

# Star Health

## Evaluation of Being Equal Pilot Program

2021

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Participating services:

- Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre
- Clarendon Children's Centre
- Coventry Children's Centre
- Renown Kindergarten
- Windsor Community Children's Centre

## Acronyms

GE and R	Gender Equality and Respect
ELS	Early Learning Services
BE	Being Equal
DET	Department of Education and Training
RR	Respectful Relationships program
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
FV	Family Violence

Health Promotion Team, Star Health  
 Address: Star Health Group, PO Box 103 South Melbourne, VIC 3205  
 E: [hpteam@starhealth.org.au](mailto:hpteam@starhealth.org.au)  
 P: 03 9525 1300  
 W: [www.starhealth.org.au](http://www.starhealth.org.au)

# Executive Summary

Star Health's two-year pilot program, Being Equal, was an innovative codesign project which partnered with five Early Learning Services (ELS) from the City of Stonnington and City of Port Phillip. Star Health created a whole-of-service framework to guide early learning services through a process of creating environments that are more gender equitable and respectful.

Based on the Department of Education and Training's Respectful Relationships Whole of School Approach and aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, Being Equal is a continuous improvement cycle with a focus on six elements:

1. Leadership Commitment: embedding Gender Equality and Respect (GE and R) in policies and procedures.
2. Support for Staff and Families impacted by family violence: creating a safe space for staff and families by creating the capacity to identify and respond appropriately to family violence.
3. Professional Development: educators' knowledge of GE and R; and capacity to use it in their everyday practice.
4. Culture and Environment: applying a gender lens to behaviour, spaces and equipment.
5. Teaching and Learning: embedding GE and R in learning activities
6. Community Partnerships: working with families to raise awareness and understanding of the value of gender equity and respect in the early years

The evaluation revealed that all five services made progress across the six elements. This included significant changes in Leadership and Commitment, Culture and Environment and Professional Development. Educators used their GE and R knowledge in reflective practice and applied it to teaching and learning through books and play based activities. All services reported increased confidence in responding to family violence disclosures.

Star Health's role was to support services with professional development, provision of resources, individual tailored support and regular peer network meetings. This enabled services to effectively implement Being Equal in their unique setting. We identified four enablers in the Being Equal program that support making change in the services: the whole-of-service approach, peer network, the program coordinator support and champion(s) within each service.

Within this evaluation, we highlight features in a service that support making change, including:

- A champion to lead the program
- Time and authority of all educators to focus on the program
- GE and R is a priority in planning and quality processes
- Ownership and commitment of the program and processes by all staff

Through the implementation of Being Equal and a developmental evaluation process, we found that services that are early adopters, well-resourced with both time and staffing, and primed for a program of this kind, are best placed to implement Being Equal.

# Introduction

In 2018 Star Health's Health Promotion Team established a pilot program titled Being Equal (BE) with five early learning services in the cities of Stonnington and Port Phillip. The two-year pilot program was focused on adapting a model which would create environments within Early Learning Services (ELS) that are more gender equitable and respectful. Within this report, we highlight the Being Equal Model which encompasses the program cycle, theory of change and program components. We detail our evaluation approach and the methods used to guide our work. We conclude with our evaluation findings and recommendations for future implementation.

This evaluation will inform the next stage of development of the BE program model as well as the possible future roll out of the program in Stonnington, Port Phillip and beyond. This evaluation is intended for the Department of Health and Human Services, Being Equal Early Learning Services and to share with interested organisations.

## Background

Early childhood is a time when **children absorb messages** around gender stereotypes and identity. Research shows that children's ideas about gender are shaped by their early life experiences, family, lifestyle, early childhood education and media<sup>1</sup>.

Early Learning Services (ELS) play a key role in challenging rigid gender stereotypes and providing equitable spaces where young children can learn and play, **free from the restrictions of inequitable gender roles**. Early childhood educators and staff are uniquely placed to support families to navigate family violence support services; but also, to think about how to role model gender equity and respectful relationships at home. It is important to create safe and supportive workplaces by implementing a **whole-of-service approach** to family violence prevention, gender equity and respect.

The whole-of-service approach is a useful primary prevention model which aims to embed sustainable organisational change. It recognises that change needs to be made across policies, process, and the environment as well as to the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes of the staff and educators.

Star Health identified that Victorian schools were supported to take a whole-of-school approach to promote gender equity and respect, however there was no similar whole-of-service approach for ELS's. Given this gap, Being Equal was developed by Star Health's Health Promotion Team in recognition of the vital role early learning services play in contributing to challenging gender stereotypes and supporting children to imagine their identities beyond these stereotypes and restrictions.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Melbourne, Building Children's Resilience through respectful and Gender Equitable Relationship pilot program: A literature review,

# Being Equal Model

## What is Being Equal trying to change?

The long-term goal of Being Equal is that women and children in the cities of Stonnington and Port Phillip are free from violence. Research shows that gender-based violence is linked to gender inequality; therefore, our medium-term goal is to ensure that all children attending early learning services in the City of Stonnington and Port Phillip experience gender equity and respectful relationships.

