

# Gender

TITLE  
**04**





# Gender

This unit aims to enhance the learners’ understanding of their own gender/sex and those of familiar people. Understanding is developed and embedded through a range of carefully planned and personalised learning experiences. The activities are suggestions only. You can adapt or extend them to suit your learners’ age, cognitive ability and specific needs. Moving beyond the direct facilitation of learning, this unit explores broader issues in how we engage with children and young people around this theme.



Links to Curriculum for Excellence	Learning intentions	Success criteria
<p>I recognise that we have similarities and differences but are all unique. <a href="#">HWB 0-47a</a></p> <p>I understand my own body's uniqueness, my developing sexuality, and that of others. <a href="#">HWB 3-47a</a></p>	<p>With the appropriate level of support and resources children and young people learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ That they are male or female.</li><li>▶ That familiar people are male or female.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ I can identify my own gender/sex.</li><li>▶ I can identify the gender/sex of familiar people.</li></ul>

## Links to other themes

Learning within these other thematic units will support learning on this theme:

- ▶ My Body
- ▶ Puberty
- ▶ Relationships

### Activities, ideas and supports for learning: Understanding gender (sex)

For a typically developing child there will be a growing awareness of the physical differences between girls and boys around the age of 2, and by 3 years old most will be able to identify as a boy or girl. By 4 most children have a stable sense of their gender/sex.

Learners with complex additional support needs can be supported to build awareness of gender/sex as part of their individual identity, and may build understanding or awareness of the gender/sex of familiar people. The learning activities offered in this unit work within these parameters.







### 1. I am a boy/I am a girl

Approaches and materials in the units *My Body*, *Puberty* and *Personal Hygiene* can be used to establish the child/young person's gender/sex as they learn names for parts of their body, how their body changes with puberty and how they maintain good personal hygiene. In the *My Body* unit there is an activity suggested that sees learners work with arts specialists to create a self-portrait that captures who they are, this would be an opportunity to develop awareness of one's gender/sex.

### 2. People I know are boys/men. People I know are girls/women

For this activity (and with the permission of those involved) collect photographs of classmates and/or familiar adults in the child/young person's life at home or at school. Using classmates and adults at school means a group activity is more easily facilitated as everyone is familiar. Sort the people into girls and boys or men and women.





Having considered some approaches to learning we can consider gender/sex beyond what we facilitate directly with children and young people; these further issues should inform how we relate to, love and support our young people.

### Gender stereotyping: the role of adults

Learners with complex additional support needs, as we describe the profile of these learners, will not have the capacity to understand that society can stereotype or discriminate against or limit a person based on their gender/sex. However, all children and young people still *experience* the world around them and can face limitations or stereotypes based on who they are. We adults can challenge this and support them to live life to the full, be they boys/men or girls/women. We can do this by:

- ▶ Resisting buying clothing that is overtly gendered – this is especially true for girls who might not be able to play, get messy or have fun in clothes that are restrictive.
- ▶ Introducing both boys and girls to all sorts of experiences and play (taking on board what they prefer/like and can manage in terms of the sensory experience). So, for every child we can think of creative and arts-based play, indoor and outdoor, building and making, rough-and-tumble, quiet and contemplative.
- ▶ Creating opportunities to try different toys and playtime experiences with no gender bias, for example train sets, dressing up clothes, dolls, play kitchens.
- ▶ Not assigning tasks, work or play activities by gender.
- ▶ Buying toys or clothes that the child likes or needs, rather than things that are *for girls* or *for boys*.
- ▶ Encouraging all our children to be caring and kind.
- ▶ Encouraging and support friendships with both boys and girls.
- ▶ Being supportive of children and young people in terms of preferences for things like clothing or any other way they choose to look, present or express themselves.

### Gender-based violence

This is violence that is directed against a girl or woman because she is a girl/woman, or violence that affects girl/women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1992). Gender-based violence can happen to anyone, including people with complex additional support needs and can happen in the person's home, care environment or online. In our role as educators and safeguarders we adults must always remember the importance of every child and young person's right to personal safety and to be free from harm. We can be aware of behaviour change that might indicate distress, and we are obliged to act on concerns, following our established child protection and safeguarding procedures.

### Gender dysphoria/People who are transgender

It is acknowledged in the literature and in health services that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder are disproportionately represented in those referred to gender identity services. Why this might be so is debated, and this unit is not the place to address complex and contested arguments. What we can do – as we consider learning *for children and young people with complex additional support needs, as we have defined this* – is think about the very specific needs of children and young people (who may have ASD) *who we know are learning at pre-Early level/ Milestone Level*. What we can say is that it is unlikely that the learners we seek to support with these materials, those with profound learning disabilities, have the cognitive capacity to understand, express or present any experience of gender incongruence or dysphoria. For material that supports young people learning at other Levels, please refer to other content in the [rshp.scot](http://rshp.scot) resource.

## And finally....

### I can indicate to an adult if I am upset

Children/young people may be upset about aspects of their RSHP learning. As they learn we want them to understand and remember who they can find support from. The My Circle exercise described in the unit called Personal Space and Boundaries can support children and young people to identify who they can tell if they are upset. Of course it is also the responsibility of adults who provide education and care to know the learner well and to be aware of changes in behaviours that might communicate worry or distress.

### Learner evaluation

Learners should be asked to show a preference as to whether they like or dislike the activities that are part of their RSHP learning. It may be possible to tell if the child/young person is enjoying their participation as it happens, this is facilitated when the adult knows the learner well and is able to interpret reactions. Whether at school or at home, you may have already worked on developing an object of reference or signifier for when you want to know a child/young person's opinion. Learner evaluation will help you to make learning more enjoyable, relevant and useful for the learner.



