telephone information lines and events such as recruitment fairs and short courses.

EYDCPs were originally given targets for recruiting groups currently under-represented in the early years, childcare and play sector workforce. They were expected to recruit a minimum of 6 per cent men, and to set higher targets where they believed these could be achieved. (see EYDCP Implementation Planning Guidance, 2002). The target of achieving 6 per cent men in the childcare workforce by 2004 was not achieved. EYDCPs are no longer required to meet targets for the recruitment of men, or other under-represented groups, although the most recent guidance includes 'Maintaining the drive to recruit and retain men, people from ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities and older workers' as one of five key objectives (see SureStart, 2004:27). One of the key elements of SureStart recruitment strategy is 'Targeting specific ethnic groups and other under-represented groups by offering advice, support and information locally' (see SureStart, 2004a:49).

The emphasis of the Government's campaign has therefore been on advertising and promoting childcare as an option for men, and other groups who are under-represented 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. Children's Minister, Margaret Hodge,² has recently emphasised the importance of high quality childcare through increasing the opportunities for training and career development. The Minister has been quoted as saying, 'Increasing the professionalism of childcare will lead to better pay, both of which will attract more men into the sector' (Observer, 2005).

Current activity within the campaign

There are two main strands to the current national recruitment campaign in relation to gender diversity: Sure Start is testing a series of job and audience-specific advertisements in volunteer local authority areas. The job-specific advertisements cover four areas of work: pre-school, playwork, nurseries and childminding; while the audiences selected are men and older workers. The aim is to test the effectiveness of the approach rather than to measure response.

The second initiative involves collaboration between Sure Start and the Daycare Trust on a project with three main elements underpinning the aim of getting more men into the childcare workforce:

- improve targeted marketing and support for recruitment of men;

² Margaret Hodge was replaced by Beverley Hughes as children's minister in May 2005.

- develop a 14-19 strategy with schools and careers services to target young men in Year nine onwards;
- improve and develop local training, employment and career pathways.

The trust is undertaking local development projects with eight local authority groups involving 20 local authorities addressing varying challenges in each area. These include work with local childcare employers and with Connexions and schools careers services. Projects are also analysing the views and experiences of men, including those who enquire about careers in childcare and do not go ahead. The work of the cluster groups has been underway since August 2004 and will lead to the development of a range of practical resources as a resource pack for local authorities when targeting men for recruitment to the sector.

SureStart also offers a video aimed specifically at attracting men into childcare which is available to all local authorities, and has recently produced a film clip aimed at young people, which features young male play workers. The clip is available as a video, DVD and interactive CD-ROM and is intended for distribution to job centres, Connexions offices and schools.

5.4 Local authority recruitment activity

Local authorities are delivering the National Recruitment Campaign (see above) in their areas, through a range of activity. This has included advertising in venues frequented by men, using men in advertisements and holding men in childcare recruitment events. Campaign work and initiatives are usually led by the EYDCP or CIS, which are located within local authorities. Most local authorities have produced recruitment publicity, such as leaflets and posters with images of men in caring roles, and some have produced videos for screening at recruitment events. Birmingham EYDCP has produced an information pack aimed at men who are considering working in childcare. This pack includes case studies of male childcare workers in a range of settings and contact details of a male mentoring network.

Advertising childcare opportunities to men

Most local authorities have distributed promotional material, such as leaflets and posters, to venues in their areas, including libraries, sports facilities, schools, playgroups and job centres. Local authorities have also produced radio advertisements featuring male childcare workers, or men expressing the high level of job satisfaction gained through working with children.

