

# Prevention and early intervention in children and young people's services

## Promoting inclusion



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## Executive Summary

For more than a decade, The Atlantic Philanthropies, sometimes in conjunction with Government and other organisations, has invested over €96 million in agencies and community groups running 52 Prevention and Early Intervention programmes throughout the island of Ireland. This initiative includes a funding partnership between the Irish Government and The Atlantic Philanthropies to support three large-scale model prevention and early intervention projects in disadvantaged areas of Dublin (Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght West, youngballymun and Preparing for Life in North Dublin). The initiative supports services using a diverse range of approaches and working in a wide range of areas, such as parenting, children's learning, child health and development, behaviour and youth mentoring.

All services funded under the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative were required to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of their services in improving outcomes for children. These evaluations include randomised controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies and qualitative work. The goal was to help the communities in which they operate, but also to share their learning so that policy-makers and those who design, deliver and fund services for children can benefit from their experience and put it to work for other communities.

This report synthesises key messages for policy-makers and service managers about interventions to promote inclusion in children, based on three programmes that have been funded through the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The programmes include an Early Years media initiative – Respecting Difference; a primary school-based programme – PATHS®; and a community-based programme – BELONG.

This is one of a series of reports on what can be learned from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative about influencing different aspects of children's development.

### Summary of key learning points

- The programmes reviewed have proved effective in achieving positive outcomes. They have facilitated the development of children's self-esteem and social and emotional learning (SEL). The children involved in the programmes became more inclusive of others and were less likely to display racist attitudes towards peers. The programmes also provided the children with effective conflict-resolution skills.
- The children who took part in the programmes felt an enhanced sense of identity and belonging, and as a result are more engaged in activities taking place in their communities.
- The programmes and interventions reviewed in this report have demonstrated their capacity to affirm children's identity, increase cultural awareness and foster positive attitudes to diversity and inclusion. More research is necessary to show that these changes in attitudes and abilities can be maintained over time, beyond the duration of the programme or intervention, and therefore future evaluation studies should include longer term follow-up with children, teachers and families using the services.
- Since Northern Ireland is a relatively new post-conflict society, engaging with themes of diversity and inclusion has increased relevance. Nonetheless, negotiating with themes of difference can be complex and as a result, adequate support should be provided for educators and parents in order to maximise the impact of the goals of interventions and programmes.

- Addressing and challenging potential pre-existing prejudices of parents involved should form part of any intervention design or implementation process. This form of intercultural awareness can help prepare parents to fully engage with the topic with their children and ensures that positive attitudes are being modelled in the home.
- The skill of the practitioner in working with children and their parents and his or her ability to interact and engage with sensitive content is a key factor in the potential success of an intervention. Training is required to increase the capacity of professionals to engage effectively with children and their parents to ensure that stereotypes and prejudices can be challenged with the appropriate skills and attitudes recommended by anti-racism training programmes. This training acts as an agent of change and will have a sustainable impact as the new skills will be applied by practitioners working with subsequent groups of children.
- Pre-schools, schools, after-school activities and youth clubs are appropriate settings for running diversity and inclusion programmes with children. There is potential for the interventions reviewed in this report to be replicated in similar settings in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- The programmes target children of a variety of age groups and it is necessary to ensure that all age ranges are included in an intervention they may benefit from.
- Interagency partnership and collaboration in service delivery can enhance the outcomes of an intervention due to the fact that practitioners support one another and share good practice across interventions. Furthermore, such cooperation may contribute to the possibility of an intervention becoming more sustainable since there is increased commitment to achieving successful outcomes.
- Services should examine which children are taking part in the programmes, as well as monitoring which children from their target group are not participating in the programme. Undertaking active outreach to these groups has the potential to maximise positive outcomes and ensures that children from the target group can benefit from the service on offer.
- Children benefit from interventions to promote diversity and inclusion from Early Years interventions and in pre-school settings. In order to maximise the potential for positive outcomes as evidenced by the three programmes, similar interventions and programmes should continue at primary level and in after-school activities.
- Legislation and policy statements in Ireland and Northern Ireland reflect a commitment to promote the inclusion and integration of members of ethnic minority groups. The three interventions under review are well-matched to meet the principles and objectives of recent policy documents, ensuring that children are supported to respect diversity, include others and feel a sense of belonging to their community.
- Strong policy frameworks are already in existence in both jurisdictions. In order for the education system to develop in relation to diversity in society, objectives from governmental and departmental policies and strategies must be implemented, thereby creating the necessary conditions for changes in practice.
- Programmes such as those reviewed in this report ought to be supported by school structures and policies that promote diversity and inclusion, challenge racism and provide positive affirmation of the identities of minority ethnic groups.
- There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children. Programmes and services need to be selected not only on the basis of impact, but also taking account of the service users’ needs, the most appropriate mode of delivery and the most appropriate setting for that service. Media initiatives, community-based and school-

based programmes are all effective methodologies to use when carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children.

- The learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative provides useful knowledge about the effectiveness of different evidence-informed approaches to changing children's attitudes to inclusion and how to implement these effectively so that the best outcomes can be achieved.

## Section 1: Background to the report

### The Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative

For more than a decade, The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) has been funding an initiative to promote prevention and early intervention for children and youth in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This has involved investing, sometimes jointly with Government, in a cluster of organisations that have developed and delivered services based on evidence of what works. The Atlantic Philanthropies has since invested some €96 million in 20 agencies and community groups running 52 prevention and early intervention programmes in Ireland and Northern Ireland. These include a funding partnership between the Irish Government and The Atlantic Philanthropies to support three large-scale model prevention and early intervention projects in disadvantaged areas of Dublin (Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght West, youngballymun and Preparing for Life in North Dublin). The Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative supports services working in a wide range of areas, such as early childhood, parenting, children's learning, child health, behaviour and social inclusivity.

### 'Capturing the Learning' project

A condition of funding required the organisations to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of their services in improving outcomes for children. The goal was to help the communities in which they operate, but also to share their learning so that policy-makers and those who design, deliver and fund services for children can benefit from their experience and put it to work for other communities.

The 'Capturing the Learning' project, led by the Centre for Effective Services, involves a process of synthesising the collective learning from many of the projects in the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative: collating data and information from multiple sources and perspectives, and distilling out overarching messages about what works. A website for the project can be found at [www.effectiveservices.org/prevention/early-intervention](http://www.effectiveservices.org/prevention/early-intervention), which gives further details on each of the innovations, planning reports, implementation reports, evaluation reports and other useful resources.

This is one of a series of reports synthesising what we have learned from the initiative so far about promoting inclusion. It draws on three currently available evaluation reports and will be updated between now and 2015, when more evaluations relevant to inclusion become available from the initiative.

Other reports from the 'Capturing the Learning' project focus on what we have learnt from the initiative about influencing parenting, children's learning, improving child behaviour and children's health and development. A report is also available examining what the organisations learned about choosing, developing and implementing innovations and evaluating their outcomes (Sneddon *et al*, 2012).

## Structure of the report

This report summarises the key learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative and from international evidence on how to promote inclusion with children. It also outlines the relevant statistics, policy information and key points of discussion that have emerged from the inclusion work conducted with children and, in some cases, practitioners and parents. Following this introduction, the report is organised in four sections, as follows:

**Section 2** makes the argument for the importance of promoting inclusion among children. It is based on demographic information illustrating the growing diversity in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the international research evidence about the importance of inclusion work and the negative impact exclusion can have on children and society. It highlights the important role parents and educators can play in promoting inclusion. This section is intended as a brief overview of the key evidence and policy documents, rather than a comprehensive review of the literature. More detail can be found in the literature reviews included in the evaluation reports from the three programmes delivered through the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative.

**Section 3** describes the three programmes reviewed in the report and the main findings emerging from the evaluations conducted.

**Section 4** synthesises the findings from the three programmes under review and highlights the key issues and common themes that have emerged from delivering these programmes locally. The key processes that lead to similar results are outlined, providing valuable learning for those responsible for developing and delivering preventive and early intervention services.

**Section 5** presents the overall conclusions and the key learning points emerging from the evaluations conducted, to promote inclusive attitudes and behaviours in children.

The report concludes with a list of **References** that informed the report and an **Appendix** presents examples of successful inclusion initiatives both at home and abroad.

## Section 2: Why is it important to engage in inclusion work with children?

### Introduction

The interventions, programmes and practices employed today by schools, parents and community services can have far-reaching effects throughout the course of children's lives, which are beneficial not only to children and their families, but also to their communities and the wider societal and political systems in which we live.