## Our goal:

*Early Learning Services are gender equitable, inclusive and safe*

## The change we want to see:

*Children experience respectful relationships and less rigid stereotypes in Early Learning Services*

## Our Theory of Change

### IF:

- Parents are aware and understand the value of gender equality and respect
- Staff and educators' model equitable and respectful relationships with children
- Early learning services reflect equality and respect
- Learning activities and interactions are more equal and respectful
- Early learning services are safe for staff, families and children impacted by family violence

### THEN:

Being Equal early learning services are safe, equitable and respectful

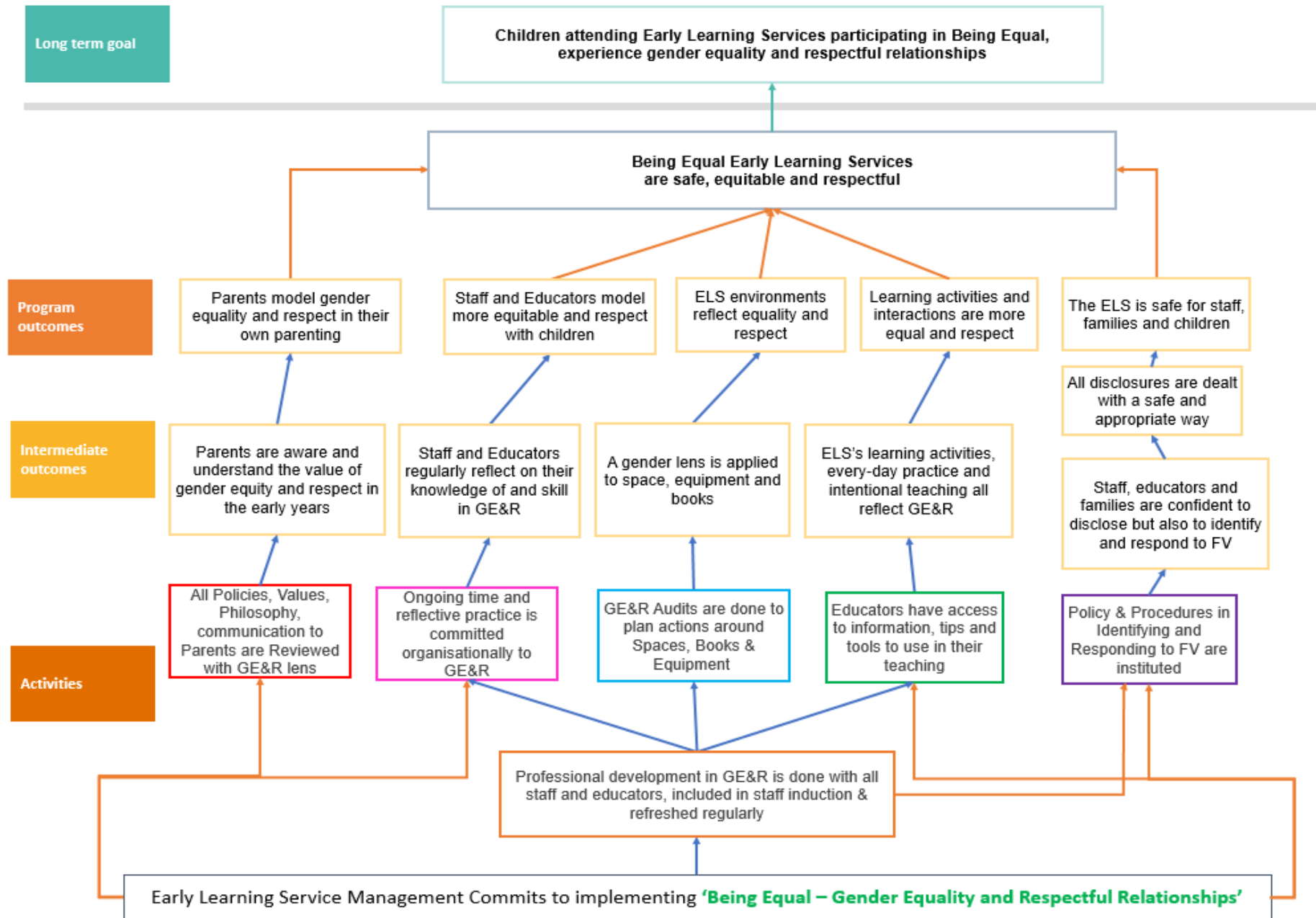


Children attending early learning services participating in Being Equal experience gender equality and respect

### ULTIMATELY:

- These children will grow up with less acceptance of rigid gender stereotypes and of the use of violence; and experience more respectful and equitable relationships.

Figure 2. Being Equal Theory of Change



# Being Equal Program

## Program Outline

Being Equal was developed using multiple evidenced-based frameworks and primary prevention approaches. A key framework was [Our Watch's Change the Story Framework](#) which outlines that gender-based violence is driven by gender inequality.