Some local authorities have targeted publicity at venues where men are more likely to be found. These include football grounds. For example, North East Lincolnshire CIS has produced a 'banner board' for display at the Grimsby Town FC stadium with

the slogan, 'Think working in childcare is just for women?..... Think Again!' and photographs of local male childcare workers with children. The CIS has also placed childcare recruitment advertisements with photographs of men in recruitment pages of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph. Similarly, Bolton CIS has placed recruitment advertisements in the Bolton Wanderers planner, and Bedfordshire CIS has placed advertisements aimed at men in the fanzines of Luton FC and Bedford Rugby Club. It has also installed a slogan board at the Rugby club which reads 'Are you man enough for childcare?' Fanzines are also distributed at local primary and secondary schools during promotional events. Such methods may help to raise awareness of opportunities in the sector and challenge gender stereotyping, but there is not yet evidence of their effectiveness in recruiting men into childcare. The SureStart Unit has expressed an interest in measuring the effectiveness of banners at football matches and more generally in exploring the possibilities of reaching men through sporting events, including through programme advertising and sponsorship (see SureStart, 2004b).

Recruitment events

A number of local authorities have held one-day recruitment events aimed specifically at men. These have been held at shopping centres, leisure centres and other public venues with stalls distributing information and promotional gifts such as pens and key rings. Some local authorities have held larger events. For example, Kirklees EYDCP recently held two *Men Into Childcare* recruitment drives at sports centres in Huddersfield and Batley. One of the aims of the campaigns was to raise awareness among men of full-time job opportunities and improved pay rates in the sector. The events featured men who have retrained as childcare workers, including a former truck-driver working as a childminder. Gateshead EYDCP has held an event at the civic centre where male childcare workers have been available to talk to men who have shown an interest in attending a 'making choices' orientation programme. Also in the north of England, Rochdale CIS has also held an event to encourage men to consider a career in childcare and to identify any barriers to their participation. The event, entitled 'Men Behaving Dadly', was held in the sports arena of a local college. Like the Kirklees events, it was attended by male childcare worker 'role models'.

Targeting men for recruitment

Local authorities recognise that the barriers to men working in childcare are considerable. A survey of all local authorities by the SureStart childcare recruitment team identified the main barriers to working in childcare, aside from pay, were the perceived job status and the perception that childcare is 'women's work' (see SureStart Childcare Recruitment Team, 2004b). In their response to NIESR's request for information on their activities, they referred to low pay, the status of childcare as women's work, and other opportunities open to men. Because of these barriers,

some local authorities have worked more intensively with selected groups of men, as well as promote childcare more widely. Groups targeted by local authorities have included men in areas of high unemployment, black and ethnic minority men and those attending father and toddler groups.

Initiatives aimed at increasing the presence of ethnic minority men in the childcare workforce can meet another objective, of improving its ethnic diversity. Bradford City Council recruited two part-time male outreach workers to promote career opportunities in childcare, early years and playwork to men, and particularly to black and ethnic minorities. The project aimed to recruit men to men-only 'orientation' courses, where participants are informed about the opportunities available in the sector. One of the courses included a residential weekend with out door activities, available only to men who completed the full course. Outreach workers visited a range of venues to promote the project, including local festivals and community centres.

Nottingham EYDCP has made links with a local fathers group with a view to informing its members about career opportunities in childcare. The EYDCP's workforce development team plans to lead an informal discussion on such opportunities during a group session. Rochdale Children's Information and community education services are developing a basic skills parenting course for fathers, with the aim of promoting entry to careers in childcare. This is building on an existing successful course for women.

Training initiatives

Training may have greater potential to attract men than jobs alone. Previous research has suggested that courses for mature entrants would be particularly attractive to men who are considering childcare work options (Cameron *et al*, 1999). A number of local authorities offer introductory childcare courses for men, or are planning these, to encourage male participation. Birmingham EYDCP has held an introductory course on opportunities in childcare specifically for men. Bradford City Council has held three men-only childcare orientation programmes as part of a project aimed at increasing participation by black and ethnic minority men in childcare (see above). In London, three local authorities, including Hammersmith and Fulham have run a men-only 'Making Choices' familiarisation seminar, on a Saturday and with a male tutor. These courses are reported to have a good take-up, but it is not yet known whether they have led to an increase in male recruitment to childcare jobs.