### Demographics

Society in Ireland and Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly diverse. According to the 2011 Census, 14% of the population in Ireland identify as an ethnic minority other than White Irish (CSO, 2012) and 5% in Northern Ireland identify as an ethnic minority, other than British/Irish/Northern Irish (NISRA, 2011). 11% of the population were not born in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, the largest ethnic minority groups identify as Chinese, followed by Indian, Asian and Black African. There are approximately 1,300 members of the Traveller Community living in Northern Ireland, representing 0.07% of the overall population. Travellers' mortality rate is 15 years less than the general population and the child mortality rate up to the age of 10 is ten times that of the general population (Department of Health and Children, 2000). Just under half of all Travellers feel discriminated against (*ibid*).

The largest ethnic minority groups in Ireland are from Poland, followed by the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Latvia and Nigeria. Research by the Economic and Social Research Institute and Equality Authority (ESRI and EA, 2012) identified that black African immigrants report the highest levels of discrimination. In Ireland, 29,573 people (0.6% of the population) are members of the Traveller Community. 55% of those surveyed do not stay in school beyond the age of 15; this is in comparison with 11% of the general population. Since 2002, there is a considerable increase in the number of Travellers educated to lower secondary level (CSO, 2012). In Ireland, the Traveller Community does not have official ethnic minority status.

### Racist incidents

In Northern Ireland last year, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) recorded a total of 2,040 sectarian or racist incidents, and a total of 1,343 sectarian or racist crimes (PSNI, 2012). Records show that the number of 'hate-motivated' incidents and crimes has dropped since 2005; however, there are concerns about the under-reporting of racist incidences. An Equality Awareness survey carried out by the Northern Irish Equality Commission in 2011 measured general attitudes towards specific groups. For the most part, attitudes towards different groups were positive; however, 30% of those surveyed displayed negative attitudes towards Travellers, 31% displayed negative attitudes towards Eastern European migrant workers and 13% displayed negative attitudes towards Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups (ECNI, 2012).

In Ireland, the Garda Síochána recorded 142 racist crimes (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2012). A 2012 report by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Equality Authority shows that black people are four times more likely to experience discrimination and racism than

White Irish people (ESRI and EA, 2012). The non-governmental organisation, European Network Against Racism Ireland, expressed its concerns in relation to the under-reporting of racist incidences and the absence of legislation on racist crime. Currently, it is at the discretion of Judges to consider racist motive as a factor when determining a sentence in a case (see [www.enar.org](http://www.enar.org)).

Due to demographic changes and prevalence rates of reported incidents of sectarianism or racism, initiatives and programmes that affirm diverse identities and promote positive attitudes to diversity and inclusion are vital for successful integration of children and adults from minority ethnic groups. The following sections outline some of the key elements of diversity and inclusion. Information is provided about how interventions can positively impact a child's self-esteem and sense of belonging, and about the importance of encouraging children to include others from a variety of backgrounds. In addition, the potential negative impacts on a child who is a victim of discrimination or exclusion are discussed, such as anxiety and low academic achievement.

### **The importance of identity, self-esteem and belonging**

Our identities are multifaceted and extend from a personal/individual level to a group, social and national level. Identity should not be simplified; rather, it should be viewed as complex and ever-changing (Hall and Du Gay, 1996). Rather than being singular, our identities can be multiple, incorporating aspects such as, among others, gender, religion, sexual orientation, affiliations, family status/background, ethnicity and nationality (Parekh, 2008; Youval-Davis, 2006). There is a tendency to evaluate one's own membership group (the 'in-group') more favourably than a non-membership group (the 'out-group'). How similar or dissimilar children view other children can impact on their behaviour towards that child and whether or not they will include them (Cameron *et al*, 2001; Stephan, 2008). Although empirical evidence has been inconclusive, there is a general consensus among social psychologists that there is a link between feeling a sense of belonging to a group and positive self-esteem (Kim, 1994). Children as young as 3 years of age have been shown to exhibit racial prejudice (Brown, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994). Consequently, programmes and initiatives that address positive attitudes to diversity have an appropriate place in the area of pre-schools, schools and after-school activities/groups in order to challenge stereotypes and prejudices, foster inclusive attitudes and empower children with the skills they may require to challenge discrimination and/or become resilient to discrimination.

### **Perception of self and the role of the parent/educator**

For children, development takes place in the world that surrounds them. How they perceive themselves within that world will depend on the messages that are given to them from people in their environment. As self-identity and self-esteem are linked to achieving equality in education (Griffiths, 1993), it is crucial that within a child's early development there is a place for his or her identity to be affirmed.

According to Devine (2011, p. 135): 'For many [children] tension exists as they straddle diverse worlds, seeking approval and recognition from teachers and parents, while simultaneously retaining status and recognition from peers. Participation in child and youth cultures brings with it relief and autonomy from the constraints and obligations of formal schooling, but challenges vulnerabilities in relation to the assertion of "self", "otherness", "belongingness" and relations with peers. In this scenario, the situation for migrant children is especially challenging.'

The role of families, communities, Early Years settings and schools in contradicting and counteracting negative stereotypes and affirming diverse identities can assist children from majority and minority ethnic groups in building a positive perception of themselves (Nieto, 1999). As schools are microcosms of society, they can be representative of how society portrays attitudes towards inclusion. Accordingly, educators, in particular, require training in the skills necessary to engage children in discussion, activities and interventions that promote inclusion. An awareness of personal prejudices (conscious or subconscious) and a discussion around the same will enable educators to move forward to acquire the skills necessary to undertake this type of work with children (Howard, 2003; Devine, 2011). Since low expectations from teachers can have a negative effect on student motivation and performance (Nusche, 2009), it is essential that teachers maintain high expectations of all children in order for them to achieve their full potential as they progress within the educational system.

In parallel with diversity and inclusion work that takes place in the school, conversations in the home around themes of diversity and viewing difference as a positive thing can reinforce messages of inclusion. By modelling inclusive attitudes, parents can assist children to question stereotypes and develop an awareness of responding appropriately to diversity within society. Maintaining a link between the school and the home when carrying out programmes about diversity and inclusion can strengthen for children the importance of respecting difference and including others.

### **Racism – direct and indirect (and prejudice reduction)**

The concepts of inclusion and respect for difference are inextricably linked with reducing prejudice. Prejudice usually refers to negative attitudes towards others and bias may manifest itself as behaviour (discrimination), attitude (prejudice) or cognition (stereotyping) (Hewstone *et al*, 2002). A recent development in the literature on prejudice has been around morality and group identity. The social reasoning developmental (SRD) perspective argues that children develop moral principles of fairness and equality from an early age, while they also develop implicit and explicit prejudice toward others from different social groups (Rutland *et al*, 2010).

For children from majority and minority ethnic groups, interventions designed to enhance their inclusion of others, and promote respect for difference and a sense of belonging, can equip them with confidence in their own cultural identity. Such programmes give children the skills to counteract and/or manage any prejudice they might encounter and can play a vital role in achieving prejudice reduction.

Discrimination comes in many guises, from prejudice to racism. Connolly and Keenan (2001) purport that racism may be direct or indirect. Direct racism manifests itself as verbal or physical abuse, whereas indirect racism is less obvious. Indirect racism manifests itself in such actions as staring, distancing and name-calling, and it involves ‘an additional set of processes that tend to feed into and reinforce the violation of dignity experienced by many minority ethnic people. However, as opposed to direct racist harassment, these processes are distinguished by the fact that they are more likely to be subconscious or covert and where the racial motivation is in doubt or completely unintentional’ (*ibid*, p. 3).

Racism features in schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland (Devine *et al*, 2008; Connolly and Keenan, 2002). Research conducted by Devine *et al* (2008) in a number of Irish primary schools showed that

racism occurs in schools and that ethnic identity was a significant factor in relation to how children negotiated the inclusion and exclusion of their peers. The impact of racism on children can result in low self-esteem, anxiety and a decreased motivation to interact with peers (*see below*).

## **What are the benefits of inclusion work for children?**

The report *Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools* by the Department of Education and Science (2002, p. 34) states: 'Young people should be enabled to appreciate the richness of a diversity of cultures and be supported in practical ways to recognise and to challenge prejudice and discrimination where they exist.'

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes of developing social and emotional competencies in children. This is best done through effective classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad parent and community involvement in programme planning, implementation and evaluation (Greenberg *et al*, 2003). Effective SEL programming begins in pre-school and continues throughout school. There are five key components of SEL programmes: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. In particular, the social awareness component fosters 'the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports' (CASEL, 2012, p. 9). An analysis of school-based, universal SEL programmes found SEL participants showed significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and academic performance (Durlak *et al*, 2011).