The BE program also adapted the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's [Rights Resilience and Respectful Relationships](#) whole-of-school approach. The model identifies six areas of focus to bring about sustained change: school leadership and commitment, support for staff and students, professional learning strategy, school culture and environment, teaching and learning and community partnerships.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1. Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's Respectful Relationships whole-of-school program

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education and Training, Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence, Victoria, 2014



The Being Equal program adapted these **six elements** and developed a benchmark tool (*see appendix*) setting out the requirements for each service. The six key elements are:

1. **Leadership Commitment:** embedding Gender Equality and Respect (GE and R) in policies and procedures.
2. **Support for Staff and Families** impacted by family violence: creating a safe space for staff and families by creating the capacity to identify and respond appropriately to family violence.
3. **Professional Development:** educators' knowledge of GE and R; and capacity to use it in their everyday practice.
4. **Culture and Environment:** applying a gender lens to behaviour, spaces and equipment.
5. **Teaching and Learning:** embedding GE and R in learning activities
6. **Community Partnerships:** working with families to raise awareness and understanding of the value of gender equity and respect in the early years

The program also drew on resources and tools from several other gender equity programs and healthy settings approaches in its development:

- [Respectful Relationships Education Toolkit](#) by Our Watch
- [Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years](#) by Darebin City Council
- [Free to be Me Book Audit Tool](#) by Access Health
- [No Limitations: breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years](#) from Women's Health East
- [Building respect and equity among young children](#) – City of Melbourne
- [Level Playground](#) from Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)
- [Tip Sheets](#) from Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria Partners in Prevention
- Identifying and responding to family violence training facilitated by Uniting
- Anti-Bias Book Catalogue by Alistair Gibbs

Being Equal used the **co-design principle** to bring about change. Educators from the participating services worked together in a **peer network** to co-design Being Equal through a process of testing and refining a range of approaches, tools and resources over the 2-year pilot period. The regular peer network meeting also provided a space for educators to share and reflect on practices and their services implementation of change and to build their knowledge and expertise, share experiences of different tools and resources and problem solve. Through this peer network, several resources and tools were developed to support the implementation of Being Equal. These include:

- All Staff Briefing presentation and checklist
- Staff Induction checklist
- Being Equal Key Messages
- Procurement guidelines for staff and families
- Family violence audit tool
- Active Bystander Training with Alistair Gibbs
- Action Plan aligned to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
- Benchmarking tool

## Program Cycle

The BE program follows a cycle of continuous improvement, aligned with Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework’s Early Years Planning Cycle. This approach is familiar to the early learning services and supports the collection of evidence to track change and adjust practice.



Figure 3. Being Equal cycle

*This cycle is based on the Department of Education and Training RRRR Cycle for the Whole of School Approach*

**Key Messages** were used to support the work, teaching, culture and environments.

Children can be the same and different	Children can be strong and gentle
Children can be fair and friendly	Children can be kind and brave
Children can do anything	Children can work together

Figure 4. Key messages

## Program Key Activities

To achieve the six key elements, ELS were supported to undertake **Key Activities**.

Table 1. Summary of the key activities services undertake over the course of the 2-year period.

KEY ELEMENTS	KEY ACTIVITIES
Leadership and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Champions with time and authority to implement Being Equal.</li> <li>Participate in a Being Equal Induction conducted by Star Health.</li> <li>Participate in peer network meetings</li> <li>Review policies, values &amp; philosophy</li> </ul>
Supports for Staff and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit policies and processes to identify and respond to FV</li> <li>Develop FV Policy if needed</li> <li>Training in identifying and responding to FV</li> </ul>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff briefing on Gender Equality and Respect</li> <li>Staff reflection survey</li> <li>Complete DET RR training (minimum of 1 educator per service)</li> <li>Offer training opportunities (Active Bystander, Healthier Masculinities)</li> </ul>
Culture and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a gender lens to: environment, equipment, toys and books</li> <li>Educators use assessment/audit tools</li> <li>Develop an Action plan based on assessment findings</li> <li>Submit regular case studies on the changes made and their impact</li> </ul>
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators apply the 6 Being Equal Key Messages to everyday practice and interactions with children.</li> <li>Educators embed gender equality and respect into activities with children</li> </ul>
Community Partnerships	<p>Service and Star Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in Being Equal Network (1hr, 6-weekly)</li> <li>1:1 support meeting between service and Health Promotion team</li> <li>Regular communications: emails and Mailchimp once a term</li> </ul> <p>Parent engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include BE in parent communication (i.e. handbook, website, orientation)</li> <li>Consult with parents about GE &amp; R (parent surveys, informal discussions)</li> <li>Information about activities with children (newsletters &amp; weekly reflections)</li> </ul>
Monitoring and Review	<p>To track progress, services are encouraged to keep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journals or examples of activities carried out</li> <li>Case studies: Stories of changes</li> <li>Regular assessments of the environment</li> <li>Track progress to share with the peer network</li> </ul>

## Participating centres

The Star Health, Health Promotion Team recruited early learning services from the Cities of Stonnington and Port Phillip through an expression of interest process. The expression of interest was promoted via an email newsletter. Six early learning services submitted an expression of interest and were accepted into the program, with one service leaving the pilot in December 2018 to focus on another program.

