



Evaluation of the Media Initiative for Children-Respecting Difference Programme in the Education Sector

**Final Report
March 2015**



Acknowledgements

The evaluator would like to thank everyone who offered their time so generously as part of this process. This also includes all the schools, parents and children who participated in evaluation activities and in the programme between 2012-2014. The cooperation and support given by Early Years and SEYS team on the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was greatly appreciated. A final thanks to SEUPB for funding the evaluation.

Table of Contents

SECTION DETAILS	PAGE NUMBER
Executive Summary	4
Introduction and Background	7
Evaluation	11
The MIFC Respecting Difference Programme	13
Stakeholder Insights	41
Value for Money	44
Conclusions	45
The Transformation Process	46
Lessons Learned	51
Recommendations	52
Appendix 1	52
Appendix 2	53

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Background

Early Years was awarded £618,843 in funding through PEACE III Measure 2.2. The proposed project aimed to develop a MIFC Respecting Difference Programme within the primary school system in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland; focusing on children aged between five and eight, to create discernible changes in attitudes, behaviour and awareness of sectarian, racial and ethnic differences among children, their parents, teachers and school's Board of Governors.

This study was prepared by in advance of the post project evaluation by Dr Katrina Collins, an independent consultant. Qualitative data was gathered and analysed in order to assess the benefits for those who have participated in the project as well as the contribution the project has made to acknowledging and dealing with the past, and peace building and reconciliation. The approach taken was a combination of desk based analysis, interviews with key stakeholders and field visits.

Conclusions

Taking account of the monitoring data combined with detailed evaluation information gathered across the project and at its summation, it is evident the data supports that Peace and Reconciliation Outcomes were met. Analysis of training evaluations, project publicity activities, participatory evaluation data and stakeholder interviews together offer consistent and recurring evidence of impact in terms of the following project indicators which have been outlined in this report;

- Positive change in behaviour
- Improved levels of trust and tolerance within or between communities
- Acknowledged different experiences, memories or legacies of the past
- Change in attitude and behaviour of children towards inclusion and exclusion
- Improved relationships between parents across community divisions
- Increased confidence and skills of teachers to contribute to building a sustainable peace
- Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work
- Schools in a better position to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society

The project effectively builds on the evidence-based MIFC-Respecting Difference programme and was in direct response to one of the recommendations from the Coral Research expanding its use to five-eight year olds at Foundation level¹. Through the work of the project, the support provided to implement the programme alongside the development of age/stage appropriate resources including those in Irish have very much

¹ www.early-years.org/coral/mifc.php

encouraged to develop cross community and cross border partnerships with neighbouring schools.

This approach realises a range of outcomes at different levels including the children's own attitudes and behaviours towards difference in its many forms; practitioners' or governors' understanding of or capacity around difference and diversity work and parents' appreciation of diversity issues and confidence to address this with their children and others across communities.

The evaluation has established that project targets set out in the Letter of Offer by SEUPB have all been met with the exception of training sessions with Board of Governors. Explanations about this have been detailed in the report. All other targets were above the intended objectives which meant a larger number of teachers, parents and children engaged in the project. One of the Peace and Reconciliation outcomes refer to Board of Governors and the remaining nine focus on the impact of project activities on parents, teachers and children.

Lessons Learned

There was clear and smooth transferability of the MIFC programme as recommended through the Coral Research to Foundation Year in Northern Ireland and Junior/Senior Infants in the Republic of Ireland.

The role of the EYS is critical in securing the involvement of schools and sustaining implementation to full service design. The competency, confidence and flexibility of Early Years staff were cited as essential in understanding the needs of schools while facilitating the planning and delivery of workshops and support visits.

The readiness of Early Years as an organisation to support the delivery of a meaningful Shared Education experience in schools.

The Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project model attracted schools and encouraged participation. Competing priorities given budgetary constraints and pressures mean core curriculum topics and targets will take precedence unless a full service design such as the one used in this project is made available.

Teachers acknowledged the added value of focusing on children's emotional development as a vehicle for addressing difference.

TV advertising has a substantial cost effectiveness in spreading awareness of the media messages and creating opportunities for family conversations on issues of equality and diversity. They raised the public profile of the project and served as a link between children and adult worlds where a familiar language offered a shared vocabulary to discuss respecting difference.

Home-school links through parents' workshops and resources further supported the transition of the messages from the classroom to home.

The cross curricular flexibility offered by the programme was amplified through the sustained support provided by the SEYS.

Without paid sub cover to release teachers to attend training workshops, participation of schools in the project is a major barrier.

Geographical spread of the project impacted on the school matching process. This involved identifying participating schools from different backgrounds who could be suitably matched for cross border or cross community liaison activities.

Recommendations

The recommendations emerge from detailed examination of available evaluation information gathered throughout the project and summatively at the project's end.

- The Respecting Difference in the Education Sector should be brought to scale in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- The development of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme to address issues being experienced by older primary aged children should be given consideration in the near future
- Teacher training is accompanied by funded sub cover in response to the financial barrier that is impeding school participation in the project
- Additional strategies are developed when planning to engage Board of Governors in the project to improve their understanding of the need to do diversity work using this approach
- Geographical location is taken into account when matching schools for liaison activities
- There is strategic acknowledgment of the readiness of Early Years to implement an evidence based developmentally appropriate resource that supports schools to genuinely deliver on the Shared Education agenda

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This project was proposed by Early Years (a not for profit organisation that provides training and information for parents, childcare providers, employers and local authorities) having been developed through a cross border sub-group of the Media Initiative For Children Steering Group which includes Queen's University, CCEA, Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland, the Community Relations Council, Border Counties Child Care Network in the Republic of Ireland, Early Years, County Child Care Committees in the Republic of Ireland, Child Care Partners in Northern Ireland and the Education and Training Inspectorate. This group had been responsible for overseeing the implementation of the MIFC Respecting Differences cross border pre-school pilot programme, which was initially implemented in 80 pre-schools on a cross border basis between 2006 and 2009.

Early Years was awarded £618,843 in funding through PEACE III Measure 2.2. This funding represented 86% of the overall project cost. The proposed project aimed to develop a MIFC Respecting Difference Programme within the primary school system in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland; focusing on children aged between five and eight, to create discernible changes in attitudes, behaviour and awareness of sectarian, racial and ethnic differences among children, their parents, teachers and school's Board of Governors.

The project proposed to work with a total of 30 schools (19 NI schools and 11 ROI schools), targeting approximately 1,800 children, 180 teachers and 600 parents. The 30 primary schools were pre-determined based on the relationship between themselves and the preschool groups that participated on a precursor project (aimed at 3 – 5 year olds). The proposed programme sought to build upon the experiences of children and parents passing through the preschool programme and further their knowledge and ability to respect differences (religious, ethnic, disability etc.).

The pre-schools that participated on the precursor MIFC Respecting Difference Programme were selected by random control, based on a stratification selection process developed by a research team from Queens University Belfast. The stratification process selected groups in a range of areas such as rural protestant, rural catholic, city middle class mixed, rural border area, etc.

The proposed project was to be a three year programme (running from January 2012 to December 2014), which follows Year 1 children as they progress to Years 2 and 3, thereby embedding the Respecting Differences ethos in the children in that year group and their parents over a three year period. The programme will also be embedded in the participating schools through by the up-skilling of the teachers (Primary 1, 2 and 3) and the Board of Governors.

Key aspects of the proposed project were as follows:

- Participating schools will each identify two teachers to receive four days of training on the Respecting Difference Programme. They will receive a resource box with curriculum materials and culturally appropriate resources to implement the programme within the primary school.
- Boards of Governors will attend one workshop per annum.

- Parents will attend two workshops per annum, which will support the development of inclusive practice in the school environment and support parents to extend the programme at home over the course of the project.
- Children will be brought together two afternoons per week throughout the academic year and will be taught the Respecting Difference Programme in a shared environment within either the controlled or maintained sectors. The implementation of the programme will be accompanied by a set of five media messages being shown on UTV, Channel 4 and RTE for a three week period (three to four times a day). This aims to ensure awareness and ownership for the programme and a certain degree of safety in terms of introducing a potentially sensitive programme with young children and their families.

The need for the project was summarised as follows:

- Research conducted by Queens University Belfast recommended that from “the age of five onwards, children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices and to be able to identify them in their own attitudes, where appropriate”;
- A positive evaluation of the preschool project that recommended that primary schools should consolidate and build upon the effects achieved at pre-school settings among children aged 5-8;
- The progress of the Fermanagh Pilot Project;
- The programme was considered to be innovative and developmental; and
- Displacement and additionality were not considered to be issues.

Project Aim, Objectives, Outputs/ Targets and Outcomes

General Project Aims

- “Lead to changes in the attitudes and behaviours of teachers, parents, boards of governors and children, and in so doing will contribute to a greater understanding and respect for those who are different in terms of religion, race and ethnicity.
- The project will build and sustain new institutional capacities within the participating schools which will allow the schools to maintain the programme long after the project funding ends thus leaving a lasting legacy within the schools and local communities.”

Specific Project Aims

- Make teachers more competent and confident to deal with differences within the context of a divided society;
- Erode barriers between schools, allowing schools to deliver aspects of the curriculum on a shared basis;
- Ensure parents will be confident and competent in supporting a culture of Respecting Difference within their own families and be able to extend the programme into the home environment;
- Ensure Boards of Governors have developed strong inclusive policies for their own schools and strengthened relationships with other schools both within Northern Ireland and on a cross border basis; and
- Better position schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society both within Northern Ireland and on a cross border basis.

Project Objectives

- Cross Border management group established;
- Implementation of the Respecting Difference Programme in the schools to include training for practitioners; information session for parents and Board of Governors and ongoing support from an Early Years Specialist;
- Four day comprehensive training in the Media Initiative for Children along with regular support visits from project staff;
- Cross community and cross border liaisons

Project Outputs

- Information on policy developments on both sides of the border shared;
- New educational programme for children in primary schools;
- Two full-time Senior Early Years Specialists and an administrator employed for three years to support the implementation of the programme;
- 30 Schools recruited and implementing the project (21 from NI and 9 from ROI);
- 1,000 five to eight year old children experiencing the impact of the MIFC programme
- 1,000 parents exposed to the new programme through two parents workshops per year per school throughout the life of the programme;
- New capacity in teachers in primary schools to deal with exclusion and diversity issues;
- 120 teachers trained to implement the programme;
- 90 sessions held for Board of Governors throughout the project lifetime;
- 30 schools undertaken first year of training by 30 November 2012;
- MIFC Media messages aired in both NI and ROI three times per year throughout the project;
- Influence on the educational system in NI and ROI in terms of new curriculum for a divided society;
- 11 school liaisons set up on either cross-community or cross-border basis, throughout the duration of the project.