Children benefit from strategies to promote inclusion and respect if they have been enabled to learn and engage with the world around them from birth. In line with the developmental stage of the child, interventions are inclined to focus on the early childhood years between 3 and 8 years to provide children with the social and cognitive skills needed to work and play with their peers (Naudeau *et al*, 2011). The social reasoning developmental (SRD) perspective argues that whether children begin to show prejudice depends on the interplay between their emerging morality, how they understand group life and their desire to act in accordance with certain group identities.

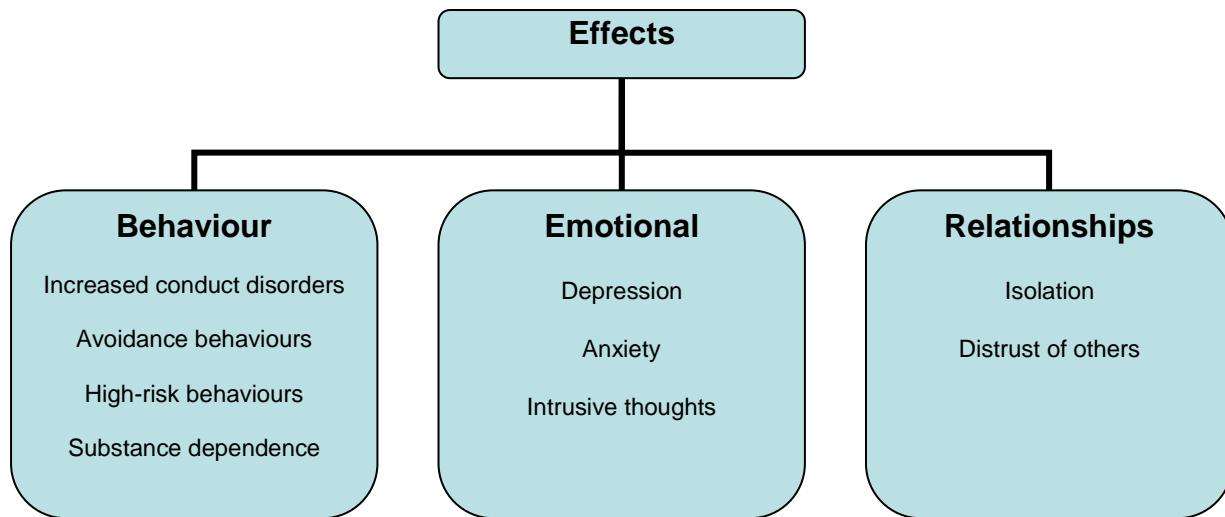
Children who are supported to engage in a positive way with peers from diverse backgrounds will benefit on a number of levels, including enhanced empathy, self-esteem, sense of belonging and improved interpersonal and intercultural skills. Developing a sense of empathy among children can be effective in helping them resolve intergroup conflicts and generate more positive attitudes towards others (Stephan, 2008).

## **What are the potential effects of not engaging in inclusion work with children?**

To be a target of prejudice or discrimination has a negative impact on the individual (Dion, 2002). Likely outcomes include negative emotional, behavioural and relational effects on children and adults (*see Figure 1*). As described by Dovidio and Gaertner (2004), *emotional responses* may include intrusive and self-defeating thoughts, depression and anxiety; *behavioural effects* may include increased conduct disorders, avoidance behaviours, high-risk behaviours and substance dependence (e.g. drugs, alcohol); and *relational effects* include isolation and distrust of others. In the case of children from ethnic minority groups, the potential negative impacts of being a victim/target of

prejudice and discrimination include low academic achievement, social exclusion, low self-esteem and low self-efficacy (a belief in one's capabilities).

**Figure 1: Effects of prejudice or discrimination on individual**



Source: Adapted from Dovidio and Gaertner (2004)

Findings from research conducted in Ireland have reported that children from minority ethnic groups can experience difficulties integrating into schools (Keogh and Whyte, 2003) and communities (Guerin, 2003). It is important to open lines of communication for children to process their racial cognitions (how they view race) in order to stimulate development to more advanced conceptions of race and ethnicity (Quintana *et al*, 2004). Engaging children with themes around diversity and facilitating their inclusion of others will enable them to acquire the social skills and behaviour necessary to include their peers and to participate fully in society. Concerns exist around the achievement gap between students from the majority ethnic group and the minority ethnic group. A number of schools have been successful in narrowing the achievement gap through a variety of strategies and whole-school interventions (Williams, 2011).

### **Policy framework for promoting inclusion**

Ireland and Northern Ireland have followed different trajectories of cultural diversity. Northern Ireland has emerged from a sectarian conflict with people from the two religious majority groups living alongside people from emerging ethnic minority groups. Due to the historical context in Northern Ireland, considerable focus is placed by key stakeholders on promoting cohesion within communities and a number of programmes are in place to encourage positive interaction among people of diverse backgrounds. Ireland has traditionally been an emigrant society, but in recent times increased immigration has resulted in greater cultural diversity, with the Irish government advocating for a model of integration. The policy landscape is coming to terms with increasing societal diversity both north and south within the island of Ireland. There is also a greater focus on the voice of the child.

The following section outlines the current situation in relation to the most relevant race and ethnicity legislation and policy for both adults and children from minority ethnic groups.

## International and European contexts

As members of the United Nations and the European Union, Ireland and Northern Ireland have subscribed to a number of significant rights, race and equality documents, most notably the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Adopted by the United Nations in 1989, the UNCRC sets up a framework to ensure that every child (aged 0-18 years) can lead a life with respect, dignity and freedom. Article 29 of the Convention states that ‘the education of the child shall be directed to ... the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own’. Both the UK (including Northern Ireland) and Ireland have signed and ratified the UNCRC and therefore are committed to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children on the island of Ireland.

## Northern Ireland –Legislative and policy initiatives promoting equality

In Northern Ireland, there is no one Equality Act (the UK Equality Act 2010 does not extend to Northern Ireland). In place of one Act, there are a number of legislative documents and Acts with similar targets focused on the area of equality and inclusion.<sup>1</sup> A variety of organisations work to monitor and promote equality and inclusion in Northern Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

### The Children’s Rights Agenda

In Northern Ireland, the **Children and Young People’s Unit** (CYPU), within the Equality, Human Rights and Governance Division of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), was established to ensure that the rights and needs of children and young people living in Northern Ireland are given high priority. An independent office has been established to promote the rights of children as listed in the UNCRC and is led by the **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**, who took up office in 2007.

The policy document ***Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*** is a 10-year outcomes-focused strategy (2006-2016) for children and young people in Northern Ireland (OFMDFM, 2006). Within the outcomes framework, one outcome identifies that children should contribute positively to community and society, and another identifies that children should be living in a society that respects their rights. Among other pledges, the document pledges to ‘ensure that ... children and young people are supported to grow together in a shared, inclusive society where they respect diversity and difference’ (*ibid*, p. 17).

### Changes in education

The educational system in Northern Ireland remains largely segregated along religious grounds, with over 90% of children attending either a Catholic or a Protestant school. In 1987, a voluntary organisation, the **Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education** (NICIE), was set up to develop, support and promote ‘integrated education’ in Northern Ireland. The underpinning principle of integrated education is the belief that bringing children from all faiths and none together in a shared

<sup>1</sup> Race Relation Order 1997; Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; Racial Equality Strategy 2005-2010; A Shared Future 2006; and Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission; Northern Ireland Equality Commission; Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED); and Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities.

learning environment will facilitate understanding, respect and acceptance. There are currently 6.5% of children in Northern Ireland enrolled in integrated schools (NICIE, 2013).

More recently, there has been interest in developing a new model of 'shared education'. In July 2012, the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland announced the appointment of a Ministerial Advisory Group to advance this concept. Shared education refers to the organisation and delivery of education to meet the needs of learners of differing community background, race, ethnicity, political opinion and socio-economic status, involving schools and other education providers of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements. The Advisory Group engaged in a widespread consultation with stakeholders, conducted visits to schools, colleges and educational institutions, and engaged directly with parents, children and young people, as well as reviewing the literature in relation to shared education and its effectiveness. From these activities, the Advisory Group in March 2013 published its ***Report of the Ministerial Advisory Group: Advancing Shared Education*** (Connolly *et al*, 2013), in which a number of recommendations were made regarding the advancement of shared education in the region, taking recent policy changes into account. The report presented 7 key principles and 20 recommendations, the latter including, among others: the establishment of a central unit in the Education and Skills Authority to take responsibility for the promotion of shared education; provision of a shared education funding premium for schools; relevant continuous professional development for practitioners; and an independent review of current curriculum elements on the topic.