The services that took part in the two-year Being Equal pilot program all participated voluntarily, and were predominantly community run, with only one council not-for-profit service taking part. Four services are providers of long day care, and one service is a sessional kindergarten with children numbers ranging from 40 to 275.

The Being Equal pilot reached 135 educators and 645 children and their families through the participation of the following services:

- Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre
- Clarendon Children's Centre
- Coventry Children's Centre
- Renown Kindergarten
- Windsor Community Children's Centre



135 Educators



645 children



5 early learning services

# Evaluation Approach

A Developmental Evaluation approach was used throughout the duration of the Being Equal pilot program to reflect and alter implementation in real time. Through the evaluation process, we aimed to:

- inform adjustments and documentation of the current Being Equal model
- develop new resources to support future roll-out of the program
- understand the program impacts within each service, and
- support the scale-up of the program in Stonnington, Port Phillip and beyond.

## Evaluation Questions

Our evaluation was guided by four key questions:

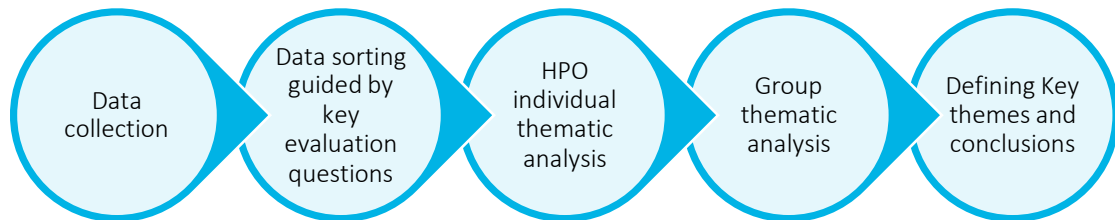
1. What progress have the pilot ELS's made towards being a more equitable and respectful early learning service?
2. What components of the program have been the most successful in making change in early learning services?
3. What types of early learning service are the most successful in making change?
4. How do the services ensure sustainability of the program or to create lasting change?

## Evaluation Data

Being Equal's evaluation was supported by data that was collected at intervals during the pilot implementation.

- Program journal: This document was created at the beginning of the pilot to enable an ongoing record of the interactions with each service, including individual service meetings, emails and phone calls.
- Staff Reflection: At the beginning of the pilot program a staff reflection survey was completed by the staff at each service. Through this reflection process, we learnt that staff felt they had a role in embedding gender equality at their service, they felt it was important, and they acknowledged they did not have the resources to do the work needed in gender equality and respect.
- Case Studies: Each service provided case studies at two points in the pilot implementation. One at end of year 1 highlighting any changes that they made during year 1 and any outcomes from those changes; and one at the end of year 2, documenting their journey through the project, where they were at the beginning, what they already did well, what changes they had made and what outcomes they had seen as a result.
- Being Equal benchmark scorecard: Developed by Health Promotion Officers to help track the progress of each centre according to the Theory of Change. This scorecard supported the evaluation as it was a tool that each service could use to rate themselves against and to assist the Health Promotion Officer in checking where each service thought they were against each of the outcome areas.

## Analysis Method



## Outputs

This Evaluation Report was a key output of the Being Equal pilot program. In addition to this report, project outputs include:

- Theory of Change
- Benchmark Tool
- Service Readiness Checklist
- Collection of case studies

## Limitations

We acknowledge that this pilot had limitations. The recruitment for this pilot was with self-selected services with a keen interest and readiness to work in gender equality. This pilot had no privately-operated services participating therefore, we are unable to conclude how Being Equal would be implemented within a privately-run setting.

This evaluation explores the service-based change within each Early Learning Service as it is too early in the programs implementation to evaluate outcomes for children and their families.

The pilot evaluation primarily focuses on the development and refinement of the pilot model. The evaluation for Being Equal was completed internally by Health Promotion Officers who did not work on the Being Equal pilot.

# Findings

## 1. What progress have the pilot ELS's made towards being a more equitable and respectful early learning service?

Through this evaluation process, a 'Benchmark Tool' to measure progress against the six elements of the whole-of-service approach was developed. The tool provides a rating scale that the Health Promotion Officers (HPO) and ELS used to measure progress towards achieving these six areas. The services were required to submit evidence to support the rating measure. Through a follow up one-on-one meeting, the HPO met with each service to reflect and agree upon a final rating.

Table 2. Summary of progress against the Benchmarks, June 2021

Early Learning Service	Leadership and commitment	Support for families and staff impacted by FV	Professional Development	Culture and Environment	Teaching and Learning	Community Partnerships
Service 1	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded/Met	Met	Exceeded/Met	Met
Service 2	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceeded	Met
Service 3	Met	Some progress	Some progress	Met	Some progress	Met
Service 4	Exceeded/Met	Exceeded	Exceeded	Exceed/Met	Exceeded	Exceeded/Met
Service 5	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeding	Exceeded/Met	Exceeded

The evaluation highlights that overall, most services made considerable progress across all six elements. Areas in which most progress was made were the **Leadership and commitment**, **Culture and Environment**, and **Professional Development**. The **Community Partnerships** benchmark taught us that while families were aware of the program, it was unclear if this awareness translated to changes in parenting or role modelling in the home. We found that gender equality and respectful relationship concepts were applied to **Teaching and Learning** through books, play based learning and language, more than through intentional lessons around the key messages.