Outcomes

- Better position schools to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society;
- Change in attitudes and behaviours of children to inclusion and exclusion;
- Increased awareness of diversity issues with their own children;
- Improved relationships with other parents across community divisions
- Increased skills and confidence of teachers to contribute to building sustainable peace;
- Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children and to create a culture of respecting difference in schools
- Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children and to create a culture of respecting difference in communities across NI and the border counties of Ireland;
- Erode barriers between schools allowing them to deliver aspects of the foundation stage on a shared basis;

- Board of Governors have developed strong inclusive policies for their own schools and strengthened relationships with other schools within NI and on a cross-border basis;
- Schools in a better position to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society.

Longer-term Impact

- Change in attitudes and behaviours of children to inclusion and exclusion;
- Improved skills and confidence of teachers to contribute to building sustainable peace;
- Influence on the educational system in Northern Ireland/the Republic of Ireland in terms of new curriculum for divided society; and
- Institutional change and capacity building.

This study was prepared by in advance of the post project evaluation by Dr Katrina Collins, an independent consultant. Qualitative data was gathered and analysed in order to assess the benefits for those who have participated in the project as well as the contribution the project has made to acknowledging and dealing with the past, and peace building and reconciliation. The approach taken was a combination of desk based analysis, interviews with key stakeholders and field visits.

EVALUATION

Preparation of post project evaluation

The evaluation is driven by the Peace and Reconciliation outcomes set out by SEUPB and uses primary and secondary sources to measure and assess the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project by these outcomes. These serve as indicators by which project impact is assessed.

<i>People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities.</i>
People engaged with the project demonstrate improved levels of trust and tolerance within their community and or between communities
<i>Different experiences, memories and legacies of the past have been acknowledged.</i>
<i>Better position schools to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society</i>
<i>Change in attitudes and behaviours of children to inclusion and exclusion</i>
<i>Increased awareness of diversity issues with their own children Improved relationships with other parents across community divisions</i>
<i>Increased skills and confidence of teachers to contribute to building sustainable peace</i>
<i>Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children and to create a culture of respecting difference in communities across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland</i>
<i>Boards of Governors have developed strong inclusive policies for their own schools and strengthened relationships with other schools both within Northern Ireland and on a cross border basis</i>
<i>Schools in a better position to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society</i>

Evaluation of Media Initiative for Children-Respecting Difference (MIFC-Respecting Difference programme) in the Educator Sector Project

The current evaluation methodology does not replicate the randomised design used in the original Coral research published in 2010 but intends to provide a comprehensive and thorough documentation of project outcomes for implementation of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme in the education sector. By engaging stakeholders using active participatory evaluation tools, a rich, personalised perspective of involvement in the programme has been nurtured since its inception in 2012.

Evaluation Terms of Reference

The consultant is required to provide a report at the end of the project which provides Early Years and the project partners with;

- a full analysis of the peace and reconciliation outcomes of the project
and

- recommendations for future activities and
- identification of factors that affected the achievement of the desired outcomes in terms of peace building and reconciliation and acknowledging and dealing with the past

- the completed Aid for Peace Report

i. Undertake an initial assessment of the available documentary sources including:

· Quantitative information on the number and type of early years settings and staff participating in the project

· Detailed evaluation based on a participatory approach from participants on the project

ii. Take cognisance of “Aid for Peace” Approach

iii. Provide guidance and advice to Early Years and project partners on the methodology and system for gathering qualitative data in relation to the project.

iv. Assist Early Years and project partners in monitoring and evaluating the project

v. Undertake some independent evaluation activities in relation to the peace outcomes to be agreed with Early Years and project partner

THE MIFC RESPECTING DIFFERENCE PROGRAMME

This is a Programme is a pre-school programme for 2-7 year old children that seeks to increase awareness of diversity and difference issues among young children, early childhood practitioners and parents and to promote more positive attitudes and behaviours towards those who are different. The programme has been developed by Early Years - the organisation for young children in Northern Ireland in partnership with the US-based Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii). It combines the use of:

- five one minute cartoon media messages shown on national television for three weeks at a time, three times per year;
- an early years curriculum and a set of culturally and contextually appropriate resources for use in the pre-school classroom and in the home environment;
- a comprehensive training programme for pre-school teachers, parents and management committees; and
- ongoing support from Early Years Specialists who act as external mentors and critical friends to practitioners.

The cartoons are set in a play park and feature characters that young children can easily identify with. The messages in the cartoons seek to promote positive attitudes to physical, social, cultural and ethnic differences amongst young children, practitioners and parents. These messages are reinforced in early years settings through the use of resources and curricular activities that prompt young children to talk about their feelings and attitudes to differences.

Methodology

Sample

The primary schools being targeted for the project have been chosen as their enrollment is fed by pre-school groups that are already implementing the Media Initiative for Children (MIFC). Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project seeks to build upon the experiences of the children and parents who have passed through the pre-school environment by furthering their knowledge and ability to respect difference.

Schools Recruited

The project recruited 31 schools, 25 in Northern Ireland and 6 in the Republic of Ireland. The project also required a mix of inner city and rural schools (School list in Appendix 1).

- Inner city protestant 4 schools
- Inner city catholic 7 schools
- City middle class mixed 3 schools
- Rural protestant 5 schools
- Rural catholic 6 schools
- Rural mixed 3 schools
- Rural cross border 3 schools

Methods

Although the evaluation will have a strong qualitative flavour with a focus on engaging stakeholders in a participatory approach, it will also include a detailed analysis of quantitative information associated with project outputs. Together they will add to the existing robust evidence base of impact of the role of the MIFC in developing a culture of “Respecting Difference” for school children and in geographic areas in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. For the purposes of this evaluation a multi-method approach will be used combining primary data collection in the form of interviews and secondary data analysis of existing monitoring and evaluation information related to project activities in the programme which includes, post training evaluations, focus groups, participatory evaluation information and voice of the child activities. Each training event within the project concludes with a qualitative evaluation exercise which will track the changes in attitudes and behaviours of all the participants involved in the project (Table 1).

Table 1: Breakdown of methods by number and type of stakeholder group

Stakeholder	Number	Method
Parents	57	Participatory evaluation exercises Focus groups Interviews
Teachers	35	Rating scales Surveys Participatory evaluation exercises Interviews
School principals	8	Interviews
Children	151	Voice of the Child activities including use of MIFC-Respecting Difference programme puppets Photographic evidence Observations
Early Years staff	11	Focus group
Board of Governors	5	Interviews
Early Years Specialists	3	Interviews
Early Years Policy Officer	1	
Partners	2	Interviews
Early Years Senior Management	2	
Borders Counties ChildCare Network	2	
Fermanagh Trust	1	Interviews
Rural Development Council	1	
Southern Education and Library Board	1	
Total	280	

Data analysis

Evaluation information collected during the project was recorded, collated and prepared for analysis. Examination of quantitative data will inform the degree to which target outcomes were met. A detailed thematic analysis of qualitative responses informed by the ‘Peace and Reconciliation Indicators’ will explore the content of feedback given by stakeholders through a participatory process. In particular, the analysis will pay close attention to and discuss the theory of change that has taken place with regard to individual change, healthy relationships and connections with others.

The triangulation of observations by key stakeholders will contribute to the existing evidence base for the Respecting Difference programme with this extension into the education sector. The lessons learned will inform future implementation and the role of the Respecting Difference programme in contributing to the delivery of the Shared Education Agenda in primary education. The components of the analysis will be assembled into a report with a clear set of recommendations that Early Years could use to the continued impact of the MIFC programme building on earlier evidence identified by the Coral Research.

Project Delivery and Implementation

Overview of project procurement/resourcing

Staff appointed:

- Mary Quirke and Rachel Steele were appointed in April 2012 as two 50% Full-time Early Years Specialists;
- Tracey Healy commenced as a full-time Early Years Specialist and Jane Bryson as part-time administrator in June 2012;
- Tracey Healy left post in March 2013 and Eilis Gill was appointed replacement Early Years Specialist in May 2013.

Procurement:

Project procurement was in line with SEUPB guidance note G4/P111 and subject to regular audit by SEUPB.

Activities and Work Undertaken

Detailed monitoring information was collected throughout the project and recorded through the European Union Funding Programmes Grant site website. This was a method of tracking the degree to which project targets were being met year on year. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the monitoring figures from 2011 when the project started against the original targets. Inspection of the monitoring data points to all targets being surpassed with the exception of training sessions for Board of Governors. 41% of the Board of Governor training sessions were delivered and discussions about the challenges associated with this target are described in the evaluation report. However it is important to acknowledge that each of the 31 schools received Board of Governor training at least once.

Monitoring data in relation to number of children aged five to eight experiencing the programme has achieved a 329% increase on the forecasted target. The other exceptional differential that should be noted is the number of parent workshops that were completed by project end. While two per year was predicted, SEYS delivered eighty two in total across the three years. The dissemination of media messages in the same period rose to ten aired both in the Republic and North of Ireland. The last target listed refers to cross community or cross border liaisons. This is partnering activities between schools from either different community backgrounds or between the two regional jurisdictions. A surge of activity is recorded in 2013 and 2014 which has been explained by initial relationship building, first with schools singularly then laterally with a focus on fostering collaborations once connections had been identified that accommodated geographical spread of participating schools.

The monitoring information not only lists a record of project achievements in terms of tasks completed but provides an indication of potential impact given the engagement of large numbers of children, teachers and parents. The 'calculated reach' as a result of these interactions within families and across communities amplifies the overall exposure of the media messages in promoting a culture of respecting difference.

While not listed specifically in the project monitoring table, a total of 150 support visits to schools to support implementation following training were carried out.

Table 2: Project monitoring summary

Target Name	Target Value for Project (Number)	2012	2013	2014	Actual Value Achieved
Pilot projects of cross-border co-operation between public sector bodies	1	0	0	0	1 (Achieved in 2011)
Pilot projects going on to become mainstream	1	0	0	0	0
New educational programme for children in primary schools (Main Target)	1	0	0	0	1
Full-time Senior Early Years Specialists and administrator employed for three years to support the implementation of the programme	3	0	0	0	3 (Achieved in 2011)
Schools recruited and implementing the project	30	27	4	0	31
Five to eight year old children experiencing the impact of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme	1000	812	1013	2465	4290
Parents exposed to the new programme throughout the life of the programme	1000	240	475	366	1081
Parents workshops per year	2	18	31	33	82
Teachers trained to implement the programme	120	56	35	37	128
Sessions held for Boards of Governors throughout the project lifetime	90	4	19	14	37
Schools undertaken first year of training by 30 November 2012	30	27	0	0	27
MIFC-Respecting Difference programme Media Messages aired in both NI and R.O.I per year throughout the project	3	6	2	2	10
School liaisons set up on either a cross-community or cross-border basis, throughout the duration of the project	11	0	6	9	15

Actual Programme delivered see overleaf:

OBJECTIVE or PRIORITY:					
<i>Indicative Actions</i>	<i>Needs Addressed</i>	<i>Theory of Change</i>	<i>Outputs/Results</i>	<i>Outcome/Impact</i>	<i>Delivery</i>
<i>Cross border management group established</i>	<i>Cross border contact maintained at the strategic level.</i>	<i>Healthy Relationships and Connections Theory</i>	Information on policy developments on both sides of the border shared	<i>Better position schools to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society</i>	<i>Bi-monthly meetings held. ROI and NI policy briefings produced</i>