Derbyshire County Council has held two men-only introductory childcare courses in partnership with the county's *Mobile and Coalfields Vocational Training Project*. Training is of eight weeks duration and aimed at unemployed men living in the

Chesterfield area. To date, 18 men have received training. The project is part of an on-going campaign to encourage more men to take up careers in childcare and is funded by Sure Start through the Open College Network. Men completing the course have found work in a variety of settings, including local pre-schools and after-school care. One of the men has since begun a social work university degree course and four others are working towards NVQ qualifications in childcare. Local authorities in areas of low unemployment have identified a need to make it easier for men to retrain for careers in childcare while working in their existing full-time post. Therefore, in recognition of a shortage of training courses locally and the difficulty experienced by men in attending courses, Bedford County Council is holding its own courses on a more flexible basis than local colleges are able to provide.

Mentoring schemes and support

In recognition of the need for additional support among male childcare workers, a number of local authorities offer new male childcare workers or trainees a male mentor. Birmingham EYDCP has set up a male mentoring group for new childcare workers and students and Bedfordshire County Council offers one to one support and initial mentoring for men wishing to undertake training within childcare. The authority also believes that employing men as childcare trainers and in development roles may help to prevent men from dropping out between making an initial enquiry and finding employment or training in childcare. The authority has also used a male childcare trainer to visit the job centre and Connexions staff meetings to promote the recruitment of men in childcare.

Male childminders may be in need of particular support, since they may experience isolation from other childcare workers as well as from other men. The National Childminding Association Network Coordinator for the SureStart local programme in Weston-super-Mare has set up a drop-in group for male childminders in the area. The group is open to all male child carers in the area and is now run by the men themselves. It has held a number of events, for example a craft workshop, open to all childminders. SureStart and the local EYDCP for Bath and North Somerset have publicised the activities of the group in order to attract men into childcare work.

5.5 Sector Skills Councils

The aims of the Government's national recruitment campaign have been supported by EYNTO, the UK Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Early Years and Childcare. As a previous EOC report points out, the EYNTO Sector Workforce Development Plan observed that the sector has 'been bedevilled by a stereotypical view that it is 'women's work' that anybody can do' (see Miller *et al*, 2004). However, the SSC has not made recommendations to counteract stereotyping or suggested activity which might attract men into the sector. Along with other sector skills councils, it has not

acknowledged the link between skills shortages and gender segregation (see EOC, 2004c). SSCs are currently undergoing reorganisation, and a new SSC for Social Care, Children and Young People is under development. This may give a new impetus to work on promoting gender equality in the sector.

5.6 Other men in childcare initiatives

Other initiatives have involved childcare organisations, notably the national childcare charity Daycare Trust, Men in Childcare and the National Men in Childcare Support Network.

Men in Childcare, based in Edinburgh, aims to promote the employment of men in childcare and to provide them with support. It was set up in 2000 and received funding from the city's childcare partnership in 2001 to employ a project co-ordinator. The project has run courses for men interested in working in childcare. These include induction and taster courses and access courses for more advanced training. To date, more than 200 students have attended Men in Childcare courses. The project has found men to be attracted by advertising aimed specifically at men, and by the prospect of training alongside other men rather than being in a small minority. The project also runs a mentoring scheme aimed at supporting men in training or employment in childcare. Originally covering Edinburgh, Men in Childcare has now received direct funding from the Scottish Executive to extend the project to other cities in Scotland. The organisation has links with partner organisations in Norway, Denmark, France, Sweden, Belgium and Hungary. It has held a number of conferences, focused on issues relating to the recruitment of men into the sector, with speakers and delegates from across Europe. The most recent of these was held in October 2004.

The National Men in Childcare Support Network is based at the Sheffield Children's Centre. The aim of the organisation is to move forward issues relating to men in a caring role. It organises local, national and international seminars and conferences on men in childcare and provides workshops for men caring for children. These include men in particular circumstances, for example young fathers, gay fathers and grandfathers. The Children's Centre also provides an advocacy service for individuals or groups of fathers and male workers, which includes mentoring. The network has collected a substantial number of case studies that are used for training and awareness-raising across local authorities to support the development of gender-inclusive practices in childcare provision.