## Ireland – Legislative and policy initiatives promoting equality

In Ireland, there is a selection of Acts outlining a variety of legislative measures intended to prohibit discrimination and promote equality. Legislation includes the **Equal Status Acts 2000-2004** and the **Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004**. Two key policy statements – ***Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan Against Racism, 2005-2008*** (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2005) and ***Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management*** (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008) – expand on strategies and principles aimed at developing a more inclusive society that promotes the integration of ethnic minority groups. No review or implementation analysis of either policy statements has been carried out to date.

## The Children's Rights Agenda

In Ireland, children's issues remain the responsibility of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). In 2007, the predecessor of the DCYA, the Office of the Minister for Children, published ***The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook*** (OMC, 2007). This policy document outlines 7 national outcomes for children in Ireland. These were subsequently amalgamated into 5 outcomes, with Outcome 5 directly linked to how children engage with diversity and inclusion – it relates to children being part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community, and included and participating in society.

The **Ombudsman for Children's Office** was established under the Ombudsman for Children Act in 2002. The role of the Ombudsman for Children is to promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of children and young people under the age of 18. The **National Children's Strategy, 2000-2010** outlined goals for improving the lives of children in Ireland. The strategy identified that 'children with disabilities, Traveller children and children from ethnic minority communities, such as refugees and other immigrants, have special needs which have to be considered and addressed collectively

and individually, as required' (Department of Health and Children, 2000, p. 23). The **National Children and Young People's Policy Framework, 2013-2017** is currently undergoing a consultation process.

### **Changes in education**

The majority of children in Ireland attend schools with a denominational ethos. Approximately 90% of children attend a Catholic school, 6% attend schools of diverse denominational ethos and 2% of children are enrolled in multidenominational Educate Together schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2012). Since 2008, 5 new Community National Schools (CNS) have opened that also have a multidenominational ethos. The main difference between the CNS schools and the Educate Together schools is that separate faith formation is offered within the school day for children whose parents opt for a doctrinal curriculum. In Ireland, there are no non-denominational primary schools.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established by the Minister for Education in 2012 in order to ensure that the current education system is offering sufficient choice to the population of Ireland and to determine, if and where possible, how some denominational schools might divest patronage in order to meet the growing needs of communities in Ireland. Research is underway in a variety of towns around Ireland to ascertain parental preferences in relation to school ethos. Initial reports indicate that parental preferences show a demand for a variety of educational settings, with Educate Together being shown as the preferred choice of alternative patron.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published ***Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools*** in 2005, which provides relevant information for those involved in primary education; teachers, school managers, school support staff and policy-makers. The background knowledge, sample lessons and criteria included in the guidelines assist in the development of a school culture that is inclusive, respectful and aware of the needs of the community. Department of Education in-service training for teachers on the implementation of the guidelines has been minimal.

The ***Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2016*** aims to ensure that all children experience an education that, as the Education Act 1998 states, 'respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership' (Government of Ireland, 1998) and that all education providers are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm (Department of Education and Skills, 2010, p. 2). The strategy identifies 10 key components of intercultural education and 5 high-level goals, the latter being (*ibid*, p. 56):

1. Enable the adoption of a whole institution approach to creating an intercultural learning environment.
2. Build the capacity of education providers to develop an intercultural learning environment.
3. Support students to become proficient in the language of instruction.
4. Encourage and promote active partnership, engagement and effective communication between education providers, students, parents and communities.
5. Promote and evaluate data gathering and monitoring so that policy and decision-making is evidence-based.

## Section 3: The Programmes and Findings

The three programmes reviewed in this report – Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference, PATHS® and BELONG – are part of the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative. In their different ways, they attempted to promote inclusion and diversity with different age groups using different approaches. Summaries of the programmes are presented below, outlining their objectives, target groups and duration, in addition to an overview of the main findings from each of the evaluations.

The programmes worked with a range of ages, from 3 to 12 years, and in a variety of settings including community, primary school and pre-school settings (*see Table 1*). One of the programmes, PATHS®, is an evidence-based programme developed in the USA; it was replicated with fidelity and adapted to relate to local context by including additional material on ‘mutual respect and understanding’ (MRU). The Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference and the BELONG programmes were locally developed programmes to address specific issues in children’s lives. The Media Initiative and PATHS® are universal programmes, while BELONG is a targeted programme for children from Traveller and BME (black and minority ethnic) backgrounds, which aims to increase their cultural confidence, competence and participation in their community. The Media Initiative also aimed to increase awareness and understanding of inclusion among Early Years practitioners and parents.

It is important to note that the three programmes did not use the same evaluation methods to investigate outcomes. PATHS® and the Media Initiative both used randomised controlled trials in addition to qualitative methods. The findings reported here for BELONG are interim and represent findings from the early implementation and interim operational reports using a mixture of interviews, case studies and surveys. The final evaluation report is due in Summer 2013.

With the above differences in mind, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between the outcomes achieved by the three programmes. Table 2, at the end of this section under ‘Overview of impact’, summarises the main results from the evaluations conducted so far, differentiating, where possible, between significant improvements, positive trends or no differences in outcomes.

**Table 1: Overview of the 3 programmes promoting inclusion**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service/ Programme</b>	<b>Target group(s)</b>	<b>Duration/ intensity</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Early Years</b>	<b>Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference</b>	Children aged 3-5, their parents and teachers	One academic year and 5 one-minute media messages for 3 weeks, 3 times per year	This programme uses a combination of cartoon media messages around diversity with an Early Years programme. It aims to promote positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences among young children, practitioners and parents. The messages also address bullying behaviours.
<b>South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)</b>	<b>BELONG</b>	Black and minority ethnic (BME) children aged 7-12	Programmes varied in duration and intensity	A family support programme with 3 interlinked sub-programmes of activities on Cultural Confidence and Competence; Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying; and Education. It aims to promote a sense of belonging through increasing cultural confidence and competence, increasing participation in clubs and schools, increasing the educational achievement of Traveller children, reducing bullying and racial bullying, and increasing resilience.
<b>Barnardos Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS®) Programme</b>	Children aged 5-11	Delivered each academic school year by key stage (class), taking 3 academic years to complete.	Universal whole-school social and emotional learning (SEL) programme that seeks to change/build on a school's ethos and culture. It involves scripted lessons delivered by teachers during normal class time, which aims to help children develop self-control, self-esteem, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem solving skills.

## **Early Years – Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme Background**

Early Years, the organisation for young children, is a non-profit-making, membership-based organisation that has been working since 1965 to promote high-quality childcare for children (up to 12 years of age) and their families. Early Years provides information and training for parents, childcare providers, employers and local authorities. The Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme was developed by Early Years in partnership with the US-based Peace

Initiatives Institute (Pii) and is part of the Coral Initiative (Children, Outcomes, Research, Action Learning), a programme developed by Early Years to track how the work of the organisation and member groups improves long-term outcomes for young children, using evidence-based practice and policy advocacy.

### **Programme delivery**

The Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme is a pre-school programme for children aged 3-4. It seeks to raise awareness around issues of diversity and difference among children, Early Years childhood practitioners and parents, with the aim of promoting positive attitudes and behaviours around diversity by focusing on the three themes of disability, race and cultural differences.

The programme combines the use of 5 one-minute cartoon media messages, broadcast on television in Ireland and Northern Ireland for 3 weeks at a time, 3 times per year. The characters in the cartoons are shown accepting and respecting those from the various different traditions that have often been associated with sectarianism, as well as including children who live in minority ethnic communities, children who have a disability and/or physical difference, and children from the Traveller community. The messages in the cartoons endeavour to foster positive attitudes to physical, social, cultural and ethnic differences among young children, practitioners and parents. The messages are reinforced in Early Years settings through the use of resources and interactive activities that prompt young children to talk about their feelings and attitudes towards difference. The practitioners involved in the initiative are trained by Early Years to deliver the programme and work with an accompanying resource manual.

### **Aims**

The aims of the programme are categorised by the participating groups.

The outcomes identified for **children** included:

- **socio-emotional development** (increased ability to recognise emotions in others, instances of exclusion and to identify how being excluded makes someone feel);
- **awareness of cultural differences** (increased ability to recognise the Irish Tricolour flag, the British Union flag, a St. Patrick's Day Parade and an Orange Parade);
- **inclusive behaviour** (increased desire to join in a St. Patrick's Day or an Orange Parade, and an increased willingness to be inclusive of others).