All services have put in the required basic practices to identify and respond to family violence, yet we acknowledge that there is further work to be done by services to embed these practices in the future. This will be supported by the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework. As this program is only 2 years into implementation the focus on this evaluation was to understand the extent to which the early learning services have laid the organisational foundations for five outcome areas reflected within the Theory of Change.

### Outcome area 1. Parents are aware and understand the value of gender equity and respect in the early years.

All services have parent committees or a parent group that are well informed about the focus areas of the service. Communication between the services and parents was integrated into existing methods of information sharing. Specific information about current program activities were communicated through foyer displays, parent newsletters, Facebook posts/story park and conversations at drop off and pick up. Within this pilot, ‘understanding’ as a measure was not explicitly captured as this outcome area was not the central focus of the pilot, therefore the impact on the parent’s awareness and understanding was not evaluated. Educators did reflect that a shift in parental feedback, awareness and communication was evident throughout the duration of the pilot implementation.

*“We set all toys for types of learners and not types of genders”*  
Educator

### Outcome area 2. Staff and Educators regularly reflected on their knowledge of and skill in gender equity and respect.

Key areas of reflection embedded across the services included staff reflective surveys, weekly team discussions, network meetings, quarterly meeting discussions, journaling, and the use of social media to share current articles, videos, book recommendations and thoughts to create an ongoing interest in gender equity and respect. Extensive professional development supported ongoing learning in areas of gender equity and respectful relationships. The Gender Unicorn tool and the Gender Glorious workshop by Body Safety Australia complimented the training opportunities offered by the BE Program and deepened educator understanding of gender and its impacts.

*‘Every time I hear children use a gender stereotype, I feel compelled to question and challenge the thinking’* Educator

### Outcome area 3. A gender lens was applied to play spaces, equipment and books.

All services reviewed the clothes and dress ups available for play, with some of them exchanging branded and gendered dress-ups (Disney dresses and superheroes) for capes and other fabric that are more suited to open-ended play; or ensured that children were able to wear all the dress ups if they were interested in doing so. Beyond dress ups and dolls clothing, all services started the Being Equal program from a very good base when reviewing their toys. Prior to the program the services had adopted the use of sustainable, upcycled and repurposed toys/items to encourage imaginative open-ended play and the colour of toys tends to be more natural with a move away from highly gendered colours and branded toys.

*“Boys [would play] outside with the trucks and girls couldn’t use as they feel intimidated, so we have moved some of the trucks indoors, so girls can access them”*  
Educator

Applying a gender and inclusion lens to books available to children was the benchmark that all services allocated the most time and energy to. Using the Access Health or Melbourne program auditing tool, embedding reflective practice, and reconfiguring reading spaces, services ensured that outdated gendered books were discarded, or the stories were retold in a way that challenged gender stereotypes. New books that explore inclusion and diversity themes were purchased with Star Health’s allocated funding to each service.

In most services, play spaces were reconfigured to ensure they could be used by all children. Images displayed were reviewed to highlight strong female characters or to challenge gender stereotypes.



#### Outcome area 4. Early Learning Services' learning activities, everyday practices and intentional teaching all reflect gender equity and respect.

The program initially involved Champions at each service developing a lesson plan for each key message that could be shared with the other services. During the implementation of this, educators decided lesson plans were too prescriptive and preferred a resource with a simple explanation for each key message, with links to the early years learning outcomes. Educators then adapted this knowledge for play-based learning and service wide activities to raise awareness. Although the key messages (Figure 4) were not fully embedded into the culture and interactions with children; between children, educators and parents; services remain interested in progressing this work moving forward. A significant learning within this outcome area is that educators are best placed to develop the resources they require and to identify how to incorporate them into everyday practice and play based learning.

*'The conversations around GE are much more frequent around the classroom and staff room. Teachers feel more empowered to educate and intentionally teach children about the importance of the key BE messages'*

**Kindergarten Director**

#### Outcome area 5. Staff, educators and families are confident to disclose, identify and respond to family violence.

All services have either developed a separate family violence policy, or embedded family violence into an existing policy to ensure this is regularly revised and upheld, however the measure of family's confidence to disclose, identify and respond to family violence was not measured during this pilot. The Being Equal program offered Identifying and Responding to Family Violence training for all participating early learning educators on two separate occasions, face to face and online with 38 educators embracing the opportunity. This training ensured that all services now have a proportion of educators trained in how to identify and respond to family violence. 89% of educators who attended reported that they feel confident about identifying family violence and referring to services because of this training. Positively, one service has mandatory family violence and gender equity online training for all new staff. Services reported that their staff were more confident in responding to family violence disclosures this was captured in BE benchmark and through feedback from each early learning service.