<p><i>Implementation of the Respecting Difference Programme in the schools to include training for practitioners; information session for parents and Boards of Governors and ongoing support from an Early Years Specialist</i></p>	<p><i>Respect for Diversity</i> <i>Willingness to be inclusive of others seen to be different</i></p>	<p><i>Individual Change Theory</i> <i>Healthy Relationships and Connections Theory</i></p>	<p><i>New educational programme for children in primary schools</i></p>	<p><i>Change in attitudes and behaviours of children to inclusion and exclusion</i> <i>Increased awareness of diversity issues with their own children</i> <i>Improved relationships with other parents across community divisions</i></p>	<p><i>Early Years evaluations carried out at the end of all training sessions indicated changes in attitudes and behaviours</i> <i>Qualitative information collated at the end of parents information sessions through the use of Graffiti Walls and Post-it comments. Parents Workshops and BoG Workshops to used as focus groups also indicated increased awareness of diversity issues</i> <i>End of project evaluation in year three indicated changes in attitudes and behaviours, increased awareness and improved relationships.</i></p>
			<p><i>Two full-time Senior Early Years Specialists and an administrator employed for three years to support the implementation of the programme</i></p>		
			<p><i>31 schools recruited and implementing the project; 25 from Northern Ireland and 6 from Republic of Ireland</i></p>		
			<p><i>4,290 five to eight year old children experiencing the impact of the MIFC programme</i></p>		
			<p><i>1,081 parents exposed to the new programme through two parents workshops per year per school throughout the life</i></p>		

<p><i>Four day comprehensive training in the Media Initiative for Children along with regular support visits from project staff</i></p>	<p><i>Ability to undertake the sensitive area of respecting difference on the grounds of religion and culture</i></p>	<p><i>Individual Change Theory</i></p>	<p><i>New capacity in teachers in primary schools to deal with exclusion and diversity issues</i></p> <p><i>128 teachers trained to implement the programme</i></p> <p><i>37 sessions held for Boards of Governors throughout the project lifetime</i></p> <p><i>27 schools undertaken first year of training by 30 November 2012</i></p> <p><i>10 MIFC Media Messages aired in both NI and RoI three times per year throughout the project</i></p>	<p><i>Increased skills and confidence of teachers to contribute to building sustainable peace</i></p> <p><i>Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children and to create a culture of respecting difference in schools</i></p> <p><i>Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children and to create a culture of respecting difference in communities across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland</i></p>	<p><i>Evaluations after each training event</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation through support visits</i></p> <p><i>Indicated full implementation of programme by schools</i></p> <p><i>Reports from Media Buying Service on coverage gained through the airing of the MIFC media messages indicated high levels of message penetration and participation by children and parents in family learning moments</i></p>
---	---	--	---	--	---

<p><i>Cross community and cross border liaisons</i></p>	<p><i>Institutional change and capacity building</i></p> <p><i>Significant changes in the primary school curriculum</i></p>	<p><i>Healthy Relationships and Connections Theory</i></p>	<p><i>Influence on the educational system in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in terms of new curriculum for a divided society.</i></p> <p><i>11 school liaisons set up on either a cross-community or cross-border basis, throughout the duration of the project</i></p>	<p><i>Erode barriers between schools allowing them to deliver aspects of the foundation stage on a shared basis</i></p> <p><i>Boards of Governors have developed strong inclusive policies for their own schools and strengthened relationships with other schools both within Northern Ireland and on a cross border basis</i></p> <p><i>Schools in a better position to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society</i></p>	<p><i>Evaluations after each training event and liaison</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation through support visits</i></p> <p><i>Collation of Most Significant Change stories</i></p> <p><i>Changes in primary school curriculum to include more shared education activities – monitoring of NI and ROI curriculum development</i></p>
---	---	--	---	--	--

Actual Programme Implementation Timetable:

Generally, the project was implemented in line with the project plan. There was some delay in year 1, with the full staff team not recruited until April 2012. This initial delay was addressed throughout the following year and the full complement of schools recruited and participating in training by then end of 2013.

Please see attachment

Budgets/Project cost by year:

Please see attachment

Media Messages

TV Advertising

The MIFC TV advertising campaign has continued through different funding cycles from 2004. Marketing agency LyleBailie developed a campaign with the aim of promoting positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences amongst young children, practitioners and parents. The campaign drew on a story telling methodology to foster positive brand associations which should be; 'Welcoming', 'Inclusive', 'Friendly', 'Fun' and 'Educational'. Early Years evidence choice of TV as a communication medium drew upon available intelligence about the media channel reach for adults in Northern Ireland. They recognised the significant role of television in reaching large audiences with an intended message which underpinned Early Years decision to focus on driving audiences to the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme messages as a family unit using this platform. It is important to note the SEUPB funding cycle was 2011-2014 which is included the overall 10 year span of the MIFC media campaign. The tables clearly demonstrate the total reach in this period where 98% of individuals in Northern Ireland viewed the MIFC Adverts at least once during this time. For the purpose of this evaluation and the allocated funding, a high level of reach is achieved between 2011 and 2014, ranging from 44% to 72% (Table 6). There appears to be a direct correlation between Television Viewer Ratings (TVRs) and coverage, which means the larger the TVRs the greater the reach.

Table 6: Campaign coverage for MIFC messages on TV (2004-2014)

YEAR	Television Viewer Ratings (TVRs)	1+ COVERAGE
2004	80	44%
2005	165	62%
2006	303	75%
2007	184	65%
2008	163	62%
2009	165	46%
2010	205	65%
2011	229	68%
2012	262	72%
2013	259	72%
2014	345	75%
TOTAL	2,360	98%

Workshop Evaluations

Evaluation were sought at the end of day two with focus placed initially on the role of the facilitator to communicate the rationale, ethos and content of the programme. Participants were unequivocal in their ratings as regards the high level of competency in the subject area and facilitation style. The ratings were converted to percentages for 128 teachers trained to implement the programme. 97% of participants were in strong agreement about the potential impact of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme on their confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues. A more in depth exploration of participant experiences took place through open ended feedback and discussions regarding potential impact of the training on their practice.

Teacher Workshop Evaluations

The two day structure of training offered participants the chance to explore the role of personal experience in attitude formation around diversity issues. Self reflection was encouraged in a safely facilitated environment through various exercises around respecting difference. Teacher's feedback about this part of the training was often centred around remarks of surprise about their own personal attitude, experience and perception of diversity issues. However the activities provided valuable opportunities for self examination about the influence of adult interaction with children, in this case, teachers with their pupils, for example;

"This training will help me consider how I can help support children to become more respectful of other cultures and help children see we are all similar but we have differences that make us unique"

Recognising the importance of addressing diversity issues rather than avoid it was a recurrent theme in workshop evaluations. This appeared to be a key learning point taken from the training with teachers acknowledging the importance of firstly accepting that similarities and differences are present in many different ways but the emotions attached to the experience of exclusion remain the same for everyone.

Following the exercises which encouraged self reflection and fostered greater self awareness about personal responses and influence around diversity issues, teachers were keen to report a substantial increase in their understanding, knowledge and confidence about how to approach and teach respecting difference. Teachers pointed out in their feedback that the triad of training, resources and support was a 'unique' and 'high quality' approach. There was a palpable enthusiasm about the programme which provided an evidence based methodology underpinned by intentional support. Teacher's comments about the effect of the training include;

"It has given me confidence to address different issues within the classroom - by using the concrete materials, puppets etc. By having a more structure approach it will be easier to approach these issues in the classroom"

"This course has filled me with enthusiasm and given me the confidence to approach this area of work at school and at home"

The degree of fit with the primary curriculums in both NI and the R.O.I was recognised by teachers who could foresee the applicability of the programme and its resources directly to the SPHE parts of the curriculum but acknowledged its cross curricular impacts also. The foundation of social/emotional development in children and the multi media approach to disseminate positive messages around respecting difference, led teachers to endorse the programme's adaptability in their primary classrooms. Comments supporting these views included;

"Resources will allow for the topics and themes to be integrated seamlessly into the curriculum"

"I feel that this initiative will tie in very well with many of our curriculum goals, particularly in the areas of oral language development, SPHE, ESSE, and drama/visual arts activities. I look forward to using the resources and feel that it will complement our Aistear (Integrated Learning Session) greatly"

Focus on outcomes for children led teachers to consider how the programme could impact children's attitudes and behaviour. While training centred on building the knowledge, confidence and skill of primary teachers in the 31 schools, the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme messages and resources were embraced by teachers on the training as a methodology to help them create a culture of respecting difference in their classroom, their school and potentially their community. Teacher's willingness to work in this way and to support children to change attitudes and behaviours towards inclusion and exclusion are exemplified in the following comments;

"I will use the training to effect positive change in my classroom"

"This is will have a huge impact. It will begin to encourage discussion around similarities/differences and hopefully begin to break the cycle of prejudice"

Board of Governors Training

Although the target number set out in the Letter of Offer were not fully reached, it is important to acknowledge that Boards of Governors in all 31 schools received training at some point across the project. This training brought a whole school approach to the project by involving members of the schools' Boards of Governors in training workshops. Training took place at one of the scheduled meetings to raise their knowledge and understanding of the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project. This was reported by Board of Governors in the participating schools as 'highly beneficial', 'informative' and 'connected them to what is being embedded in their school'. It was noted by SEYS that parents who had attended parent workshops were members of the Board of Governors in their school. By having previous experience of the programme it strengthened the Board's support of the media messages and programme being implemented in their school. The difficulty of scheduling training for Board of Governors in schools given was acknowledged both by project SEYS and school principals in the evaluation. This challenge was in the context of the voluntary role of Board members and competing priorities on their agenda within a limited number of annual meetings. In addition, it was understood that the structure of Boards mean a high retention of rate with a lower number of new members joining on a yearly basis. With few or no new Board

members schools did not require another training session which had a direct impact on meeting the number of workshops set out in the project's forecasted targets within the Letter of Offer from SEUPB.

Parent Workshop Evaluations

Feedback from workshops with parents from the 31 participating schools was collected from the SEYS at the end of the sessions. These were qualitative in nature and provided a detailed account of the impact of their experiences at the workshop. Similar to teacher training workshops, active learning exercises are used to encourage discussion and support self reflection about respecting difference. In particular, parents readily cited the effects of watching the DVD 'A Class Divided' featuring a social experiment conducted by Jane Elliot in the 1960s. Viewing this DVD and witnessing the demonstrable impact of exclusion on children's feelings and behaviour was reported as a catalyst to assessing the influence of their language and behaviour on their own children. The feedback would suggest the DVD shown in the workshop facilitated internal reflections and group discussions about adult influences on children and the importance of addressing these issues with their own children. Examples of comments offered included;

"Tonight was very thought provoking. The Class Divided really made me think about what concrete learning experience I could use with my own children"

"Tonight actually made me aware of the stereotypes we associate with people because of their appearances and how this is actually prejudice too"

There was a substantial degree of recognition of the programme by parents, both in the public domain through the TV adverts and through stories shared by their children. Awareness of the resources meant parents already had some knowledge of the programme particularly if their child was engaged in a preschool setting who had the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme. This meant parents were able to strengthen the link between home and school, continuing to promote the messages in the home environment and support the work on respecting difference being implemented in school. Examples of personal experiences with the persona dolls were given to highlight the role they played in supporting their child who was worried about feeling excluded;

"My daughter loved Tom as she had a patch on her eye and identified with him"

"I like the programme a lot. As a mother of a foreigner I can add some comments about how my child feels at her school. She is worried that because of the language barrier she will be excluded and she will never find an Irish friend. Your programme can help my child. Thank you"

Parents repeatedly commented on the manner by which the SEYS delivered the workshop and created an environment conducive to sharing and discussing emotive issues.