The outcomes identified for **practitioners** and **parents** included:

- **an increased recognition** of the importance of doing diversity work with young children;
- **an increased confidence** in dealing with diversity issues;
- **a reduction in prejudices** (particularly sectarianism, but also prejudices held towards other groups);
- **increased levels of empathy** towards others.

### **Evaluation**

A randomised controlled trial was conducted in 74 pre-school settings with 1, 181 children, together with 868 parents and 232 practitioners. The child outcomes were assessed using a series of

standardised tasks in which children were shown a variety of pictures and photographs and asked to identify and describe what they saw. In-depth qualitative case studies were carried out in the 74 locations (54 settings in Northern Ireland and 20 settings in Ireland). Parents and practitioners completed a questionnaire that consisted of valid and reliable measures of the outcomes.

### **Findings**

The randomised controlled trial found evidence that the Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme was having positive effects in relation to all three of the socio-emotional development outcomes; positive effects in relation to each of the four outcomes relating to the recognition of cultural events and symbols associated with the Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland (findings were equally strong for children in settings in Ireland); and evidence of inclusive behaviour (children were more likely to express an interest in taking part in Orange parades and St. Patrick's Day parades). However, no evidence was found that the programme had any effect on children's willingness to be inclusive of others in general, nor was any evidence found that it impacted on their willingness to be inclusive of the children different to themselves. The effects tended to be consistent across the whole sample of children and similar for children from differing socio-economic backgrounds and for Catholic and Protestant children in Northern Ireland and also for children in Ireland. Finally, the programme was found to be robust in that it achieved similar effects regardless of the quality of the setting that delivered it and minor changes in the degree to which the setting delivered the programme consistently.

### **Conclusion**

For children, the programme was successful in improving socio-emotional development and cultural awareness. In relation to the specified parental and practitioner outcomes, potentially encouraging signs of positive change were found concerning increases in their awareness of the need to undertake diversity work with young children and also in relation to their confidence in their own ability to address such issues with their children.

The findings relating to the parental and practitioner outcomes cannot be considered sound evidence since the evidence produced was not statistically significant, potentially as a result of the small-scale size of the group surveyed. However, the evidence suggests that further research would be beneficial in this area.

## **Barnardos NI – Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS®)**

### **Background**

The Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS®) Programme emerged in Northern Ireland following a comprehensive process of pupils' needs analysis and community consultation. PATHS® NI is based on the international PATHS® training curriculum (see [www.PATHS®training.com](http://www.PATHS®training.com)). Through activities based on understanding emotions and increasing the vocabulary linked to emotions, the PATHS® curriculum facilitates the development of self-control, self-esteem, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem-solving skills among children aged 5-11. In Northern Ireland, it links with the current Personal, Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) curriculum and works positively to promote whole-school behaviour policies. Lessons for each class grouping are available and the programme can be used either at class-level only or implemented as a whole-school approach.

Due to historical and political implications in the area, an additional element to the statutory strand of the Northern Ireland curriculum was incorporated into PATHS® NI. This component is Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU), addressing issues of ‘mutual respect and understanding’ (MRU). MRU consists of lessons focusing on accepting people who are different and becoming part of a local and global community. The PATHS® Programme was adapted to Northern Ireland and was selected by the participating school communities as the best fit of several options to meet pupils’ needs.

### **Programme delivery**

The PATHS® NI whole-school approach was implemented in 6 of 12 participating schools in the Craigavon and Lurgan areas of Northern Ireland. The 6 schools that did not implement PATHS® continued on as normal, but were encouraged not to implement any new related programmes for the purposes of the evaluation. These 6 schools then implemented the programme for the third year of the evaluation period. The resource-intensive programme caters for children aged 5-11. The curriculum consists of teacher-delivered, age-appropriate lessons dealing with recognising emotions, expressing feelings, coping with negative feelings (such as anger), reacting to social problem-solving situations and fostering mutual respect and understanding. Of the 12 schools that agreed to participate, 6 were randomly assigned to implement the PATHS® NI Programme, while the other 6 continued with the PDMU. All schools in Northern Ireland are required to incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) as part of the curriculum.

Ongoing training for teachers delivering PATHS® NI is provided by PATHS® coordinators. The schools serve populations of mostly working class pupils, with the demographics indicating the majority of schools served at-risk populations (over one-fourth of enrollees).

### **Aims**

The PATHS® NI project aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- increased mutual respect and understanding;
- improved behaviour;
- reduced bullying.

### **Evaluation**

A mixed-methods approach was employed for the evaluation of the PATHS® NI Programme. This included a cluster randomised treatment, whereby 6 schools were randomly selected to carry out the intervention and the children in 6 other schools were randomly selected as a comparison group. Evaluation methods included individually administered assessments of children’s skills at recognising emotions and dealing with social conflict; observations of teachers’ classroom behaviour and of children’s classroom and play activity behaviour; teachers’ ratings of children’s social behaviours; and interviews with different participant and stakeholder groups. The analysis separated the children into a younger (aged 5-7) and an older (aged 8-11) group.

### **Findings**

Significant improvements were reported for the younger group in relation to empathy, coping and cooperation, actively helping others, mood, identifying emotions correctly and providing competent

responses to challenging social situations. Significant improvements were found for the older group in relation to empathy and cooperation, reflectivity and perseverance, fighting and aggression, mood, providing competent explanations of why a social conflict occurred and what one should do in response, demonstrating MRU skills by describing oneself as (a) not inclined to taunt people who are different and (b) inclined to spend time with people who are different. The children had acquired the skills to resolve intergroup conflict.

Significant improvements were found for the younger and older groups in relation to identifying emotions/feelings. A higher percentage of positive emotions/feelings and a lower percentage of negative emotions/feelings were reported among the children. The programme was successful in providing competent coping responses to social situations involving the need to remain calm.

Observations of classroom teaching and pupil behaviours during play periods showed only isolated and limited differences in outcomes between the children involved in PATHS® NI and the children in the comparison schools. Interview responses by school principals, teachers, programme coordinators and parents indicated that implementation of PATHS® NI had increased the social and emotional learning (SEL) of the children relative to the prior year and, overall, the delivery of the programme stayed true to its design.

## **Conclusion**

Principals, teachers, coordinators, and parents were all positive about PATHS® NI and wanted it to continue in future years, with principals reporting that the programme was having a positive effect on school ethos. All groups of respondents observed improvements in pupils' behaviour, self-esteem, interactions with adults and other children, awareness of feelings, and their ability to deal with anger, frustration and social conflicts.

## **STEP – BELONG**

### **Background**

The BELONG Programme is a family support programme dedicated to promoting a sense of belonging among black and minority ethnic (BME) children and young people in the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Southern Area of Northern Ireland. In this instance, children from the Traveller Community were specifically targeted as part of the BME group. The South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) is BELONG's anchor organisation and contract holder for the BELONG programme. STEP does this on behalf of an interagency BELONG partnership of statutory, voluntary and community members which originated from a working group on the needs and rights of BME children. The BELONG Programme considers itself a tentative model, a model informed by existing evidence but seeking to generate new evidence. The BELONG model is informed by both an ecological and child rights' approach and is committed to a social cohesion agenda.

### **Programme delivery**

The BELONG Programme is based on prevention at a wider societal level, through supporting change in the wider environment in relation to BME children. It operates through the local community and schools to promote more culturally competent school and play/leisure environments, and at an individual level through direct support to BME children by providing them with better tools to address the issues which might inhibit positive outcomes. The intervention is targeted at children, young people and their families who have been identified by professionals in 14 participating

agencies (in the health, education and community sectors) as being in need of additional support. The service is aimed at BME children aged 7-12 and is part of an overall strategy for 0-18 year-old BME children and young people in the area. The BELONG Programme has three sub-programmes: Cultural Confidence and Competence; Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying; and Education. It is BELONG's intention that the sub-programmes will collectively have an impact at an overall programme level.

## Aims

BELONG's overarching aim is to promote a sense of belonging through the following set of more specific objectives:

- to increase cultural confidence and competence;
- to increase participation in clubs and schools;
- to increase educational achievement of Traveller children;
- to reduce bullying and racial bullying;
- to increase resilience(coping skills).

## Evaluation

A formative and summative evaluation is underway in order to assess the outcomes achieved by initiatives running at both programme-level and intervention-level. At the time of writing, 2 of 3 evaluation reports have been completed – an *Early Implementation Evaluation Report* and an *Interim Operational Evaluation Report* (Forkan *et al*, 2011 and 2012). The *Final Evaluation Report* is expected in 2013. Evaluation consists of measuring data sources from both the programme and intervention levels, and includes policy analysis, service and policy stakeholders' perspectives, the 'belonging' index, monitoring data from sub-programme interventions and detailed case studies.