The Daycare Trust ran a *Men in Childcare* week in June 2003 which focused on men's roles both working in childcare and as active fathers. The week was intended to open up discussion on the need for more men in childcare, barriers to men's

involvement in childcare and how they can be encouraged to play a more active role. It included a number of activities to promote men in childcare. The Trust commissioned Mori to include questions on men in childcare in its regular survey of the general public, with a sample size of more than 2,000 adults. The findings of the survey were presented in Chapter 2. The Trust also commissioned a policy paper 'Men's Work?' (see Owen, 2003). A national conference, 'He who cares wins', was also held during the week, and an art competition was held for children to paint or draw their male hero.

5.7 Connexions and work with young people

Careers education and guidance can play an important role in encouraging young men to consider working in childcare (see Gould, 1997). However, as phase one of the EOC's investigation into gender segregation and apprenticeships reports, Connexions partnerships do not appear to be actively promoting non-traditional career choices, including childcare for boys (EOC, 2004c). Some examples of good practice in challenging gender stereotypes have been found, for example the involvement of male childcare workers in 'What's My Line' quizzes in schools (Rolfe, 1999). The Sheffield Children's Centre (see above) has taken part in these careers events in schools in the city. As Peeters points out, it can be particularly difficult to encourage young men to consider an occupation which they regard as female at a time when they are developing their self-identity (Peeters, 2003:7). Challenging stereotypes should therefore be a permanent and integral feature of careers work with young people.

Some local authorities have involved young people in the production of their promotional materials aimed at men. For example, Tameside local authority has run a photographic competition with a local sixth form college with categories for 'caring males' and for 'caring' photographs taken by men. Gateshead EYDCP is promoting careers in childcare to young men in the borough. This includes a new Apprenticeship route, which involves liaison with local schools. Partnerships of this kind may be particularly effective in encouraging young men to consider childcare, because they involve challenging stereotypes and offering attractive routes into jobs in the sector.

5.8 Other European countries

The UK Government is not alone in recognising the need to recruit more men into childcare occupations. As explained in Chapter 1, the slightly stronger presence of men in childcare occupations in some other European countries, notably Denmark and Norway, is explained partly with reference to recruitment campaigns aimed at improving the proportion of men entering the sector as students of childcare and early years.

In Norway men are currently around 7 per cent of staff in daycare institutions, and the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs has set a target for this to be increased to 20 per cent by 2007 and has set up networking systems to promote the recruitment and retention of men. Unlike in the UK, where the main impetus behind greater gender diversity is workforce expansion, the Norwegian initiative is aimed at changing gender roles in the home as well as at work and in improving the performance and behaviour of boys in school.

In a number of countries, the participation of men in childcare has been promoted through publicity campaigns featuring images of male childcare workers. As a previous EOC report points out, these are different from the typically feminine image of childcare (see Miller, 2004). For example, Holland's poster and leaflet-based campaign features men and children in fancy dress, including as pirates. These have been distributed to jobseekers at unemployment offices, but their effectiveness is not known.

Peeters reports an increase in male students on out-of-school childcare courses as a result of a recruitment campaign by the Flemish government. This has included an increase in the salaries of staff in public daycare centres as well as an advertising campaign (see Peeters, 2003). The campaign appears to have achieved most success in recruiting men to posts in out of school care, partly because the Flemish Department of Employment assisted them in finding employment. The scheme was also more successful in recruiting mature entrants rather than school leavers. This adds further weight to research findings that interest in careers in childcare among men increases with age.

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 have the effect of raising the status of both the training and the occupation, and therefore increase their attraction to men.

Key points

- Initiatives to increase the employment of men in childcare have come largely from the work of campaigns and charitable organisations, such as the Daycare Trust and Men in Childcare Scotland, and from the work of local authorities, directed by the national childcare recruitment campaign. The few examples of employer activity aimed at recruiting men are found in the public sector. Research suggests that many employers do not see the achievement of a more

diverse workforce as their responsibility but that of the Government and services such as careers education and guidance.