Participatory Evaluation Findings - Teacher Training and Parent Workshops

As part of an internal evaluation capacity building programme in Early Years, the SEYS used a participatory evaluation methodology to understand outcomes for children, parents and schools. This approach actively engages stakeholders in the planning and completion of an evaluation to document, describe and assess the changes experienced or observed by key stakeholders from involvement in project activities. After an initial planning stage, a range of participatory and active learning methods are used to collect evaluation data. This ranged from 'the body exercise', 'graffiti walls' to 'discussion boards', and 'group rating charts'.

Involvement in the project

Formal engagement through parent workshops provided a unique space which offered learning experiences at the individual and group level. Parents discussed how the format of the training event generated personal insights about the role of adults on children's attitude formation with regards diversity and exclusion. Parents reported feeling 'challenged' but informed about the development of their children's attitudes to others and the associated feelings attached to 'hurtful' and 'helpful' behaviours. Raising awareness about the pathway to prejudice and understanding how to approach diversity issues in a positive way was viewed by parents as a key outcome of their attendance. Parents completed a pre and post rating of their knowledge, skill and confidence with regard promoting respecting difference. There was a substantial shift in self reported scores with parents stating they had experienced improvements across each of these indicators. A visual example of parents completing the scales carried out at each workshop is provided:

Parents rating their knowledge, skill and confidence on promoting respecting difference at the start of the workshop.



Demonstration of the resources used to disseminate the media messages of the programme was perceived as 'interesting', 'informative' and 'insightful'. Having the opportunity to understand personas, the resources and the rationale for the project through workshop facilitation was considered 'invaluable', 'empowering' and 'helpful' by parents. Parents who were attending for the first time often attributed their awareness of the programme to their children's stories about the personas and viewing of the associated TV adverts. Parents at previous training events organised through preschool settings, were

equally positive about the reminders it brought to them about the importance of the work of the project.

Parents placed value on the holistic nature of the programme which was not contained solely to a school context but understood and promoted the role of parents in their children's development and education. Through their feedback parents acknowledged that the workshops and parent resources fostered meaningful engagement which is intended to be sustained. Examples of comments supporting this view included;

"It is not often this kind of chance is offered to be part of what is going on in school and fully understand what this type of thing means"

"I feel I can really listen to what my daughter says about the puppets and be able to talk to her in a way I feel confident about it".

Observed Changes

Parents considered what changes they firstly observed in themselves as a result of taking part in the programme. There was an overwhelming pattern in the responses which point to greater levels of self awareness about the formation of prejudices and the influence of adult attitudes and language on children. Through facilitated discussions, parents were able to understand the demonstrable impact of 'hurtful' and 'helpful' behaviour on children's emotions. Due to their increased capacity to connect actions with thoughts and feelings parents reported being more actively mindful of their language, attitudes and reactions in situations where others are different to them. Parents offered self reflections about the changes they witnessed in themselves;

"I am now able to see that it's the adults who have the hang ups and fears. The workshops have made me really think how I can easily pass these fears onto my children"

Parents reported the programme afforded them unique opportunities to interact with parents from other communities they would not normally spend time with. By doing so, it meant they could find ways to learn about each other and work towards building trust and tolerance. Parents' surprise at the level of emotional maturity shown by their children dominated the feedback shared by parents. By this they meant the language used, the awareness of difference and the impact of hurtful and helpful behaviours on others. Individual accounts of change pointed to improvements such as more open communication, greater confidence and self-esteem, better equipped to make friends and an increased awareness about other communities. Changes discussed by parents were not contained to one child but spoken about in terms of a whole family impact. The resources and programme content, including TV adverts, finger puppets and parent packs were cited by parents as 'highly valuable' in giving a structure to family conversations about respecting difference. Parent's confidence levels were raised by having the 'tools' to discuss issues with and respond in an informed way to their children's enquiries about other communities and people different to them.

While parents did not speak at length about impacts of the programme on their community, there was a definite drive to promote it and advocate to other parents about attending the workshops. Personal benefits of engagement appeared to underpin their recommendation

to others given their direct experience as a parent within a community and working with parents from other communities. For example;

“I feel strongly to try to get this programme accepted in our community as I was in a mixed race marriage and my children have suffered a lot because of that”

Teachers

As part of the PE activities, teachers were asked to describe the types of support they received from the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector SEYS. The responses given could be grouped under the following categories;

- Training to improve self reflective practice
- Help with planning
- Facilitate parents workshops
- Integrate into topics across the curriculum
- Support to organise meaningful activities with the children
- Cross community trips
- Progress meetings
- Model good practice with the puppets
- Feedback on implementation

From the list created it was evident that a full profile of supports were provided to promote full service design linked to projected outcomes. Teachers were immensely appreciative of the input of the SEYS from initial point of contact, through training to ongoing engagement in project implementation. The continuous and intentional nature of the support offered to teachers was strengthened further by the continuity of the engagement. Teachers repeatedly identified the role of the SEYS as ‘critical’, ‘essential’ and ‘fundamental’ to the success of the programme.

Teachers trained across the 31 schools firmly believed the changes observed in themselves, their classroom, their children, their parents and the wider school community was attributable to the facilitation provided by the SEYS. The journey described by teachers was sequentially significant to them as they charted the impact of specific stages in their engagement to changes in themselves and others. For example, the training workshops encouraged self-reflection and critical questioning about their own attitudes and prejudices, which led them to actively consider how their behaviour influenced children. The training and support around implementation itself was strengthened by the role modelling, planning time and confidence built that resulted from the scaffolding offered by the SEYS. The opportunities to form cross community liaisons added to their professional and personal development around work on diversity issues. The learning offered through these activities were cited in the feedback as ‘unique’, ‘bridge building’ and ‘significant’. An example of one comment about the opportunity offered by the Respecting Difference in Education Sector project represents this point;

“Staff are working alongside new colleagues from areas in the local community that we would not usually have visited sharing experiences travelling to different venues and as a teacher seeing other programmes of early education”

Personal Impact

Teachers recounted personal changes they have noticed in themselves since taking part in the programme, starting with the training workshops. By demonstrating the effect of adult behaviour on children and the formation of attitudes, teachers were able to assess their own experiences of difference and the impact of this on their perceptions and attitudes. Examples of personal development recorded by teachers include;

“I have a better understanding in myself of difference”

“I ask myself - how inclusive I am?”

Practice Impact

Their personal growth led teachers to have greater confidence and willingness to explore issues of inclusion and exclusion. This was attributed to the availability of high quality resources accompanied by the expertly support of the SEYS. Teachers spoke about their own ability to actively implement the programme reassured that the resources promote positive messages of difference. The resources themselves were frequently cited as essential to delivery and led to teachers remarking on the ‘quality’, ‘developmental appropriateness’ and ‘flexibility across the curriculum’. The introduction of the new Irish language resources were welcome by Gaelscoils where teachers who were interviewed for the evaluation reported on children’s ‘glee’ at being able to engage in Gaelaige as they would with other materials.

The changes observed by teachers were centred on their improved understanding of children’s emotional development. They reported placing greater value on feelings and emotions and the role these have in addressing inclusive and exclusive behaviour, linking this to respecting difference. This appeared to have a significant impact on practice generally not just within the PDMU part of the curriculum. Example of changes noticed in practice include;

“I have more confidence in dealing with contentious issues”

“As a result of this programme I am now proactive in addressing issues around diversity”

Parental Impacts

Teachers were asked to share their observations with regards changes in parents of children in their class. There were two pertinent themes emerging from the aggregated responses of teachers. The first was about the level of engagement and interest shown by parents about the programme. Teachers remarked on parents’ enthusiasm about the programme, the amount they talked about it, the retelling of stories from home about the resources, the level of engagement with their own children and willingness to take part in programme activities. Teachers repeatedly used the adjective ‘proactive’ to describe parents response to the programme. They commented on how this was more noticeable than other programmes offered by the school.

The second observation which stood out for teachers were the changes they observed in parents attitudes and behaviour following the cross community liaison events. Parents appeared to place substantial value on the opportunity to meet and interact with parents from other communities. Through time their interactions became more relaxed, less tense and more meaningful as further opportunities to meet were offered. Examples of observed changes in parents by teachers include;

“Parents were definitely more proactive, they talk about taking the puppets to football matches, outings etc.

“Parents are reading stories with the children at home reinforcing the messages they are hearing in the school”

Children’s Changes

Teachers were asked to consider the changes they have observed in children in their class. The accounts given by teachers who completed the PE activities were collated and thematically organised. Recurrent patterns in responses allowed for the recorded changes to be grouped into four main categories of impact. These are detailed below with further explanation or examples of the outcomes experienced by children in the programme.

Emotional and social development;

- Children are confident in expressing feelings through language/body language
- Children talk about difference in a positive way
- Children display empathy
- Children display helpful behaviour
- Feelings are a big topic on the children’s agenda

Change in attitudes and behaviours to inclusion and exclusion;

- Children establishing relationships with other children who are different to themselves
- Children are taking an active interest in other cultures
- Children display inclusive behaviour

Positive associations with the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme resources

- Children use the puppets to talk about things that are upsetting
- Children look to the puppets as positive role models
- Children view the programme and especially the personal dolls as an integral part of their classwork
- Children act as ambassadors for the programme in home, at school and together with children from other communities they have shared activities with

Shared Space

- The children are talking about places in a 'community sense' seeing the whole area as a community e.g. the café where x mother works, the dentist, where y's granny lives
- The reaction of the children over time has grown more positive when going to the partner school, "excited, happy reactions to what is now a natural event"

Voice of the Child

Accessing and representing children's voices is at the core of the work carried out by Early Years. Children providing their perspective on experiences gained while engaging in the programme was viewed as critical in further supporting the evidence base of impacts. The process by which children are actively involved in the evaluation was planned carefully to be both developmentally appropriate and complementary to the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme content itself. In this respect, persona dolls were utilized in participatory evaluation activities, although other methods were incorporated to gather a rich and comprehensive collection of children's voices.