## Findings – Programme level

Some of the key strengths identified for the BELONG Programme include an organic approach; staff's professional development in working with hard-to-reach populations; a growing commitment to the aims of BELONG; increased interagency working leading to the sharing of good practice, the skills and the expertise of the team of workers; satisfaction with BELONG's staff; and satisfaction with support provided by BELONG.

In relation to the impact of the BELONG Programme on the target communities, all 14 participating agencies reported that the intervention had a positive impact on the BME communities with which they work. Despite limited data in relation to the specific views of Travellers and some concerns about the irregular attendance of some Traveller children, BELONG staff reported a developing sense of ownership of the programme by Travellers and detailed how members of the Traveller community were now employed to work with children on the programme.

Overall, an increase in the level of belonging and resilience among children was reported, in addition to an increase in the children's cultural competence and confidence, and increased access for BME children to various clubs in the community. The findings outline that relationship building among the key stakeholders has been of central importance to the success of the intervention.

### **Findings – Intervention level**

The evaluation of the BELONG Programme at intervention level focused on the perceptions of children, parents and staff.

Evaluation of the children's experience of BELONG was documented in case studies relating the progress of 4 children in 4 different BELONG interventions. Each case study details positive outcomes in relation to self-esteem, confidence, communication, behaviour and ability to complete tasks. Children reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the activities and that the interventions helped them think about and learn new things. They also stated that they would like to attend a similar intervention in the future.

Interviews with parents yielded very positive results. Parents reported that BELONG is very beneficial to their children because it provides the opportunity for them to meet and get to know other children from either within or outside their own ethnic group. They also stated that their children were able to stay motivated in school due to the support they received at homework clubs run by BELONG.

### **Conclusion**

The BELONG Programme has proven successful in a variety of areas. It has been shown to be effective in instilling cultural confidence and a sense of belonging in the children that the intervention targeted. The programme is still meeting the needs of the target group and stakeholders would like to see a continuation of BELONG. One of the reported core strengths of BELONG was interagency support and collaboration, and much of the success of the initiative was attributed to this community approach.

### **Overview of impact**

Table 2 presents a summary of the main outcomes of the three programmes in relation to attitudes and behaviours concerning diversity, inclusivity and difference. It is important to be aware that the findings from BELONG are *interim results*, which focus on perceptions and experiences of the programme, and the final report is expected in 2013. The results from the Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference and the PATHS® programmes are from the randomised controlled trial (RCT) evaluations conducted.

**Table 2: Impact of the 3 programmes on children, parents and/or practitioners**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Impact on child, practitioner and/or parent <i>inclusive</i> attitudes and behaviours</b>
<b>Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference</b>	<b>Significant improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant improvement in children's ability to recognise emotions in others.</li> <li>• Significant improvement in children's ability to recognise instances of exclusion and how exclusion can make others feel.</li> <li>• Significant improvement in children's cultural awareness, for example, recognition of the Irish Tricolor and British Union flag.</li> </ul>
	<b>Positive trend</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive trend in awareness of parents and practitioners of the need to undertake diversity/inclusion work with children.</li> <li>• Positive trend in confidence of parents and practitioners in addressing the issue of diversity/inclusion with their children.</li> </ul>
	<b>No difference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant difference in children's willingness to be more inclusive of others in general or those different to themselves (examples used were a Chinese child and a child in a wheelchair).</li> </ul>
<b>PATHS®</b>	<b>Significant improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant improvement in children's empathy and cooperation (for both younger and older groups).</li> <li>• Significant improvement in children's identification of emotions in others and explaining why a conflict occurred (for both younger and older groups).</li> <li>• Younger children showed improvements in actively helping others.</li> <li>• Older children showed improvements in levels of aggression, and more positive inclusive behaviours.</li> </ul>
	<b>No difference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant difference in children's <i>observed</i> behaviour in class or during play period.</li> </ul>
<b>BELONG (<i>interim qualitative findings</i>)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children reported high levels of satisfaction with the programme and the activities offered, and said that they would like to attend a similar intervention again.</li> <li>• Parents reported the programme to be beneficial for their children in terms of their learning and their social and emotional development, and said that more frequent services would be welcomed.</li> <li>• Four case studies reported positive progress was observed in children attending the programme, e.g. improved confidence, behaviour and communication skills.</li> </ul>

## **Section 4: Discussion of findings: Key issues and common themes**

A synthesis of the findings of the three programmes under review is now provided. It aims to outline the commonalities and differences across the initiatives and identify processes that lead to similar results. The programmes' common patterns of delivery, methodologies and successes/limitations will be discussed, alongside input from current literature on the themes of diversity and promoting inclusion.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention**

In Ireland and Northern Ireland, the need for a focus on prevention and early intervention policy and practice is now widely accepted. There has been a growing body of evidence gathered in recent years in relation to the need for early and preventative interventions and also in relation to the effectiveness of strategies and approaches to tackle some of the areas in which children and their families need support. The arguments for this type of approach have been well documented and two reports by Graham Allen on the subject in 2011 played a major role in highlighting the need for early intervention and offering evidence of what is effective (Allen, 2011a and 2011b).

The primary focus of the three programmes under review in the present report is on promoting positive inclusive attitudes among children (and in one case, among Early Years childhood practitioners and parents) from the majority and minority ethnic groups. The theoretical underpinnings of prevention and early intervention have informed the aims and outcomes of all three programmes. While they broadly fit under a Prevention and Early Intervention banner, the PATHS® NI and the Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference programmes aim to increase awareness and tolerance of cultural diversity from an early age, while the BELONG Programme is focused on affirming cultural identities in children and young people to enhance their cultural confidence, resilience and coping skills.

The findings from the three programmes in this report add to the emerging body of evidence on effective programmes and practice in the Prevention and Early Intervention arena with respect to children's attitudes towards diversity and inclusion. They contribute an additional dimension in that the evidence generated is local and all have been tried and tested in Northern Ireland. The initiatives have been subject to in-depth evaluation, with views sought and analysed from a range of key stakeholders. The findings are largely consistent with the messages from existing research literature in this field and have potential for replication elsewhere in Ireland and Northern Ireland since they demonstrate effective approaches across geographical areas, age ranges and delivery contexts.

This locally generated evidence gives policy-makers, service commissioners, service providers and, most importantly, service users greater confidence in knowing what will work, for whom it will work and in what circumstances. Given the commonalities across both jurisdictions, each of the three initiatives can also generate evidence that can be applied to the other two. The findings from these three interventions show that a variety of approaches and methods can be used effectively to change the attitudes and behaviour of children, parents and professionals in a range of settings, and can help to ensure that practitioners have increased confidence in undertaking inclusion work.

The initiatives were of varying durations. The Media Initiative for Children ran for one academic year, with evaluations taking place at the beginning and end of the pre-school year 2008/2009. PATHS® NI ran over the course of 3 academic years and 5 evaluations were conducted between 2008 and 2011. The BELONG Programme runs initiatives on an ongoing basis and 2 evaluations were carried out during 2011, with the final evaluation to come during 2013. The findings add to a still-emerging body of evidence and will require further research. However, at this point, there are a number of key messages that can be drawn from the findings of the evaluation reports.

## **Replicating existing programmes and creating new programmes**

The evidence base supporting the three programmes was quite different.

The **Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme** has a universal appeal and the evidence suggests it can be implemented in any pre-school setting in either jurisdiction and is equally effective. Early Years spent considerable time and effort developing the programme and the evaluation found that it can be expected to have similar effects for children, regardless of their gender, religion or socio-economic status.

The PATHS® strand of **PATHS® NI** had a very strong evidence base since it was a Blueprints model programme. The MRU strand of PATHS® NI was self-designed and therefore was always likely to encounter challenges during installation and implementation. Similar to the Media Initiative for Children, the PATHS® element of PATHS® NI achieved the expected outcomes, particularly for the younger children. The evaluation indicated that the socio-emotional element of the programme was more effective than the current school curriculum in Northern Ireland.

**BELONG** is very different to both of the other programmes in terms of its approach and what it aims to achieve. BELONG is essentially a large number of pilot programmes that are implemented to meet the needs of BME children as they arise. The approach is organic and bottom-up, and ultimately aims to increase the resilience of children to enable them to deal effectively and positively with a variety of exclusionary situations. Having a sense of belonging to the wider community will require BME children to be confident in their own cultural identity and to be aware of others' cultural identities. For children to have a sense of belonging, their environment and the services within it must reflect the culture of all BME groups and address their needs appropriately. To date, the BELONG *Early Implementation* and *Interim Operational* evaluation reports indicate that the programme is playing a pivotal role for BME children in the areas where it is being delivered.