- The Sheffield Children's Centre has aimed to employ equal numbers of men and women since 1989. It has pursued this through holding public meetings, seminars, training events and open days and circulating literature in community languages. Having recruited a number of men, through methods including advertising in social and leisure settings such as pubs, sports clubs and working men's clubs, the Centre found it easier to recruit more and turnover is reported to be low.
- Local authorities have been delivering the national recruitment campaign since 2000, under the direction of SureStart. Having tested a number of ways of attracting men into childcare, the current focus of the campaign is on effective advertising and recruitment methods. A joint project between Sure Start and the Daycare Trust is addressing a number of gaps in earlier work on men in childcare, including the views of local employers, the views and experiences of men, and work with Connexions and schools careers services.
- Activities of local authorities over the course of the national recruitment campaign have included advertising in venues frequented by men, using men in advertisements and holding men in childcare recruitment events. Although seen as successful in raising the profile of men in childcare, these methods have not led to significant increases in applications from men.
- While running general campaigns aimed at men from all walks of life, some local authorities have also targeted activities more closely at groups of men, including men in areas of high unemployment, black and ethnic minority men and father and toddler groups.
- Training may have greater potential to attract men than jobs alone and some local authorities offer introductory childcare courses for men to encourage male participation. Although some local authorities report increased take up of introductory training, it is not yet known whether these approaches have led to an increase in male recruitment.
- In recognition of the need for additional support among male childcare workers a number of local authorities offer new male childcare workers or trainees a male mentor.
- Careers education and guidance can play an important role in encouraging

young men to consider working in childcare. However, Connexions partnerships do not appear to be actively promoting non-traditional career choices, including childcare for boys. Work in progress involving SureStart and the Daycare Trust may help to address this need.

- The experience of other northern European countries in trying to recruit men suggests that most success can be achieved by increasing salaries and the professional standing of childcare, as well as targeting mature entrants. The nature of work may also be a factor, with evidence of men being attracted to work with older children and with a stronger educational content.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Main findings

The childcare workforce is almost exclusively female. Men are a small proportion of workers in all settings, with the exception of after-school care. Moreover, their representation has not increased, even in this area of work, in recent years. Low pay and the predominance of part-time work are thought to deter men, and there is evidence of men having to combine part-time posts to obtain full-time employment.

There is general agreement on the benefits of employing more men. These include demonstrating gender equality to children, and enriching children's experiences of care. There is evidence from employers that recruiting more men would improve the image of the childcare sector, be good for business and help to address skills shortages. At the same time, the barriers to men's participation are considerable. The image of childcare as 'women's work', combined with low pay and poor career prospects deters many men from contemplating a childcare career. Careers information and guidance could challenge stereotyped notions of childcare work, and improve understandings of the skills and knowledge required, and the high levels of job satisfaction reported by workers in the sector. However, there is little evidence of such work in the current activities of Connexions partnerships or schools. Interest in childcare among young men is currently untapped because of inadequate careers education and guidance. More boys might consider working in childcare if misconceptions and stereotypes were challenged and if childcare, among other non-traditional choices, were encouraged through work experience programmes.

Opportunities for young people to enter jobs in childcare through the apprenticeship route are limited, and this may deter young men. Reasons for a shortage of training places appear to include the lack of commitment to off-site training among childcare employers. This is likely to discourage career-minded young women as well as young men. Low completion rates among apprentices in the sector provide further indication that insufficient support is given to training in the childcare sector.

There is some evidence that men may choose childcare as a 'second chance career', following a period of unemployment. This mirrors the choice of many women to work in the sector while their own children are young. However, it also suggests that some men may waste years in jobs they dislike because they did not know they like working with children. It is possible that, with better initial careers education and guidance, men with the skills and aptitude for working with children could be recruited at a much earlier stage in their working lives.

Childcare workers are known to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction and studies that have asked male childcare workers about their experiences have found these to be very positive. At the same time, men working in the sector have been found to lack support, and this may result in the loss of valuable employees. However, both levels of turnover among men, and reasons for loss of male workers are not known.