Through planned events the SEYS recorded children's responses both verbal and non verbal throughout activities, ending with circle time which facilitated group discussion among the children about their experiences. Together staff collated the recorded material and used key developmental indicators to assess children's response to the resources and joint activities. The findings which emerged were identical to those of teachers in terms of 'Emotional and social development', 'Attitudinal and behavioural change around inclusion', 'Positive relationship with the resources' and greater awareness of the 'Shared space' around them.

Photographic evidence accompanied the verbal and creative arts data collected through SEYS engagement with children. A selection of these from the activities are presented below:



The Senior Early Year Specialist (SEYS)

Early Years employs a team of 30 Early Years Specialists who support approximately 20 services each and hold a third level qualification in early childhood studies.

In line with the Government's emphasis on improving educational outcomes for all pupils throughout all phases of education, pre-school education centres are expected to continue to improve the quality of their educational provision. Support from a qualified teacher or suitably qualified early years specialist is regarded as the most effective way to ensure this

emphasis on continuous improvement. The role of the Early Years Specialist is to support the centre in: planning, curricular activities; assessing children's progress; assisting in the development of a self-improvement programme and action planning; and in preparing children for the transition to compulsory education.

In addition to holding an approved qualification, early years specialists should have at least two years prior experience in a leadership role in a pre-school centre and also the necessary organizational skills.

The Senior Early Years Specialist is qualified to Masters level and is responsible for the development and delivery of the MIFC – Respecting Difference Programme. The role also involved providing support to schools for five hours over each month, involving at least two visits to the school, in direct contact with the children using the programme. This involvement may include teaching, observing mentoring or working alongside the staff. The support provided must meet the needs of the staff and the children. In all centres, however, the support must continue to place a strong emphasis on working with the staff during teaching sessions and providing mentoring and coaching on all aspects of the delivery of the MIFC – Respecting Difference Programme and links to the curriculum.

Interviews with the SEYS delivering this programme provided a detailed account of the transition from preschool settings into the Foundation year in 31 primary schools. This began with the development of MIFC-Respecting Difference programme resources that would supplement the Service Design Manual (SDM) used in preschool settings. Time was invested by the SEYS to identify how links would be made to the Foundation curriculum (Northern Ireland) paying particular attention to PDMU. Evolution of the supplements including games and curriculum addendum's were focused on having a developmentally appropriate and educationally relevant service design which supported delivery of project outcomes. Part of this process included piloting of the supplements with teachers and children. Small changes were made following feedback from the pilot and full production of the Foundation curriculum supplements was completed.

Given the cross border nature of the project, the SEYS undertook training in the delivery of the Aistear curriculum in the Republic of Ireland. Aistear is the early childhood curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years.² The SEYS observed classrooms in R.O.I following training to understand how they could make links to Aistear using the tailored MIFC-Respecting Difference programme for schools. As a result a further supplement to the SDM was created to specifically deliver the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) component of Aistear. As engagement with schools in the R.O.I progressed additional cross curricular links, for example, language and literacy, were emphasised by the SEYS.

Development of the SDM to effectively transport to school settings for children aged 5 to 8 was viewed by the SEYS as an essential moderator to implementation and ultimately achieving project outcomes.

² <http://www.ncca.ie>

The Role of the Senior Early Years Advisor

SEYS described their role as being a “conduit for the implementation process”. This was embedded in the support provided from the commencement point at training through the continued mentoring during implementation.

Schools’ willingness to participate in the project dictated their agreement to engage and quality of the relationship formed. SEYS emphasised their role in relationship forming, building and sustaining with school principals initially and teachers subsequently. This experience varied greatly, tempered in large part by the principal’s readiness to welcome the programme and lend their support to its implementation in their school. School principals interviewed as part of the evaluation, confirmed the support function of SEYS, ‘their manner’, ‘professionalism’ and ‘organisational abilities’ was a ‘significant plus’ in their continued participation in the programme.

Part of this process was the facilitation by the SEYS of cross border and cross community liaisons (Examples are give in Appendix 3). Feedback from the team emphasised the significant opportunity this offered schools and parents who were often experiencing cross border or cross community engagement for the first time. Supporting development of these liaisons was viewed as a substantial responsibility of the SEYS which took time and planning to coordinate given the geographical spread of schools in the project, particularly in rural areas.

The SEYS on this project understood the level of engagement teachers and schools could commit to based on the competing priorities within the daily timetable. The ability to be ‘flexible’, ‘responsive’, ‘open’ and ‘independent’ was described by SEYS as ‘welcomed’ and ‘appreciated’ by teachers and principals. They believed that it was their responsibility to understand the demands of the school setting, the targets within the curriculum and the context in which teachers worked. By being aware and informed about each individual through relationships nurtured, SEYS strengthened their engagement and in turn their support for high quality implementation. Mentoring in the form of role modelling and observing sessions to provide feedback to teachers were examples offered by SEYS which formed key parts of their support function.

Professional Development of the SEYS

The structure of support and professional development created by Early Years was cited by the SEYS as ‘pivotal’ to their ability to respond in a reflexive manner to the needs of schools and parents. Their role as mentor, advisor and partners to schools was mirrored by their own experience of support and guidance given to them from the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme consultant, other SEYS and Early Years staff. They spoke about ‘parallel learning’ and ‘role modelling’ which they drew heavily upon to improve their own practice which they believed had a direct positive impact on their capacity to by an external pedagogue to teachers in the project.

Opportunities provided by Early Years, such as training in participatory evaluation and enrolment in a Master’s Degree in Applied Peace and Conflict Studies with Early Years through the University of Ulster Magee in conjunction with funding from the International Networking Group on Peace Building with Young Children. One SEYS completed the Masters which provided an opportunity for participants to explore the effects of conflict on

young children and the development of effective programmes to enhance practice and outcomes for young children and families impacted by conflict through a combination of taught and online modules. This Masters programme offered further professional development and a broader understanding of peace building programmes locally, within Northern Ireland, and from an international perspective.

Impact of the SEYS

The SEYS belief in the programme's ability to achieve the intended outcomes were grounded in observed changes that had occurred across schools, groups and individuals. These were shared during evaluation interviews and could be divided across the specific stakeholder groups they primarily interact with;

Impact on Teachers

The changes reported both by teachers and confirmed in the observations by SEYS was overall improvement in teachers' knowledge, confidence and capacity to deliver positive messages on inclusion and exclusion while promoting the need for a society that respects difference. These were authenticated in ratings provided by teachers at the training workshops and through changes in practice recorded by SEYS at support sessions. SEYS believed that increases in these indicators of impact could be considered as a "precursor to outcomes for children". Observations and discussions with teachers during support visits show that respect for difference had become an integral part of the curriculum. SEYS observed how teachers had a genuine understanding and insight into how the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme complements their work across the curriculum and supports the social and emotional development of their pupils.

In terms of cross community and cross border activities, changes were noted about teachers' interaction with teachers from other schools. It emerged that these activities had fostered relationships and ongoing contact leading to peer learning and sharing of good practice. The SEYS spoke about the formal and informal opportunities for engagement at these events where teachers learned about issues faced by the other school and recognised similar problems being experienced by them. The sharing of practice and ideas across communities established through this project points to improved levels of tolerance and trust with the goal of delivering the curriculum in a more shared way.

Impact on Parents

Relationship formation and trust building with parents was cited as a key part of the work completed by Early Years team. While the school often facilitated access to parents through their own links, the team were responsible for organising activities including training workshops and cross community liaisons involving parents. During interviews, the SEYS reported similar observations in parents where there was increased awareness and a self proclaimed need to engage their children in conversations about diversity.

Impact on Children

The direct impact of their role on children emerged from the direct involvement and support with teachers. One SEYS stated; "By improving outcomes for teachers we ultimately strengthen better outcomes for children". There was a consistent agreement among SEYS about the 'enabling' nature of their role, both with teachers and parents. By passing on good practice and modelling the MIFC-Respecting Difference approach, SEYS

believed they were supporting high quality implementation which meant children's needs were being met around issues of inclusion and exclusion.

Reflections by SEYS highlighted the programmes' appeal to raise outcomes for children beyond the boundaries of the PDMU curriculum. This included progressing children's social and emotional development, language and literacy, opportunity for shared learning and shared playing and promotion of relationships with parents around discussion of difficult issues. In addition, the interviews raised the importance of children's rights and opportunities for them to discuss issues affecting them. Offering a space and developmentally appropriate tools to do this was considered 'empowering', 'meaningful' and 'authentic' by facilitator. 'Powerful conversations' initiated by children using the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme resources have been witnessed repeatedly by SEYS who have observed this directly themselves or relayed to them by teachers and parents.

Impact on School and Curriculum

The value awarded to the programme by schools was cited as a metric of success by SEYS. A whole school commitment to the programme and its ethos was one expression of value. Others included; ongoing principal support, teachers' willingness to implement with fidelity, inclusion of the programme across the school to raise whole school awareness, e.g., at school assemblies to address issues and drive to involve parents. Understanding of the cross curricular relevance of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was another firm indicator of value. This was apparent in teachers' confidence in using resources to explore themes across subjects.

The challenges experienced by EYS

The single most identifiable moderator which challenged the achievement of project objectives was the issue of 'teacher sub cover'. Budgetary restrictions preventing teacher release for training based on the need to fund sub cover was a constant barrier experienced by schools and SEYS throughout the programme. In interviews with school principals they wanted to make clear their inability to participate in the programme to the extent they would want was 'entirely and solely' down to funding sub cover. They set this within a context of 'competing priorities' in a climate where 'targets were more demanding and budgets more restricting'.

Project targets included the provision of training for schools Board of Governors. The forecasted target was not reached by the end of the project and a number of lessons learned were drawn together by SEYS. The formation of Board of Governors do not generally experience an annual replenishment but tend to have a high level of retention year on year. In this respect, training provided to a Board and its members was not needed a second time. Therefore demand for Board of Governor training was not high due to the natural retention in Board members year on year.

The formation of school partnerships or liaison for cross community activities was in some cases challenging as a result of geographical spread of schools. This was particular true for rural locations where schools serving different communities were not located in close proximity.

Development Work

New School Resources

In response to feedback from teachers requesting further resources to enhance learning outcomes for children within the Foundation Stage, six board games and supplements for the curriculum have been developed to further promote children's emotional literacy particularly focusing on the application of empathy and the development of more sophisticated vocabulary and ideas relating to feelings and emotions. The games have been developed in accordance with the relevant themes within PDMU in the Foundation Stage Curriculum (for example Self Awareness, Feelings and Emotions, Similarities and Differences) and SPHE in the R.O.I Infant Class Curriculum. Following training completed by the SEYS in Aistear, supplements were developed in response to this to support teachers in R.O.I schools. A simultaneous focus throughout these games is the development of problem solving skills and the progression of learning around diversity issues for children from the previous preschool MIFC-Respecting Difference programme into the Foundation Stage within primary school children. Examples of the six new products include;



Supporting pupils with special educational needs

Delivery of the programme in two special needs schools within the project have used the resource box for two year olds to work with children who have severe learning and physical needs. The resource boxes that are currently available for the schools project, are not intellectually or developmentally appropriate for the children in these schools. However, Early Years had developed a resource box to support children aged 2/3 years. The content of these boxes are ideal for the children in both these schools and would support the teachers to implement the Respecting Difference Programme.