## 2. What components the program have been most successful in making change in early learning services?

Through qualitative surveying of educators, we found that four key elements of the Being Equal program best contribute to making change in early learning services.

- **Being Equal's whole-of-service framework** ensured an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement and helped the services to work through the process systematically, allowing each service to build their knowledge and skills over time. The Being Equal framework supported services to embed gender equity and respectful relationships into their processes, planning, professional development and communications.
- **Being Equal's Peer Network** allowed educators from each service to come together every six weeks, to learn from each other, explore ideas, key concepts, tools and problem solve.
- **Being Equal Project Coordinator** is a key element to support the planning and implementation of Being Equal within a service. The project coordinator acts as a critical friend, a facilitator to

bring people together, and coaches them through the Being Equal cycle. Star Health's Health Promotion Officer's acted in this coordination role for the pilot duration.

- **Being Equal 'Champion'** held the portfolio of Being Equal and led the work within their service. The pilot project acknowledged that early learning services are often time poor, therefore having a key person in the role to lead change within the service, undertake training and guide staff action was essential to success.

### 3. Features in a service that support making change and what types of early learning service are the most successful in making change?

The services that participated in the Being Equal program all did so voluntarily, were predominantly community run, with only one council not-for-profit service taking part. These services already had preexisting relationships through other Health Promotion programs, they were all **early adopters** and committed to social and environmental change. Services ranged in child enrollments from smaller place services 40 places to larger services of 155, with a largely **female workforce**, and most services highlighting that a proportion of their staff came from non-English speaking background. The type of services most successful in making changes were those that are community managed long day care or kindergarten. Key elements contributing to greater success with implementing the program were: embracing a whole-of-service approach, adopting innovation, maintaining a supportive parent community and having smaller enrollments. All services were motivated by reaching or keeping 'Exceeded' standard in their Quality Assessment Rating.

The early learning services that were successful in making change had structures in place to support change and implement wellbeing programs. These structures included:

- **Champions** (key educators) responsible for Being Equal for the duration of the pilot period. The service Champion was someone who was most likely the Educator with the health and Wellbeing portfolio, a lead educator, or the Centre Coordinator.
- **Time and authority** was given to all educators across the service to implement the program.
- **Planning and quality** processes that have a strong focus on gender equity and respect.
- **Ownership** of the program and process. All educators see that they have a role and gender equity, and respect is important.
- **Professional development and resources** for educators through books, YouTube videos, visual resource, assessment tools ensured ongoing learning and capacity building.



#### 4. How do the services ensure sustainability of the program or to create lasting change?

A key aspect of Being Equal's sustainability is the whole-of-service approach, which aims to create change across the services policies, practice, culture and environments. The flexible and collaborative approach allowed early learning services to take ownership and embed changes that work for their services.

The five early learning services embedded gender equity and respect in everyday practice in range of ways including:

- having a standing agenda item at team meetings.
- including it on quality improvement plans
- scheduling regular book, toy, and space audits.
- making it part of staff induction.
- supporting staff to undertake professional development.
- regularly communicating with staff and parents via books, videos, and articles.

Being Equal has supported the early learning services leadership and educators to become skilled champions of change. These are skills and knowledge that will help to sustain and build change within services. It is expected that these early childhood educators will be champions of gender equity and respect within the broader early learning sector.



# Conclusion

The Being Equal pilot demonstrates the effectiveness of applying a whole-of-service approach to gender equity and respectful relationships in early learning services. The evaluation of the Being Equal two-year pilot found that key factors need to be in place within the Early Learning Service for this program to be successfully implemented. Our data highlights that ELS's that are early adopters, well-resourced with both time and staffing, and primed for this kind of program, are best placed to implement Being Equal.

The pilot highlighted that providing professional development alone will not lead to a whole-of-service approach. The framework that was developed through the Being Equal pilot, provided a clear organisational change process for ELS's to work through towards gender equity and respect. The support from Star Health enabled the services to progress through the framework in an effective and timely manner.

Before we can conclude that Being Equal is effective in all types of Early Learning Services, it would first need to be piloted in services not captured within the pilot.

# Recommendations

1. Explore opportunities for a Being Equal pilot to be implemented in a broader range of Early Learning Services across Victoria.
2. Further develop the Community Partnerships element of Being Equal, to better support families to role model gender equality and respect in their parenting.
3. Future implementation of Being Equal requires a resourced community of practice or peer network
4. Future implementation of Being Equal requires the support from a backbone organisation or program coordinator.