## **Effective approaches in diverse settings**

Effective interventions focusing on promoting positive attitudes to inclusion can be implemented in a variety of settings. The three programmes under review took place in different settings: the Media Initiative for Children targeted children in pre-schools; PATHS® NI targeted children in primary schools; and BELONG targeted primary school-aged children engaged in youth clubs and after-school activities. In each of these settings, the programmes were led by adults trained in the initiatives, whether they were pre-school educators, teachers or community group leaders.

There are a number of effective approaches worth considering when planning inclusion work with children. Successful results were evidenced by each of the approaches employed by the three programmes.

### **Media-based**

The Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme is a new initiative designed to run alongside the Early Years Pre-School Curricular Guidance (Northern Ireland) and Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curricular Framework (Ireland). There are plans underway to implement the Media Initiative in primary schools, targeting 4-5 year-old children. The programme employs the use of short media clips of cartoon characters modelling inclusive behaviour. The characters represent children from groups who may be targets of discrimination or exclusion in Northern Ireland. Television and video can influence children's racial knowledge, attitudes and preferences (Graves, 1999) and have the potential to reduce prejudice (Paluck and Green, 2009). One of the potential difficulties encountered with media interventions is the difficulty in changing ideas about race (Persson and Musher-Eizenman, 2003). Discussion is a common feature of media interventions, largely because of the implicit theory that peer discussion amplifies the impact of the message (Paluck and Green, 2009). The added value of including discussion to media interventions is that children receive encouragement from an adult who is reinforcing the same message (Gunter and McAleer, 1997).

### **School-based**

The PATHS® NI Programme was designed to meet the majority of the requirements of the Northern Ireland curriculum subject Personal Development and Mutual Understanding or PDMU (except for the health and safety requirements), but on a whole school basis. PDMU corresponds to Ireland's curriculum subject, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The programme focuses on emotional development, cooperative learning, conflict-resolution and inclusive attitudes. Given that most children start school with certain biases in place, the classroom offers an excellent setting for interventions to be effective, particularly as children spend much of their school time in adult-directed activities (Aboud and Levy, 2000). The classroom setting has been used extensively to implement interventions on prejudice reduction, with an emphasis on respect, through a variety of methodologies, such as story (Hughes *et al*, 2007), media (Paluck and Green, 2009), discussion and peer influence (Aboud and Fenwick, 1999) or a combination of these methodologies. Large groups of children can be accessed with ease if the school or setting is in agreement and school agreement acts effectively as an endorsement for parents.

### **Community-based**

Allowing for an organic, needs-led approach, the BELONG Programme is community-based, focusing on cultural confidence and competence, anti-bullying and anti-racial bullying, and education. BELONG incorporates a number of activities for children of one particular ethnicity only and a number of activities for children from mixed ethnic backgrounds. This methodology is effective because intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Prejudice may be reduced by direct educational and attitude change techniques, alongside strategies targeting individuals or by facilitating intergroup contact. Intergroup contact can be beneficial in producing more informed perceptions and more personalised relationships. It can also produce more inclusive, improved representations of the groups involved, which can contribute to reduced intergroup bias and improve attitudes toward people who might otherwise be considered as different (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1999).

## **Self-esteem, identity and belonging**

Children learn by observing the differences and similarities among people and by absorbing the spoken and unspoken messages about these differences (Hohensee and Derman-Sparks, 1992). As children's awareness of difference is at a crucial stage of development during pre-school and primary years, the process of affirming a child's identity and enabling the child to recognise diversity in a positive manner ought to feature as an aspect of their social education. According to Youval-Davis (2006, p. 202), 'the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel'.

Affirming a child's identity can lead to positive self-esteem and can encourage and enhance a child's active participation in pre-school and school. Participation in school leads to engagement with learning and as a result can help lead to positive life-long educational experiences linked to academic achievement, relationship-building and a sense of belonging within a community. Children with a strong attachment to their local schools and communities are more likely to interact with their peers, make friends and build social networks from across racial and ethnically diverse groups (Weller, 2007, as cited in Reynolds, 2010).

The PATHS® Programme reported significant positive results relating to social and emotional learning (SEL) and personal development. The children had increased self-esteem and were more aware and accepting of differences and more respectful of different religions and faiths. In addition, teachers reported that the children were more capable of expressing and managing their emotions, voicing their opinions and had acquired conflict-resolution skills. At whole-school level, incidences of bullying and bad behaviour decreased, and work-ethic increased with children more motivated to improve the standard of their schoolwork.

One of the sub-programmes of the BELONG Programme dealing with Cultural Confidence and Competence reported positive outcomes in relation to the children's improved self-esteem, confidence, communication, behaviour and ability to complete tasks.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the programme resulted in children from minority ethnic groups feeling like they belonged within their wider peer group. Parents reported that their children were more likely to mix with a diverse group of children and were motivated in school. The BELONG Programme would benefit with further research to determine the success of its anti-bullying, anti-racial bullying and education sub-programmes.

## **Anti-racism: Positive attitudes to inclusion**

Racist harassment is a significant issue in some schools in Northern Ireland, with children being subjected to both direct (physical and verbal abuse) and indirect (subtle/covert actions) forms of racism (Connolly and Keenan, 2002). In Ireland, research has shown that racism features in primary schools (Devine *et al*, 2008). Consequently, initiatives that engage children with the theme of diversity and foster positive attitudes to inclusion are vital in preventing discrimination from occurring and in giving children the skills necessary to include peers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

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<sup>3</sup> An example of some of the programmes run with children can be found at: [www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/sites/www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/files/early\\_implementation\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/sites/www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/files/early_implementation_report_final.pdf)

There is strong evidence that the Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference Programme was effective in improving outcomes for children in relation to socio-emotional development and recognition of and respect for cultural diversity. It was also effective in increasing the likelihood of a child recognising whether another child was being excluded and how being excluded might make that child feel. The programme shows similar positive effects regardless of the gender, religion and/or socio-economic background of the children and also whether they come from Ireland or Northern Ireland. Although there was no evidence that the programme had any significant effect in terms of increasing the willingness of children to be inclusive of others, due to the age of the children, the study limited the research to questions about the children's willingness to include children from two diverse groups only – a Chinese child and a child with a disability. As their attitudes to other minority groups were not tested, it is therefore not possible to make conclusive assumptions about their attitudes around inclusion and further research would be necessary in this area. Similar research carried out by Perkins and Mebert (2005) suggests that children who are more culturally aware are less likely to be biased towards people from other cultural backgrounds.

Findings from the PATHS® NI Programme show significant evidence in relation to the number of children demonstrating positive attitudes and increased empathy towards diversity and inclusion. After the initiative, children were less likely to name-call or taunt people who were different to them. They were also more likely to spend time with others who were different to them. Although not all the aims of the 'mutual respect and understanding' (MRU) element of the programme were met, school principals and teachers reported that the programme had a positive impact on school ethos and fostered among children an increased ability to recognise differences between children and a tendency to celebrate those differences. An aim of the BELONG Programme was to promote inclusion by improving access to mainstream activities for BME children. The children (from majority and minority ethnic groups) attending the activities stated that they would attend similar activities in the future. This implies that the children are happy to return to events with other children from diverse backgrounds.

## **Role of parent/educator**

During a child's development, if and how their role models (such as parents and educators) exhibit inclusive attitudes and behaviours is linked to the development of a child's own attitudes towards the inclusion of others.

In the evaluation of the Media Initiative for Children, findings on the attitudes of parents and practitioners did not show an increase in the value they placed on completing inclusion work with children. This result is possibly due to the small numbers of parents that responded to surveys and as a result, further research is necessary in this area. This is particularly important considering the vital role that parents play in modelling inclusive behaviours for their children. The support and commitment of parents is necessary if the positive message of diversity and inclusion work is to truly impact on the children involved in inclusion programmes.

Again, findings from the Media Initiative for Children noted that challenges existed around identifying and addressing the concerns of practitioners in relation to engaging in activities focused on cultural differences, particularly those linked to the ethno-religious divide in Northern Ireland. Modelling messages explicitly around inclusion and respect for cultural diversity in Northern Ireland can be complex. Sensitivity remains regarding these issues in what is still a relatively new post-

conflict society. Research carried out by Donnelly (2008, p. 196) on integrated schools reported that such schools could result in 'rather repressed, and sometimes tense, school communities where individuals avoided sensitive issues'. Although the programmes did not run in integrated schools, the school population would be comparable in terms of children's ethnic backgrounds.