There is evidence that childcare employers regard men as a positive addition to their own workforce, despite concerns over the reaction of parents. However, at the same time many childcare employers do not see themselves as responsible for increasing the representation of men in the sector. Efforts to increase men's employment, through campaigns and projects have been initiated largely by local authorities under the direction of SureStart and by childcare organisations such as the Daycare Trust. Work in this area is moving beyond an earlier emphasis on advertising to more focused work with selected groups, and work with employers and Connexions partnerships.

6.2 Gaps in evidence

Although the issue of men in childcare has been the subject of some debate, there is little in-depth research. There are therefore a number of gaps in evidence on issues relating to the employment of men in childcare. These include areas where evidence is weak, or the picture unclear, and where evidence is simply absent.

The benefits of a mixed-gender workforce

Much of the literature on the benefits of a mixed-gender workforce is conjecture, rather than evidence based. Although there are few settings in which research could be done, there is a need for more concrete evidence on how children, the workforce, employers and parents can benefit from the employment of men.

Employers' practices

One of the main gaps in evidence concerns employers' practices. This includes the recruitment process and its role in maintaining a segregated workforce. Existing research shows the importance of informal recruitment methods, including 'word of mouth' to some childcare employers. This is likely to disadvantage men, who are often less connected to childcare circles. Research suggests that while employers see benefits in employing men, they have some concerns about parents' views. While there is no evidence that this results in discrimination in recruitment, this may account for employers' reluctance to be proactive and could be explored in more depth.

The experiences of men working in childcare

There are very few detailed studies on the experiences of men working in childcare, particularly across settings and over time. Therefore, while it is known that more men are employed in certain types of setting, the reasons for this are not known. Evidence on why men decide to work in childcare and why they chose to work in particular types of setting would help to pin-point the barriers to men's participation and the how these are successfully overcome.

Retention and turnover among male childcare workers

The literature focuses on the recruitment of men, while little is known about rates of turnover among men in the sector. Turnover among all employees in the sector is high, and at least some is explained by women leaving for their own childcare reasons. It is possible that turnover rates are even higher among men, but this data is not available. If this is the case, policies aimed at encouraging more men into childcare will be ineffective if issues leading to turnover are not addressed. Therefore, research on both levels of male turnover, and reasons why men leave the sector would fill an important gap in knowledge.

Knowledge and attitudes of young people towards childcare employment

More detail is needed on the views of boys of secondary school age on childcare employment. This should include sources of information on childcare employment. It could also explore ways in which stereotyped notions of the work can be countered through use of materials and activities. This might help to target information about childcare employment more effectively and to address misconceptions about childcare careers.

6.3 Key issues and implications

There is a range of barriers to greater recruitment and retention of men in childcare. Reliance upon marketing and advertising childcare work to men is proving insufficient on its own. The research suggests that strategies for increasing the proportion of the childcare work force may need to include a range of measures:

- improving low pay and conditions;
- remodelling jobs by enhancing the knowledge-base and educational nature of the work;
- targeting recruitment more closely to men in local labour markets;

- providing appropriate careers information for boys and young people about training and progression opportunities in childcare with an emphasis on the knowledge and skills elements of the work;
- improving the quality of training and range of opportunities for men to participate;
- encouraging employers to widen their recruitment pool ; and
- increasing support to men working in female dominated settings in the sector.

Increasing pay and providing more full-time jobs

It is probably unrealistic to expect a significant increase in men's participation in childcare employment without an increase in pay rates in the sector. Not only is low pay an issue in itself, it contributes to the low status of childcare. However, there are problems in raising pay rates because, as the EOC points out in its review of childcare provision, despite government assistance, the costs of childcare are largely borne by parents. Private sector providers fear that increasing pay, and therefore the costs of childcare will result in loss of custom. Government policy aimed at reducing the cost of childcare to parents may allow providers to pay increased rates, and there may be scope for further subsidisation of public sector provision. A further way of increasing the take-home pay of childcare workers is to create more full-time jobs, by combining part-time positions, and combining term-time only with school holiday-only jobs.