Rural Message

In collaboration with Early Years, the Childcare Border Counties Network and Rural Development Council, a new rural message was developed. While the funding of the new message was not through SEUPB, the role of the SEYS in contributing knowledge and expertise to the process cannot be ignored. The addition of 'Lucy' the rural persona naturally increases the complement of characters which the SEYS would be promoting through training with a view to full implementation.

Irish Language Resources

Over the duration of the project, three Irish language medium schools were involved. It was vital that these schools were supplied with resources in Irish to fully implement the programme to full service design. Translation of existing resources into Irish facilitated implementation of the programme in Irish Medium Schools and in turn, promoted the significance of Irish language and culture. This supported the NISRA target to “to work with young children to create a culture of respecting difference in schools.” These new resources were launched alongside the new schools resources on Nov. 18th 2014.

Project staff, Nicola Gillespie P1 Teacher St Columbkilles PS, Denise McCormilla BCCN, Siobhan, Sam Denison, Principle McClintock PS, Seskinore, Ciaran Hanna SEUPB.,



Cross Border and Cross Community Liaisons

One of the objectives and targets of the project was to facilitate cross border or cross community liaisons between the participating schools. During 2013 and 2014 a total of 15 partnerships were fostered. The intention of this process was to encourage schools and develop their capacity to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society. Through the interactions between staff, children and parents, it was anticipated a whole school approach would be developed which valued the joint learning opportunities that were on offer when the schools came together.

Example of a Cross Community liaison event

Chinese New Year February 25th 2014, Clooney Hall

Over 230 children, parents and staff from 3 schools implementing the MIFC Respecting Difference Schools Programme came together on a cross community basis to celebrate Chinese New Year in the Methodist Church Hall Clooney in Londonderry/Derry. St. Oliver Plunkett P.S. Strathfoyle, Newbuildings P.S. and Ballykelly P.S. shared a colourful and creative event, facilitated by authentic multi-media facilitators.



Example of a Cross Border event

Anti-bullying Event 24th March 2014, Playtrail Pennyburn

Over 103 children with 25 parents' and 10 staff from both schools came together to participate in a range of activities from schools implementing the MIFC Respecting Difference schools programme (cross border). Scoil Cholmcille, Greencastle and Nazareth House P.S. Derry met at the Playtrail and shared an interactive and inclusive event which gave the children opportunities to play together and share a creative outdoor space. Children took part in 'Spike the Hedgehog Treasure Hunt', a song and movement workshop and creative play activities that allowed them to explore helpful/hurtful behaviour and inclusive language. Feedback on the joint liaison from both parents and staff was excellent; with parents commenting that they didn't realise how much their children knew about the MIFC Respecting Difference puppets.



Crumlin P.S. and Drumlins P.S. Joint Activity

Children and teachers from both schools met on the May 15th 2014 to participate in a joint event to explore different homes. The Kathleen persona was introduced to children from both schools, discussing how she and her family lived in a trailer/caravan. The

children shared what they had previously learnt about Kathleen's home and drew comparisons with their own homes, e.g., how many bedrooms, who shared their bedrooms with siblings, bunk beds, showers and baths etc.

One teacher led discussion was then followed up with a visit from a mobile farm, where children had hands on opportunities to see the animals and hear all about their homes back on the farm.



Additional Communications and Media Outputs

The overall aim of the communications plan for the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project is to highlight the achievements of the project and the role of the Media Initiative for Children in promoting an early intervention approach to good relations. It also aims to highlight the contribution of the EU and the PEACE III Programme through the European Regional Development Fund.

Objectives in relation to communications:

- To raise awareness of the existence of the project.*
- To showcase the cross border nature of the project*
- To highlight the work being done in schools on both sides of the border*
- To highlight the developments in the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme in making it more age appropriate for young children*

A detailed analysis which describes the level and type of communications used is presented in Appendix 2. The utilisation of written, verbal, online and multimedia methods of communication strengthens and reinforces the messages of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme. A flavour of the different types of communication are highlighted in the following sections.

Newspapers and Newsletters

Articles and press releases promoting the work of the project was disseminated between five different local papers on seven different occasions between 6th January 2012 and 2nd January 2014. Together these potentially reached 65,495 readers based on the circulation rates attached to the papers.

Conferences

Early Years have promoted the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector Project at 6 political party conferences between 2013-2014. By exhibiting at these events, they have maintained a presence across the political spectrum in Northern Ireland with politicians from the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Alliance Party NI, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), Sinn Fein and the newly formed NI21 party. This is particularly important at conferences of parties that hold Executive Department positions. The Party Conferences primarily offered Early Years the opportunity to express their gratitude at the support provided by Political Parties during the year on key

issues Early Years have advocated for. Examples of photographic documentation of engagement with politicians at conferences is provided below;

Early Years Policy Officer and staff with First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness at the Respecting Difference in the Educator Sector exhibition.



Early Years Magazine

The Early Years magazine is circulated to members containing features and updates on the project. Potential reach ranges from 1478 in 2013 to 1764 in 2014. The magazine has maintained updates on project developments regarding the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme.

Early Years Social Media and Online Communications

A detailed inspection of available analytics from Early Years online platforms in the form of Facebook, Twitter and the organisation's website. The breakdown of analytics strongly suggest targets were met and a high level of awareness raising about the project was achieved by the exponential reach of Facebook, Twitter (Followers) and Website views. In doing so, awareness is increased with respect to the project outcomes and its potential influence on the 'Shared Education Agenda'.

A rise in website views is observed from project start with an overall peak occurring in 2013. In total 15728 views of which 9960 are considered to be 'unique'. This means individuals are entering the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project site for the first time, accounting for 63% of the total across the three years.

The largest utilisation of Facebook as an online tool occurred in 2014 (53519 potential reach). This centred on regional activity from a large number of users (n=72) who were 'sharing', 'liking' and 'commenting' on posts made by Early Years about the project.

Twitter analytics would suggest greater impact in terms of dissemination as evidenced in both the level of reach (represented in Twitter 'followers') and location of organisations receiving and promoting information on the project. Each year the number of 'followers' grew from 10587 in 2012, through to 15711 in 2013 to 25604 in 2014. Cumulatively, 51902

distinct 'followers' either 'retweeted', 'mentioned' or 'favourited' the tweets dispensed by Early Years in this period. If the figures were to be recomputed to take account of repeat activity of each organisation, reported levels of dissemination would be greater again. Therefore the analytics confidently indicate significant levels of awareness about the projects, its messages, resources and developments in the public domain.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS

(Project partners, representatives from Education and Library Board, Fermanagh Trust, Rural Development Council)

The Service Design Model

The structure and format of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was at the core of stakeholder's recommendation about the programme. The model of service design combining resources, training and support was described as 'exemplary', 'unique' and 'deal breaking' in interviews with stakeholders. They viewed the package offered by Early Years as 'instrumental in meeting the needs of schools' which had offered the education sector a 'meaningful' and 'evidence based' approach to addressing inclusion and exclusion within the whole school environment. This model of implementation was recognised by a number of stakeholders engaged with schools and Early Years as being a 'best practice example' of facilitating genuine conversations between teachers and pupils, pupils and pupils and parents and their children.

The role of support from the SEYS was pinpointed by stakeholders as the distinguishing characteristic of the programme which not only attracted schools but led to their willingness to sustain and fully implement with the integrity intended. The reality of competing priorities for schools was a force likely to impede sustained and genuine implementation was noted throughout the feedback gathered in the evaluation. However, the critical input of intentional support by SEYS was a recognised response to this issue which schools welcomed and stakeholders noted as a 'deciding factor' in implementation. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of support, which was not just about assisting teachers with the programme but had the objective of facilitating implementation with fidelity to the service design. Evidence based outcomes, in their opinion, was linked directly to full service implementation and part of this included the learning offered through mentoring by the SEYS.

Vocabulary and Methodology

Stakeholders in the evaluation described the 'vocabulary' offered by the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme as one of its defining benefits. The focus on emotions experienced when someone is excluded, the dialogue created through use of the resources and the discussions generated by the media messages were put forward by stakeholders as 'pivotal' to teachers and parents having 'meaningful engagements' around respecting difference referring to 'hurtful' and 'helpful' behaviours.

Media Platforms

The public profile of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme messages through TV adverts in particular was acknowledged as offering a vehicle for meaningful conversations at home and school. Children's connection to the characters which has been fostered in school was seen as a catalyst for home based discussions about the programme. Stakeholders argued that the personas brought children's school activities into conversations with parents and created a solid foundation for exploring issues of difference. This was strengthened by parent workshops which stakeholder perceived as a defining element of the programme. Familiarity of the personas as a result of the TV adverts led stakeholders to cite the media messages as 'critical', 'essential' and 'powerful' drivers of impact.

Evidence base

The knowledge that a programme works and research is available locally to support it was reported by stakeholders as a 'highly valuable commodity'. Evidence of impact created through Coral research reassured and reaffirmed for stakeholders the importance of this type of work with children.

Supporting Teachers

'Avoidance', 'uneasiness' and 'uncertainty' were descriptions offered by stakeholders to describe their experience of teachers' approach to issues of inclusion. The MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was described as a '100% perfect fit for the curriculum in school both North and South of the border'. Central to this was the journey in which schools embarked on that began with an unparalleled opportunity of joint training with teachers from different community backgrounds. The two day training was viewed by stakeholders as 'instrumental to adult exploration around the formation of attitude and influence of behaviour on children'.

Partnership working

Cross Border Advisory Group

As the funded partners in the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project, bi monthly meetings were held to direct the project, keep informed of developments and share information on both school curricula in R.O.I. and N. Ireland. The assimilation of cross border knowledge and standing between the two organisations provided a strong base for programme delivery. Interviews with the partners highlighted the value placed on their respective roles by each other. This was embedded in a history of partnership working including the recent development of the rural message alongside the Rural Development Council. Both parties were immensely committed to the project which was grounded in the evidence of impact of this approach to respecting difference. They each spoke of their professional capacity and desire to promote the programme and deliver the objectives. The reputation, evidence based and public recognition of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was put forward by partners as the vehicle by which schools in the Republic and North of Ireland could 'meaningfully perhaps for the first time develop a long term approach to inclusion in a fast changing society'.

School Partnerships

Cross border and cross community liaisons provided an opportunity to build relationships and develop partnerships between the matched schools. Schools who participated in these events commended the work of Early Years staff in organising and facilitating engagement between teachers, children and parents. Teachers reported feeling 'equal' in their involvement with Early Years staff who they stated treated them as 'partners'.