Similar concerns were identified by the teachers in the PATHS® NI evaluation relating to the delivery of the 'mutual respect and understanding' (MRU) element of the initiative. In relation to PATHS® NI, however, emphasis was placed on the importance of the training and support teachers received and the programme coordinators communicated that training in the MRU programme was still in the early stages of implementation. Coordinators reported that with ongoing training, teachers would resolve their initial difficulties with the content and delivery of the lessons as their own knowledge and understanding of diversity developed and their confidence increased in managing the subject matter with sensitivity. Potentially, similar challenges, concerns and anxieties may arise as practitioners/teachers engage in activities focused on race, disability or ethnic minority groups (Devine, 2011).

Much of the success of the BELONG Programme was attributed to the training and support offered by BELONG staff to the community groups carrying out the initiative. There was enhanced interagency working and collaboration, which could result in a number of BELONG interventions becoming more sustainable.

For prevention and early intervention initiatives intending to focus on promoting positive attitudes towards inclusion among children, ongoing training and support offered to parents and practitioners will facilitate more successful outcomes and will enable initiatives to become sustainable. Formal or informal communication with parents and educators in relation to their own needs and the needs of the children should form part of the planning stages of the training.

## Section 5: Conclusions and key learning points

The evaluations of the three programmes reviewed in this report, which aimed to positively influence attitudes and behaviours in relation to diversity and inclusion, demonstrate largely positive outcomes for the children, parents and practitioners who participated in them. Taken together, the evaluations provide important information for policy-makers and service commissioners and providers about how to plan and deliver services for children in a changing demographic in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The following discussion summarises the key learning from the evaluations of the programmes, the international literature and the policy context in which the programmes were delivered.

### Key learning

- The programmes reviewed have proved effective in achieving positive outcomes. They have facilitated the development of children's self-esteem and social and emotional learning (SEL). The children involved in the programmes became more inclusive of others and were less likely to display racist attitudes towards peers. The programmes also provided the children with effective conflict-resolution skills.
- The children who took part in the programmes felt an enhanced sense of identity and belonging, and as a result are more engaged in activities taking place in their communities.
- The programmes and interventions reviewed in this report have demonstrated their capacity to affirm children's identity, increase cultural awareness and foster positive attitudes to diversity and inclusion. More research is necessary to show that these changes in attitudes and abilities can be maintained over time, beyond the duration of the programme or intervention, and therefore future evaluation studies should include longer term follow-up with children, teachers and families using the services.
- Since Northern Ireland is a relatively new post-conflict society, engaging with themes of diversity and inclusion has increased relevance. Nonetheless, negotiating with themes of difference can be complex and as a result, adequate support should be provided for educators and parents in order to maximise the impact of the goals of interventions and programmes.
- Addressing and challenging potential pre-existing prejudices of parents involved should form part of any intervention design or implementation process. This form of intercultural awareness can help prepare parents to fully engage with the topic with their children and ensures that positive attitudes are being modelled in the home.
- The skill of the practitioner in working with children and their parents and his or her ability to interact and engage with sensitive content is a key factor in the potential success of an intervention. Training is required to increase the capacity of professionals to engage effectively with children and their parents to ensure that stereotypes and prejudices can be challenged with the appropriate skills and attitudes recommended by anti-racism training programmes. This training acts as an agent of change and will have a sustainable impact as the new skills will be applied by practitioners working with subsequent groups of children.
- Pre-schools, schools, after-school activities and youth clubs are appropriate settings for running diversity and inclusion programmes with children. There is potential for the interventions reviewed in this report to be replicated in similar settings in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- The programmes target children of a variety of age groups and it is necessary to ensure that all age ranges are included in an intervention they may benefit from.

- Interagency partnership and collaboration in service delivery can enhance the outcomes of an intervention due to the fact that practitioners support one another and share good practice across interventions. Furthermore, such cooperation may contribute to the possibility of an intervention becoming more sustainable since there is increased commitment to achieving successful outcomes.
- Services should examine which children are taking part in the programmes, as well as monitoring which children from their target group are not participating in the programme. Undertaking active outreach to these groups has the potential to maximise positive outcomes and ensures that children from the target group can benefit from the service on offer.
- Children benefit from interventions to promote diversity and inclusion from Early Years interventions and in pre-school settings. In order to maximise the potential for positive outcomes as evidenced by the three programmes, similar interventions and programmes should continue at primary level and in after-school activities.
- Legislation and policy statements in Ireland and Northern Ireland reflect a commitment to promote the inclusion and integration of members of ethnic minority groups. The three interventions under review are well-matched to meet the principles and objectives of recent policy documents, ensuring that children are supported to respect diversity, include others and feel a sense of belonging to their community.
- Strong policy frameworks are already in existence in both jurisdictions. In order for the education system to develop in relation to diversity in society, objectives from governmental and departmental policies and strategies must be implemented, thereby creating the necessary conditions for changes in practice.
- Programmes such as those reviewed in this report ought to be supported by school structures and policies that promote diversity and inclusion, challenge racism and provide positive affirmation of the identities of minority ethnic groups.
- There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children. Programmes and services need to be selected not only on the basis of impact, but also taking account of the service users’ needs, the most appropriate mode of delivery and the most appropriate setting for that service. Media initiatives and community-based and school-based programmes are all effective methodologies to use when carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children.
- The learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative provides useful knowledge about the effectiveness of different evidence-informed approaches to changing children’s attitudes to inclusion and how to implement these effectively so that the best outcomes can be achieved.

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## **Appendix: Examples of programmes and approaches promoting inclusion**

The following are examples of international and national evidence-based or evidence-informed programmes and approaches to promoting inclusion with children.

### **4Rs Programme**

The 4Rs Programme (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution) provides a programme for children aged 3-14 and includes ‘read-alouds’, book talks and sequential, interactive skills lessons to develop social and emotional skills related to understanding and managing feelings, listening and developing empathy, being assertive, solving conflict creatively and non-violently, honouring diversity, and standing up to teasing and bullying. 4Rs is divided into 7 units of age-appropriate lessons over the course of an academic year. All 4Rs stories incorporate a variety of cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds. Evidence has proven 4Rs to have a positive effect on students’ social and emotional competency, their behaviour, attendance and academic performance, and the classroom climate (Jones *et al*, 2011; Brown *et al*, 2010).

### **Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme**

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme includes sequenced, skill-building, classroom lessons designed to foster the creation of caring, peaceable school learning communities for 3-14 year-olds. Lessons emphasize building relationships, understanding feelings, developing empathy, managing emotions and developing social responsibility. A goal of the programme is to address stereotyping and reduce racial/ethnic/gender put-downs in the classroom. Evidence has shown the programme improves social and academic development (Aber *et al*, 1999 and 2003).

### **Too Good for Violence**

Too Good for Violence is a violence prevention and character education programme for 3-14 year-old students that teaches character-based skills, such as respect, celebrating diversity and understanding feelings and actions. Family and community involvement is emphasized and suggested activities and recommendations for teachers are provided. Evidence has shown the programme to improve emotional competency, communication skills, social behaviour and resilience skills (Hall and Bacon, 2005; Bacon, 2003).

### **Show Racism the Red Card**

Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) is an anti-racist educational charity that uses professional footballers and sports personalities to raise awareness about racism. SRTRC has produced a number of educational resource packs that can be used at primary level to explore themes of identity, diversity and racism. Research on SRTRC events in the UK proved the initiative to be effective in enhancing children’s understanding of racism and its effects on people, and in empowering the children to be proactive about stopping racism (Ask For Research and Qa Research, 2011; Wright and Lister, 2009). The Irish branch of the organisation runs an annual competition that encourages children to respond creatively to classwork based around bullying and promoting integration (*see [www.theredcard.ie](http://www.theredcard.ie)*).

## The Yellow Flag Programme

The Yellow Flag Programme is a progressive whole-school equality and diversity initiative in Ireland that promotes and supports an environment for interculturalism (see [www.yellowflag.ie](http://www.yellowflag.ie)). The programme, aimed at primary and secondary schools, involves 8 practical steps to follow over the course of a year and, if successful, the school is ‘awarded’ with a yellow flag that can be flown to show the school’s commitment to work that promotes diversity and inclusion. The programme was pioneered by the Irish Traveller Movement (see [www.itmtrav.ie](http://www.itmtrav.ie)) as an intercultural innovative solution. To date, 14 schools have been awarded a Yellow Flag. A research report on the piloting stage of the initiative in 2008/09 found that the programme was a successful intervention for all the key stakeholders in the 4 schools that took part (Titley, 2009).