# Appendix

Table 3. Pilot Overview: Stages of development and implementation

January 2018 - July 2018 Program design and establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing existing programs and resources, planning and designing the program</li> <li>• Recruitment of Services, Identify BE Champions at each Service</li> <li>• Establishment of peer network and induction to the Program</li> </ul>
July 2018 - December 2018  Building Service readiness, capacity of BE Champions and Baseline data collection	<p>Regular Peer network meetings and 1:1 catch ups Raise awareness of BE Program at services Staff receive PD on GE and R Set up process for BE Champions to implement the program in the Service Backlash and resistance PD for BE Champions Staff survey and Service profile (baseline data) Reviewing policies and process to support staff and families impacted by FV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and Responding to FV training.</li> <li>• Audits of policies and process to support staff and families to disclose FV</li> <li>• Support service information available to staff and families</li> </ul>
Monitor and reflect on progress	Check progress against the cycle tool
January 2019 - December 2019 Whole-of-service activities Test tools Collaborative Practice	<p>Implementing whole-of-service activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of policies, Centre philosophy and processes.</li> <li>• Assessment of whole-of-service, books, spaces using and gender and respect lens (baseline data) using tools and resources to suit needs of Services</li> <li>• Develop action plans based on assessment findings</li> <li>• Develop donations and procurements guide</li> <li>• Family engagement including parent forum on Letting Children be Children</li> </ul> <p>Peer network develop BE 6 key messages to inform teaching and play based activities Regular Peer network meetings to share and overcome challenges</p>
Monitor and reflect on progress and celebrate successes	Check in against cycle. Case study to illustrate change story submitted by Services Children's Book pack presented to Services
January 2020 - December 2020 Whole-of-service activities	<p>Use of 6 key messages in play based and interactions with children and families Develop Active Bystander training package Professional development: Active bystander Regular Peer network meetings</p>
December 2020 - March 2021 Evaluation and Maintenance	<p>Evaluation design and tasks undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finalise evaluation design</li> <li>• Interviews with services</li> <li>• Review of participation data</li> <li>• Benchmark tool developed. Completed by each service. Evidence collected to demonstrate achievement of each indicator</li> <li>• Each service submits a case study on BE journey to capture what they did and what changed</li> </ul> <p>Maintenance and sustainability Professional development: Manhood and Boyhood unpacking the Man Box research</p>

Table 4. Reach: List of five participating Services (name and no of children, number of staff/educators)

Service	No of children	No of staff	Type of service	Structure / Governance	Position of Representative at BE network
Service 1	275	58	Long day care	Community	Team leader/ Project lead
Service 2	40/day	20	Long day care	Community Coop	Educator with wellbeing portfolio
Service 3	100	21	Long day care	Council	Educator or Team leader
Service 4	120	14	Sessional kindergarten	Community	Director
Service 5	110	22	Long day care	Community	Lead Educator
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>135</b>			

*(Data Source: Being Equal pilot program registration,2018)*

Table 5. Being Equal Program: Gender Equality and Respectful Relationships Benchmarks

Key Elements						
Rating	Leadership and Commitment	Support for staff and families impacted by FV	Professional Development	Culture and Environment	Teaching and Learning	Community Partnerships
	There is strong leadership and a commitment to creating policies and practice to embed GE & R	Services are a safe space for staff and families	Educators gain and use GE and R knowledge in their everyday practice	Services are gender equitable and respectful	Learning activities are more equitable and promote respect	Families are aware and understand the value of gender equity and respect in the early years
<b>Exceeded</b>	<p>Our Service has structures in place to support educators to focus on Gender Equality and Respect.</p> <p>Our Service engages staff and families in Gender Equality and Respect policy development.</p> <p>Our Service has developed expertise in Gender Equality and Respect and shares this with the broader sector and community.</p>	<p>Our Service provides a safe space for families and staff to disclose family violence.</p> <p>Our educators feel supported and confident to provide support to colleagues and families who are impacted by family violence.</p>	Educators at our Service have embedded Gender Equality and Respect into their everyday practice.	<p>Educators and other staff have Gender Equality and Respect embedded in the preparation and set up of the environment, equipment and materials; as well as in how they encourage the children to engage with the space and materials.</p> <p>Educators regularly reflect on their use of space and equipment and challenge each other to improve their practice.</p>	Educators have Gender Equality and Respect embedded in their interactions with children and families and regularly reflect on how to improve their practice.	Our Service has embedded methods to involve families in planning and development of Gender Equality and Respect policies and activities.
<b>Met</b> <i>(Achievable in 2 years)</i>	<p>We have Gender Equality and Respect policy or statement of commitment</p> <p>Our Service philosophy includes a statement about Gender Equality and Respect.</p> <p>We review our Gender Equality policy and</p>	<p>Our Service has policy and processes in place to support staff and families who are impacted by FV to link to support and services</p> <p>Our Family Violence policy and processes are reviewed regularly and communicated to our staff and families</p> <p>Our educators regularly complete professional development on how to</p>	<p>Our educators regularly complete professional development that has a focus on Gender Equality and Respect</p> <p>Our Service provides all new staff with an induction to Gender Equality and Respect including the online training module.</p>	<p>Our educators promote a culture of respect, fairness and equity.</p> <p>Our Service encourages all children to spend time in all areas of the early years' environment.</p> <p>Our Service encourages all children to use all the toys and equipment in the Service.</p>	<p>Our educators apply a gender lens to play/learning activities to ensure children are exposed to a range of experiences, knowledge, skills that are not limited by gender.</p> <p>Our educators regularly use the Being Equal 6 Key Messages in everyday practice and play based and learning activities.</p>	<p>Our Service regularly provides families with information and strategies to promote and support Gender Equality and Respect at the Service and at home.</p> <p>Our Service partners with other organisations to promote Gender Equality and Respect.</p>