Shared Education

Shared Education means the provision of opportunities for children and young people from different community backgrounds to learn together. Advancing Shared Education is both a Programme for Government commitment and an action within the Together: Building a United Community strategy. Core recommendations and themes made in the Ministerial

Advisory Group's report (2013) on 'Advancing Shared Education' carry significant implications for the future landscape of all levels of education in Northern Ireland.³ There is an evident alignment of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme to a number of these recommendations. This is based on evaluation findings emerging from the direct experience of schools, parents, children and key stakeholders about the suitability of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme as a good practice example to deliver education in a shared society. Stakeholders suggested that the conceptual and operational framework of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme 'naturally lent itself to the intentions of the Shared Education agenda' and 'offered an evidence based, internationally recognised model of best practice' that responded to many of the intended outcomes of Shared Education.

³ Connolly, P., O'Grady, P.J. & Purvis, D. (2013). Advancing Shared Education. Ministerial Advisory Group for Department of Education.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The impacts attributable to the Respecting Difference in Education Programme are as a direct result of the quality of training provided for staff and the focus of the learning experience for children has, in turn, supported.

The other important factor is the partnership approach for the delivery of the project which aligned and mobilised different areas of expertise across the statutory education sector, Early Years and BCCN in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The level of impact is as a result of the investment in the training for staff, the supporting activities with staff, parents and management committees embedding the overall concept and approach and the resources that were developed and used as an integral part of the programme. This has included the formation of deep and respectful relationships.

There are lessons here for wider and good relations activities where the objectives are concerned with attitudinal and behavioural change. Many good relation initiatives are not planned and delivered with a strong sense of the pedagogical basis upon which their success rests. This project is different in that there is an excellent level of cognisance in relation to the need for deeper understanding of the learning processes at play if attitudinal, and ultimately behavioural change, are to be secured. This is supported by the Media Initiative Service Design. This project has given a model in designing and implementing an evidence based approach.

The type of professional development and follow up support work included in the project is of direct interest to future planned work under the new PEACE programme which includes a priority devoted to Shared Education and which will require the type of underpinning practice demonstrated within the project and based on an ecological framework approach, which acknowledges the child in the context of wider social issues. The project has been delivered on a shared education basis where primary school teachers have been trained together in the programme and have been able to deliver shared curriculum activities throughout the year.

The work is critically linked to the Every School a Good School and Shared Education Policy in Northern Ireland and to the Aistear Siolta frameworks in the Republic of Ireland. Whilst both jurisdictions have enabling policies such as these, this is an additional element which means that recognizing the position of education within communities and the cross cutting nature of the ideological and cultural components within communities, school services can break down barriers and create inclusive spaces within communities. The particular approaches and experiences within this project has direct relevance for all schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking account of the monitoring data combined with detailed evaluation information gathered across the project and at its summation, it is evident the data supports that Peace and Reconciliation Outcomes were met. Analysis of training evaluations, project publicity activities, participatory evaluation data and stakeholder interviews together offer consistent and recurring evidence of impact in terms of the following project indicators which have been outlined in this report;

- Positive change in behaviour
- Improved levels of trust and tolerance within or between communities
- Acknowledged different experiences, memories or legacies of the past
- Change in attitude and behaviour of children towards inclusion and exclusion
- Improved relationships between parents across community divisions
- Increased confidence and skills of teachers to contribute to building a sustainable peace
- Increased awareness of the need to do diversity work
- Schools in a better position to deliver primary education in a manner that contributes to a shared society

The project effectively builds on the evidence-based MIFC-Respecting Difference programme and was in direct response to one of the recommendations from the Coral Research expanding its use to five-eight year olds at Foundation level⁴. Through the work of the project, the support provided to implement the programme alongside the development of age/stage appropriate resources including those in Irish have very much encouraged to develop cross community and cross border partnerships with neighbouring schools.

This approach realises a range of outcomes at different levels including the children's own attitudes and behaviours towards difference in its many forms; practitioners' or governors' understanding of or capacity around difference and diversity work and parents' appreciation of diversity issues and confidence to address this with their children and others across communities.

The evaluation has established that project targets set out in the Letter of Offer by SEUPB have all been met with the exception of training sessions with Board of Governors. Explanations about this have been detailed in the report. All other targets were above the intended objectives which meant a larger number of teachers, parents and children engaged in the project. One of the Peace and Reconciliation outcomes refer to Board of Governors and the remaining nine focus on the impact of project activities on parents, teachers and children.

⁴ www.early-years.org/coral/mifc.php

THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

Understanding the change process in terms of these indicators and its impact in a context recovering from conflict can be explained through 'Individual Change Theory'. When applied to peacebuilding it argues that peace comes through transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, their consciousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills. For this project, the aim of the Respecting Difference model is to support teachers, parents and children who represent driving forces in a community to respect difference, and promote inclusive behaviours. The evaluation identifies a number of transformations that have occurred at an individual, class, school and community level as reported through the experiences of participating schools, children and parents. They have attributed these to gaining greater awareness of how attitudes and prejudices are formed, how they influence those around them. They understood through training, awareness raising, engagement with other communities there was another language that can affect behaviour and equip adults and children with the capacity to embrace difference rather than deny or denounce it. These collective changes reported in the evaluation report are separated into specific impacts on schools, children and parents;

Schools

Teachers and schools recognised the value of the programme for both themselves at a practice level, their children at a developmental level and for its cross curricular suitability in the Foundation Stage at primary schools.

Time for personal reflection afforded to teachers through the training workshops offered by the Respecting Difference programme was highlighted by teachers as 'rewarding', 'revitalising' and 'motivating'. The space to consider the formation of their own attitudes and their role in influencing children was deemed invaluable. Self-reflected acknowledgement of the degree to which personal and professional attitudes and behaviours are entwined could be described as the single largest significant change in the training process. Engaging in training with teachers from other schools added further value by enabling teachers to share different experiences, memories and acknowledge how these varied across communities. Teachers endorsed their experiences and shared the changes they observed in themselves as they continued implementation in practice.

Addressing rather than avoiding contentious or emotive issues was raised by teachers and school principals as an unfortunate reality linked mainly to the lack of teacher confidence and capacity in this area. The methodology, vocabulary and support that begins with joint training workshops with teachers from other communities was cited as a 'game changer' by teachers who admitted feeling equipped through MIFC-Respecting Difference programme with the tools and language to support children to understand and respect difference. Through self-reflection, training and implementation issues around diversity have gained greater visibility leading to direct conversations.

Children

The role of children as agents of change and instigators of transformation was a distinct theme in the evaluation findings from the perspective of stakeholders, teachers and parents. The evaluation findings which included direct evidence from children's voices pointed to greater emotional literacy in responding and reacting to situations that promoted inclusion or exclusion. Information gathered during the MIFC Respecting Difference programme based on parent and teacher reported observations pointed to improvements in the emotional development of children participating in the programme. This was evident in how they treat and include others. In addition, the desire to emulate the positive behaviours of the persona dolls' behaviours was described as very strong and a 'powerful tool for both teachers and children'. Parents connecting with their child through the programme was perceived by teachers and other stakeholders as instrumental to parental responsiveness. The enthusiasm of children about the programme was viewed as a 'recruitment' driver to engaging parents and opened up opportunities for whole family discussions about issues that may likely not be otherwise addressed. It was seen as offering a common language between children and parents when talking about difference. Teachers and stakeholders firmly believed that added value of the programme could be measured in its capacity to promote home school links through parental engagement, public dissemination of the media messages and whole community ethos promoted through the project.

Parents

A triangulated change effect reported by parents which consisted of an increase in awareness about the formation of attitudes, a recognition of the need to do diversity work and a willingness to engage in a dialogue with their children and other community members that is more inclusive and respectful. This process occurred through their participation on parent workshops and cross border or cross community liaisons. The opportunity to self reflect about attitude formation followed by the direct engagement with other communities, led parents to report changes in their own attitudes about diversity.

Moderators in the Change Process

Analysis of the evaluation information collated in this report suggest there are moderating factors that have contributed to the outcomes achieved through the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector. There were recurring themes which overlapped across stakeholders that pinpointed specific driving forces in the change process. These included;

- The Service Design Model - Training, resources, support and parent workshops
- The professional capacity and approach of the SEYS
- Early Years capacity to nurture and support meaningful Shared Education experiences
- The media messages and age appropriate resources
- Relationship building between SEYS and teachers
- The support for relationship from SEYS between parents across communities
- The responsiveness of children, teachers and parents to the programme

The role of the SEYS was a driving force in the project implementation process and led to the identification of core competencies that would inform future appointments of staff to work on this project and highlight the capacities necessary for effective work in this area. These are put forward as:

- Willingness to be an ambassador for the programme based on their belief in the transformations created through project engagement
- A commitment to self-reflective practice
- Demonstrated experience and understanding of the community development approach
- An openness to shared learning and mentoring
- A firm understanding of the relationship building process
- An ability to be responsive and flexible
- A definite resolve to support implementation with fidelity
- A clear understanding of the role of a change agent through support, mentoring and advocacy

One of the key moderators identified in the evaluation was relationship formation. The careful, sensitive and expertly approach of SEYS who were described as ‘ambassadors for the programme’ by teachers and parents in the evaluation, was singled out as critical to the successful implementation of the programme. The manner in which they recruited schools from the initial stages of the project, maintained open communication and nurtured relationships with staff and parents was cited frequently as a determinant in the positive experiences reported by schools. They were viewed as role models for practice by teachers who had built a relationship from the training workshops which was fostered during site visits to support implementation. Taking account of connections theory where strong relationships are a necessary ingredient for peacebuilding, the core action of forming and developing meaningful relationships through engagement in MIFC-Respecting Difference programme was to reduce division and polarisation through attitudinal change which was reported by teachers and parents in this evaluation.

Early Years Organisational Capacity

There is a readiness within Early Years to support the strategic directives of Shared Education that is founded on a 10 year legacy of delivering the evidence based MIFC-Respecting Difference programme across age groups, stakeholders and contexts. The sustained commitment to develop programmes that promote inclusion and respect difference is embedded in their organisational values and community development ethos. This approach underpinned the expertise shown by SEYS to skillfully foster relationships with both parents and schools in a manner that was responsive to their needs. The cultivation of these relationships was subtle and organic drawing upon previous experience of developing programmes in community contexts.

A culture of self-reflective practice was evident from interviews with SEYS and senior managers within Early Years. This encouraged continuous self-reflection to improve the practice of the SEYS and MIFC-Respecting Difference programme. The structure provided to do this by the organisation was cited by SEYS as critical in progressing the resources and improving their own practice. The format of this was in terms of formal training, for example in participatory evaluation, the support of mentors (MIFC-Respecting Difference

programme consultant), the opportunity to share practice and receive feedback from other Early Years practitioners and staff members and the strategic guidance offered by senior management.

Partnership Working

The formal partnership between Early Years and Border Counties ChildCare Network was viewed as highly beneficial and positive. Both parties acknowledged the contribution and expertise that supported the partnership to fully commit and deliver on the project outcomes. The success of collaborative working was framed by each organisation's genuine commitment to and indubitable belief in the design of the programme. This was grounded in their long standing relationship prior to this project where both organisations were responsible for the 'Rural Respecting Difference Programme'. The shared mutual respect and combined value placed on the programme was evident in interviews with partners. Trust nurtured through these collaborations led partners to acknowledge a responsibility they had to be role models and advocates for the programme.