The development of SureStart Children's Centres offers scope for re-modelling of jobs to combine childcare, education and play for children of all ages, and to create full-time jobs. These might be designed to involve enhanced skills and knowledge, which should be reflected in higher pay.

Targeting men's recruitment

It is important to continue to promote childcare as an employment option for men from all walks of life. At the same time, more success in terms of volumes of recruits may be experienced in targeting particular groups and promoting men's employment in parts of the sector. Initiatives targeted at men who are caring for their own children, including through fathers' groups may have some potential for success. Therefore, in designing their recruitment campaigns, local authorities need to consider the nature of their locality, pools of potential male recruits and employment options locally.

Greater gains may be experienced by aiming to increase the representation of men in parts of the sector where they are already employed. In the UK, as in other northern

European countries, these are centres caring for older children, and including play rather than care alone. The representation of men in out of school care has not increased in recent years. However, a stronger presence in this area of work, and in similar settings such as holiday care, may provide an example to providers in other types of setting. Therefore, the benefits of employing men in the out of school sector, particularly to children and employees could be more widely disseminated. Children's Centres will provide for children of all age groups and may therefore find it easier than other settings to attract men. Early examples of the employment men in such settings will be invaluable in encouraging other Centres to build a diverse workforce.

Improving the provision of careers education and guidance

Allowing men to discover they like working with children by accident, after spending years in jobs they dislike, is a waste of human resources. This could be avoided by better careers education and guidance. Work on challenging stereotypes and opening up choices among young people as a permanent and integral part of careers education could help increase the number of young men who would consider a career in childcare. This could include the use of multi-media materials, visiting speakers, work trials and placements. In relation to childcare, boys could be given greater encouragement to take up work experience placements in childcare settings. Careers information on childcare could emphasise the positive aspects of the work, particularly the high levels of job satisfaction experienced by many childcare workers. It could inform young people of the opportunities for progression, including in the areas of centre management, childcare administration, inspection and tutoring.

Changing employers' practices

Employers in all parts of the sector should be encouraged to use formal recruitment methods rather than rely on word of mouth, use of notice boards and other practices which disadvantage men. The DfES has produced guides to good practice in the recruitment of childcare workers which include guidance on equal opportunities and diversity. Employers should be encouraged to follow these and adopt good practice in recruitment and retention (see DfES, 2003).

The review has reported evidence that many employers do not regard it as their responsibility to increase diversity. Employers should be encouraged to consider the benefits of a mixed-gender workforce, not just to resolve their own recruitment difficulties, but to improve the quality of care and education of children and their image to parents and the local community.

Improving training opportunities

To ensure the quality of care to children, as well as enhancing skills, knowledge and job satisfaction, recruitment of both young people and mature entrants should be

through routes which include training. Apprenticeships are a potential entry point for young men, but measures are needed to be taken to increase the number of employer placements in the sector and to increase apprenticeship completion rates.

Men who show an interest in initial training in childcare could be recruited to courses with the minimum of delay, so that their interest and enthusiasm is sustained and developed. The Daycare Trust has advocated 'fast-track' programmes which can help men into childcare employment quickly. Colleges need to develop marketing strategies to recruit men to childcare courses. These could benefit by looking at the approaches developed in other European countries, as well as effective practice in the UK.

Increasing support to men in the sector

The experience of male trainees and childcare workers suggests a need for additional support through contact with other men. The availability of such support may both encourage men to take up training and employment in childcare and help to retain them. 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.

Improving multi-agency working

Danish childcare writer, Jytte Juul Jensen argues that increasing men's participation in childcare employment requires the involvement of various authorities and organisations in formulating policy and action (Jensen, 1996). In the UK, particular benefits may be gained from closer collaboration between organisations responsible for increasing the participation of men in childcare, particularly local authorities, and colleges, employers, Connexions partnerships and schools. The current direction of the national recruitment campaign may help to build these links and to develop a more coordinated approach in local areas. These should be reinforced and directed by coordination and discussion at national level between SureStart, Connexions, the LSCs, the new SSCs and the EOC.

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