

**Children in Scotland  
Wednesday 6 June  
For immediate release**

**Public services must respect fathers' involvement in family life**

**Father's footsteps, a special Children in Scotland conference on Monday 11 June 2006, will discuss the impact of the Gender Equality Duty on public services' treatment of fathers**

The new Gender Equality Duty (GED) has important implications for fathers, families and children. The duty, which came into force on 6 April 2007 states that public authorities must eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment, as well as promote gender equality. It will affect all public sector bodies as employers and as service providers and also applies to voluntary sector organisations providing services under contract with governmental agencies.

Jonathan Sher, director of research, policy and practice development said: "From maternity services that overlook fathers to schools that send information about students solely to mothers, there is a marked tendency of some public services to treat fathers as invisible, uninterested or uninvolved in their children's lives. Such behaviour places an unfair burden upon mothers, creates a negative self-fulfilling prophecy for fathers and deprives children and young people of the benefits realised when both parents are supported to play their mothering/fathering roles well.

The Gender Equality Duty explicitly calls for greater equality in the delivery of public services. It no longer will be legal for those providing public services to children, young people or families to treat fathers as second-class citizens or as tangential to the wellbeing of their children. How the Gender Equality Duty can be implemented in ways that honour this commitment is one of the questions to be addressed at the Fathers' Footsteps conference.

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Editors notes:

**Children in Scotland etc**

**Gender Equality Duty**

The Gender Equality Duty, which came into force on 6 April 2007, comprises:

- 1) a general duty that applies across the UK;
- 2) duties specific to Wales, England and Scotland. The general duty states that public authorities must eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment, as well as promote gender equality. It will affect all public sector bodies as employers and as service providers. It also applies to non-government organisations providing services under contract with government agencies.

The GED does not apply in Northern Ireland, which already has gender equality legislation in place.

'Fathers' refers not only to biological fathers (resident or non-resident), but also to step-fathers, foster fathers, grandfathers or other males playing the father role in the lives of children and young people.

**Examples of projects in Scotland that aim to challenge gender stereotyping.**

## **Education**

GirlsGetWise is the Scottish version of the Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) Campaign. WISE in Scotland promotes science, engineering and technology careers to women. It gives guidance about subject choices and careers. Newsletters are published, as are a collection of profiles about some inspiring women working in various relevant fields. A residential week is held annually for girls and a website exists for girls who attend the residential to chat to each other afterwards. For more information go to: <http://www.girlsgetwise.org/index.htm>

## **Early Years**

In 1998/99 in Greater Pilton (Edinburgh), it was noticed that more men than had previously been the case were working in childcare. In response, a network was set up to recruit more. A local organisation, the Pilton Partnership, provided support, while a local college provided places on its National Certificate in Childcare and Education Courses. A coordinator is now in place and the project – called Men in Childcare - has been extended to other parts of Scotland. To date, over 700 students have attended these courses.

## **Health**

‘Dads Work’ is a community project run by a male health practitioner and other staff for fathers based in Musselburgh, East Lothian. It provides support groups, positive parenting classes, workshops on the role of fathers, home visits, trips and outings for fathers and their children. It aims to promote healthy parenting both emotionally and physically, reduce the feeling of isolation, promote the belief that parenting is also fathers’ work and raise confidence, self esteem and skills of being a parent. Fathers report it has improved their relationships with their children and has made them realise the importance of spending quality time with them. For more information visit <http://www.ellp.net/dadswork/>