The term partnership working was used in interviews and evaluation information to describe the interactions between teachers, principals and SEYS. Rather than externally imposed knowledge and skill sets which were unlikely to leave a legacy of internal capacity in the classroom, experience across all SEYS was described as 'equal', 'respectful', and 'nurturing'. Observing SEYS naturally modeling the ethos and principles of the programme supported schools to understand how this way of working can create positive change in schools and communities. One principal explained this point by saying: "When you work together and learn from each other in the way we did with [SEYS], you naturally observe how promoting an inclusive approach in a very simple but valuable way can be part of how we behave everyday".

Policy Alignment

Over the incoming months Northern Ireland will further progress towards particularly exciting and potentially challenging times which will include the election new MPs in 2015 and MLAs in 2016, new District Councils coming into play in April 2015 and further Northern Ireland Executive and wider political discussion about the shape that Shared Education, united communities and shared futures will take. The positioning of Early Years' Media Initiative for Children in supporting schools to deliver education embedded in an ethos of respecting difference is strongly affirmed by the findings from this evaluation. Within the Ministerial Advisory Group's twenty recommendations on how to progress the shared education agenda within the Northern Ireland schools system, one of the key factors attributing to the success of shared education was the 'ongoing training and support for teachers and other staff'.⁵ The programme's ability to 'prepare teachers to explore issues of inclusion and respect for diversity along with skills concerning building trust, mutual respect and establishing relationships' established it as a credible and

⁵ Ibid

evidence informed model of practice suitable in upskilling schools to facilitate Shared Education⁶.

The specific and careful selection of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme by the Fermanagh Trust as their methodology of choice for in their Shared Education Project corroborates the findings of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme in the Education Sector project. The Trust's preference for the programme which led to teachers from 43 primary schools being trained in County Fermanagh was underpinned by the defining attributes of the service design model; Training-Resources-Support-Parent Engagement. Of the 42 partnerships formed during the Shared Education Project managed by the Fermanagh Trust, 37 are still actively maintained. The Trust firmly believe the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme methodology facilitated 'meaningful engagements between teachers, parents and children where children could be the central role models and key agents of change'. They also argued that training in the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme and sustained support should be an identified item on the budget lines for schools to bring the work to scale across Northern Ireland and the border counties.

Internal capacity building of teachers to deliver community relations, equality and diversity aspects of the curriculum was apparent from the evaluation findings. Teachers and principals welcomed the approach by Early Years to develop and strengthen the skills base for educators, moving away from a reliance on external organisations to deliver on these issues without creating a legacy of learning that remains within the school.

⁶ Connolly, P., O'Grady, P.J. & Purvis, D. (2013). Advancing Shared Education. Ministerial Advisory Group for Department of Education.

LESSONS LEARNED

There was clear and smooth transferability of the MIFC programme as recommended through the Coral Research to Foundation Year in Northern Ireland and Junior/Senior Infants in the Republic of Ireland.

The role of the EYS is critical in securing the involvement of schools and sustaining implementation to full service design. The competency, confidence and flexibility of Early Years staff were cited as essential in understanding the needs of schools while facilitating the planning and delivery of workshops and support visits.

The readiness of Early Years as an organisation to support the delivery of a meaningful Shared Education experience in schools.

The Respecting Difference in the Education Sector project model attracted schools and encouraged participation. Competing priorities given budgetary constraints and pressures mean core curriculum topics and targets will take precedence unless a full service design such as the one used in this project is made available.

Teachers acknowledged the added value of focusing on children's emotional development as a vehicle for addressing difference.

TV advertising has a substantial cost effectiveness in spreading awareness of the media messages and creating opportunities for family conversations on issues of equality and diversity. They raised the public profile of the project and served as a link between children and adult worlds where a familiar language offered a shared vocabulary to discuss respecting difference.

Home-school links through parents' workshops and resources further supported the transition of the messages from the classroom to home.

The cross curricular flexibility offered by the programme was amplified through the sustained support provided by the SEYS.

Without paid sub cover to release teachers to attend training workshops, participation of schools in the project is a major barrier.

Geographical spread of the project impacted on the school matching process. This involved identifying participating schools from different backgrounds who could be suitably matched for cross border or cross community liaison activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations emerge from detailed examination of available evaluation information gathered throughout the project and summatively at the project's end.

- The Respecting Difference in the Education Sector should be brought to scale in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- The development of the MIFC-Respecting Difference programme to address issues being experienced by older primary aged children should be given consideration in the near future
- Teacher training is accompanied by funded sub cover in response to the financial barrier that is impeding school participation in the project
- Additional strategies are developed when planning to engage Board of Governors in the project to improve their understanding of the need to do diversity work using this approach
- Geographical location is taken into account when matching schools for liaison activities
- There is strategic acknowledgment of the readiness of Early Years to implement an evidence based developmentally appropriate resource that supports schools to genuinely deliver on the Shared Education agenda

Appendix 1

Participating Schools

Scoil Cholmcille, Greencastle, Donegal
St. Tiarnach's, Clones, Monaghan
Our Lady of Mercy, Sligo
Crumlin Integrated
Drumlins Integrated
Knockavoe Special Education Needs School, Strabane
St. Columbkilles, Carrickmore
Ballysally PS, Coleraine
McClintock PS, Seskinore, Tyrone
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen
Glencraig Integrated
St. Oliver Plunketts, Belfast
St Teresa's Glen Road, Belfast
St. Therese, Lenamore, Derry
Nazareth House PS, Derry
St. Joseph's, Carryduff
New Buildings, Derry
Scoil Eanna, Ballybay
St Joseph's National School, Dundalk
St Aloysius, Lisburn
Denamona Primary School
McClintock Primary School
Marist Primary School
St Clare's Primary School, Cavan
St Oliver Plunkett, Strathfoyle, Derry
St. Anne's, Strabane
St. John's, Derry
Millburn Primary School, Coleraine
Ballinderry Primary School, Lisburn
Ballykelly Primary School, Limavady
St. Catherine's, Strabane

Appendix 2

Project publicity monitoring information

Publicity Method	Publicity Description	Insert Date	Publicity Cost
Newspapers and Newsletters			
Press release Derry News Circulation 7,482	Derry Kids Learn About Difference	06-Dec-2012	0.00
Press release Tyrone Constitution Newspaper weekly circulation 7,996	McClintock PS and Children's Centre Benefit from MIFC Respecting Difference Programme	21-Feb-2013	0.00
Ulster Herald article weekly circulation 12,311	Local media pick up of project launch event relevant to local participant.	11-Jul-2013	0.00
Tyrone Constitution article weekly circulation 7,996	Local media pick up of project launch relevant to local participant.	25-Jul-2013	0.00
Derry News Circulation 7,482	Local media pick up of project related civic engagement event.	12-Dec-2013	0.00
Coleraine Times Circulation 7,387	Local media pickup of project related civic engagement event.	25-Dec-2013	0.00
Coleraine Chronicle Circulation 14,841	Local Media pickup of Respecting Difference project civic engagement event.	02-Jan-2014	0.00
Waterside Hub E- newsletter	Article on the Project in the North West area	01-Jan-2013	0.00
NETQ6 Newsletter	Good practice article in Network for Quality in Early Childhood Education European Newsletter	01-Oct-2013	0.00
St. Catherine's College Newsletter	Reference to children's participation in new project materials	01-Dec-2014	0.00
Conferences			
Ulster Unionist Party Conference 2013	Participation at UUP Conference 2013 to promote project and associated activities.	19-Oct-2013	300.00
SDLP Conference 2013	Participation at SDLP annual party conference to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	08-Nov-2013	300.00
DUP Conference 2013	Participation at DUP annual conference to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	22-Nov-2013	350.00
NI21 Party Conference 2013	Participation at NI21 inaugural party conference to promote project and associated activities.	16-Nov-2013	200.00
Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2014	Participation at Ard Fheis, Wexford, to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	07-Feb-2014	250.00

Publicity Method	Publicity Description	Insert Date	Publicity Cost
Alliance Party NI Conference 2014	Participation at Alliance annual conference to showcase project and activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	22-Mar-2014	250.00
Ulster Unionist Party Conference 2014	Participation at UUP Conference 2014 to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	18-Oct-2014	300.00
SDLP Conference 2014	Participation at SDLP Conference 2014 to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	14-Nov-14	300.00
DUP Conference 2014	Participation at DUP annual conference to promote project and associated activities with MLAs, MPs and Councillors.	21-Nov-14	350.00
Events			
Launch of Respecting Difference in Education Project	Event involving MLA, schools, funder and representatives from the education and community sector.	10-May-2013	0.00
Eurochild General Assembly event	Opportunity to promote/share project information through participation at Eurochild member event	25-Jun-2013	0.00
Europe in Action conference	Presentation at parallel session about the role of the media in promoting diversity and valuing difference	15-19 May 2014	
NetQ6 Conference	Presentation at NetQ6 conference Italy	11-Sept-2014	0.00
Early Years Internal Magazine			
Early Years Magazine - June 2013 issue 28	Feature on project launch. Presently circulated to 1139 stakeholders hard copy & 339 electronically.	03-Jun-2013	0.00
Early Years Magazine - September 2013 issue 29	Feature on project updating stakeholders on progress. Presently circulated to 1764 stakeholders.	02-Sep-2013	0.00
Early Years Magazine (issue 30) - November 2013	Feature/update on project in EY Magazine. Presently circulated to 1,764 stakeholders	01-Nov-2013	0.00
Early Years Magazine (Issue 31) - February 2014	Feature/update on project in EY Magazine. Presently circulated to 1,764 stakeholders	02-Feb-2014	0.00
Early Years Social Media			
Early Years Facebook page of launch event	Facebook page containing images from project launch event.	23-May-2013	0.00
Early Years Facebook page	Update of Early Years Facebook page with posted images of party conference attendance both years	25-Nov-2013 to 21-Nov-2014	0.00
Early Years Website	Dedicated page to the project on organisation's main website		

Publicity Method	Publicity Description	Insert Date	Publicity Cost
School Websites			
Drumlins Integrated Primary School website	Webpage from Drumlins IPS website showcasing project related activity around Chinese New Year	31-Jan-2014	0.00
Crumlin Integrated Primary School website	Webpage from Crumlin IPS website showcasing project related activity around Chinese New Year	31-Jan-2014	0.00
Ballysally Primary School webpage	Webpage from Ballysally PS website showcasing project related activity around Chinese New Year	31-Jan-2014	0.00
Other Published Material			
NI4Kids	Advertisement of the project on the annual wall planner	Dec-2013	
Early Years Annual Report	Description of project developments	Annually	0.00
Additional Communication Methods			
Staff days	Annually in June and December each year	June and December 2012, 2013, 2014	0.00
Early Years AGM	Annual event where the programme will be promoted	2012-2014	0.00
Professional Content Meetings (PCM)	Occur monthly where updates are provided and developments discussed	2012-2014	0.00
International Network Meetings	Meet annually where project developments are presented	2012-2014	0.00