	<p>philosophy every three years.</p> <p>Our Service has Gender Equality and Respect as a focus in our quality plan.</p>	<p>identify and respond to family violence so they can support and respond to colleagues and families</p>		<p>Our Service and Educators regularly put strategies in place to overcome barriers to children's participation in certain spaces, toys and equipment.</p> <p>Our book collection is regularly reviewed to ensure it has books that depict stories and experiences that are diverse, inclusive and beyond gender stereotypical narratives.</p>		
<b>Some Progress</b>	<p>Our Service is committed to having a focus on Gender Equality and Respect.</p>	<p>Our Service provides information on where staff and families can seek support if impacted by Family Violence</p>	<p>Our Service has delivered an introduction to the Being Equal Program: Gender Equality and Respect to some of our educators.</p> <p>Our Service offers staff professional development opportunities with a focus on Gender Equality and Respect</p>	<p>We support our educators, children and families to have conversations about Gender Equality and Respectful Relationships.</p>	<p>Our Service has delivered one or more play based and learning activity in one area (room)</p>	<p>Our Service has informed families that we have a focus on Gender Equality and Respect.</p>
<b>No Progress</b>	<p>Our Service has registered for Being Equal Program: Gender Equality and Respect.</p> <p>Our Service has received information about Being Equal program.</p>	<p>Received opportunities for educators to undertake training on identifying and responding to Family Violence.</p> <p>Our Service has received resources on Family violence support services and information on activities to strengthen processes at Our Service to support staff and families impacted by Family violence.</p>	<p>Our Service has received information on opportunities for professional development with a focus on Gender Equality and Respect.</p>	<p>Our Service has received information and resources to support us to undertake assessments of our spaces, equipment and book collection.</p>	<p>Our Service has received information on the Being Equal 6 key gender equality and respect messages.</p>	<p>Our Service has registered with Star Health and completed an MOU.</p>
<b>NQS &amp; VEYDF</b>	NQ 7	NQ 2	NQ 1, NQ 4	NQ 3 and NQ 5	NQ 5	NQ 6



Table 6. Summary of Pilot Outcomes

Children's attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited consultation with children occurred when undertaking the assessment of use of spaces within the service.</li> <li>Observations from educators: Children have more agency in choosing clothes and dress ups and are not judged by the educators</li> </ul>
Service culture and gender equitable environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment high between and amongst most educators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% (62 /70) answered yes to statement I have a role to play in promoting Gender Equality at our Centre and 7/70 were unsure (reflection survey)</li> </ul> </li> <li>More conversations about gender equality and respectful relationships amongst educators and between educators and children observed by BE Champions</li> <li>All used an assessment tool to apply and Gender and Respect lens to their service, spaces and books and this resulted in specific changes at services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reorganised spaces to encourage targeted development of girl's gross motor skills and boys fine motor skills and their socialisation /talking about emotions</li> <li>Stories to illustrate change from the services focused on changes to book collection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Commitment to GE and RR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of agreement 98.6% (69/70) that it is important for boys and girls to have equal opportunities to be heard, learn and play (staff reflection survey)</li> <li>The BE Champion(s) from each service showed a high commitment to the program throughout the 2 years and can present the changes they have observed</li> </ul>
Service readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start of BE a little less than half of the educators surveyed said they required tools and resources to be able to deliver GE and RR (staff reflection survey).</li> <li>High level of engagement in the program amongst the services. All the participating services are community run or council managed</li> <li>All services have included GE and RR into QIP and in a key policy or philosophy document and provided educators with PD opportunities</li> <li>The program provided all services with assessment tools, a resource with 6 key messages for RR and a set of children's books with stories that highlight gender equality and RR</li> </ul>
Educator knowledge and skill to deliver GE and RR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in GE and R professional development and having regular time to reflect on practice supported Educators to feel empowered to intentionally educate children about GE and R</li> <li>Educators move in the sector so ongoing PD and an GE and RR induction process is required</li> </ul>
Parent engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited data collected, the 2/5 services that surveyed parents indicated parents are supportive of GE and RR</li> <li>Services provided parents with regular information, had conversations about GE and RR and involved them in activities such as career dress up days</li> <li>A small number of parents (25) participated in parent forum on Letting Children by Children</li> <li>Engagement with parents so they can challenge gender roles and have conversations about RR is important</li> </ul>
Educators and families are confident to disclose, identify and respond to FV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development in identifying and responding to family violence gave educators confidence in identifying FV and providing colleagues and families with information about how to access support services. Though regular opportunities for PD are required to ensure each service has a pool of trained staff.</li> <li>Services reviewed their processes resulting in all making available information for staff and families on services and 3 developed a family violence policy this makes services a safe place to disclose and promotes getting help early.</li> </ul>