

From Conflict to Peace building- The Power of an Early Childhood Initiative

Fostering Positive Attitudes in Young Children

Siobhan Fitzpatrick
Cyprus May 2009

early years
the organisation for young children
media initiative for children



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Background to Early Years - the organisation for young children



- Formerly known as NIPPA founded 1965
- Shaped and influenced by 40 Years of conflict and 700 years of history!
- Cross community /community development organisation
- Commitment to the implementation of UN Convention on Rights of the Child
- Currently supports over 1000 early years services in NI and ROI
- Employs 150 staff directly and supports the employment of 10,000 staff in the sector
- 1994 - 2008 Recognised by European Union as part of the Peace Process/ Investment of over £40 million in building and sustaining the Peace

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“Ready for peace prepared for war!”

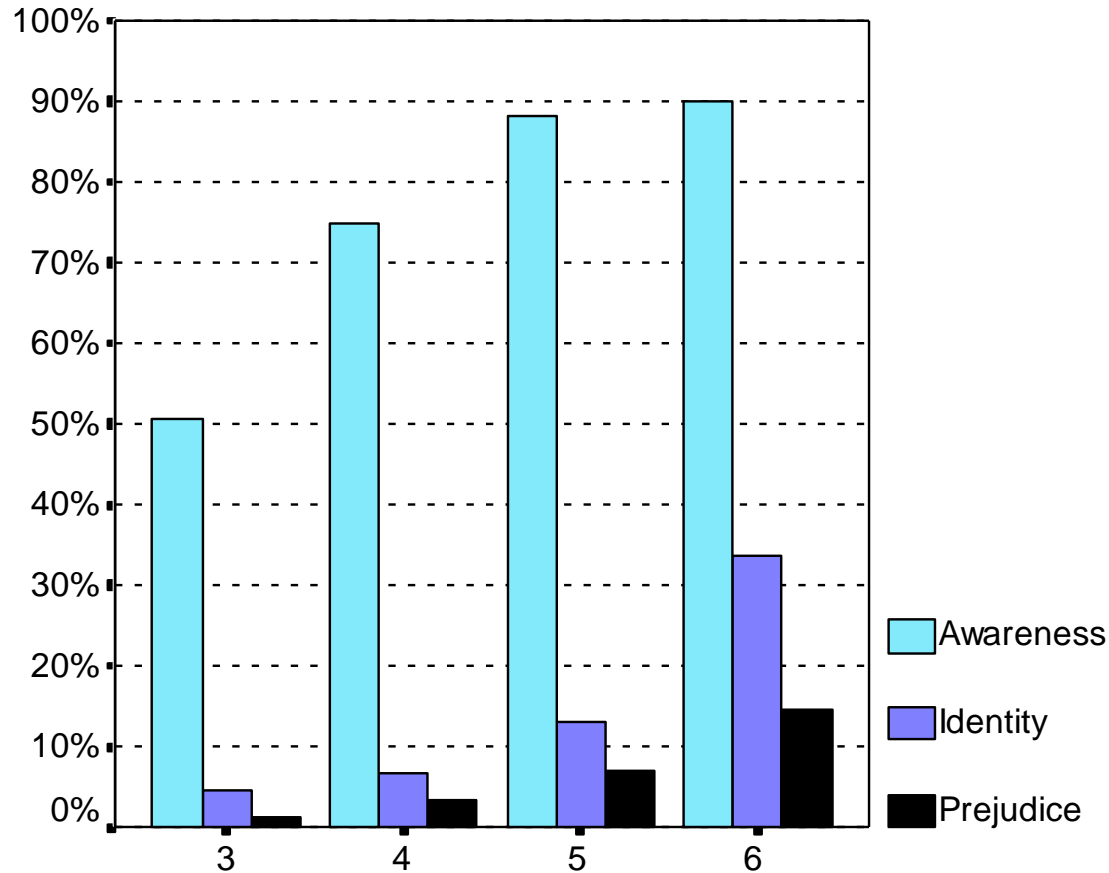


Research - Too Young to Notice ?

Connolly (2001)

Percentage of 3 Year Olds Who:	Catholics	Protestants
Ethnic Preferences	18%	3%
Ethnic Awareness	34%	15%
Ethnic Identity	36%	60%
Ethnic Prejudices	64%	40%

Concerning data - a challenge to the sector



Respecting Difference Efficacy Programme 2003

Service Design Components

- 5 x 60 second cartoons
- Respecting Difference curriculum
- Resource Pack for early years services and parents
- Training Programme for teachers, parents and management boards
- Support for implementation by Early Years Specialist staff / critical friend



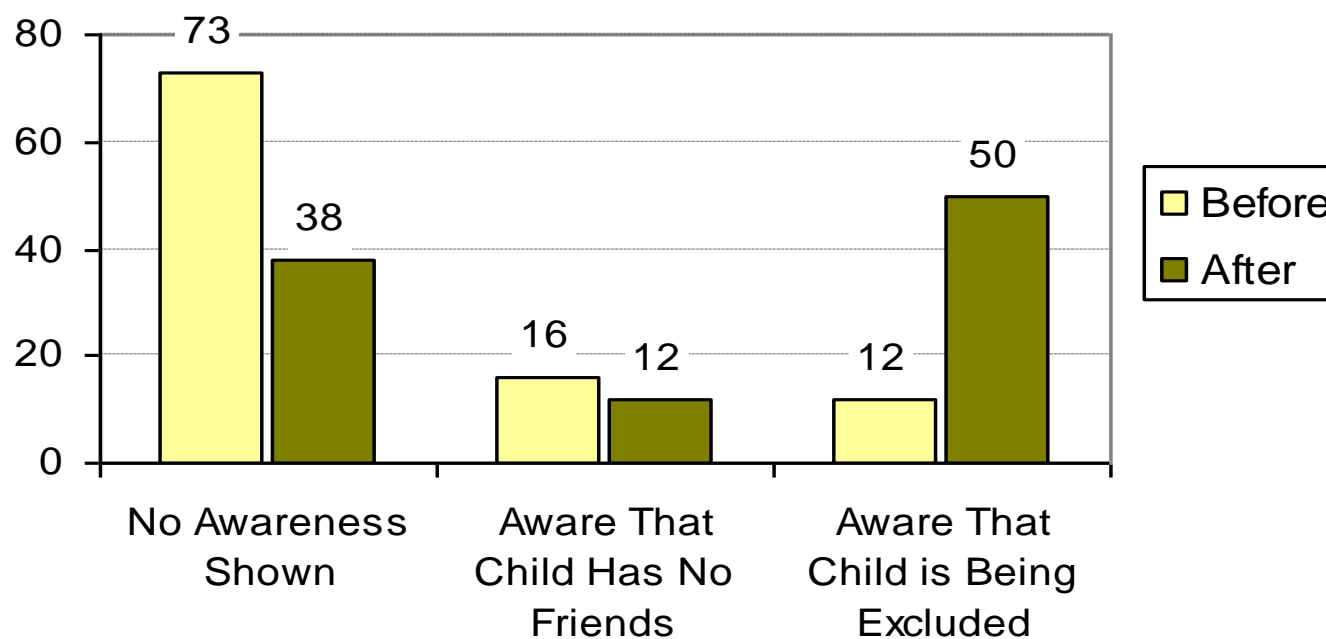
Pilot Programme 2003



- Quasi experimental design with 10 preschool settings
- 5 received the programme 5 were in a control group
- Measured children's attitudes before and after the programme
- ✓ ability to understand how being excluded made some one feel
- ✓ ability to recognise instances of exclusion
- ✓ willingness to play with others who were different

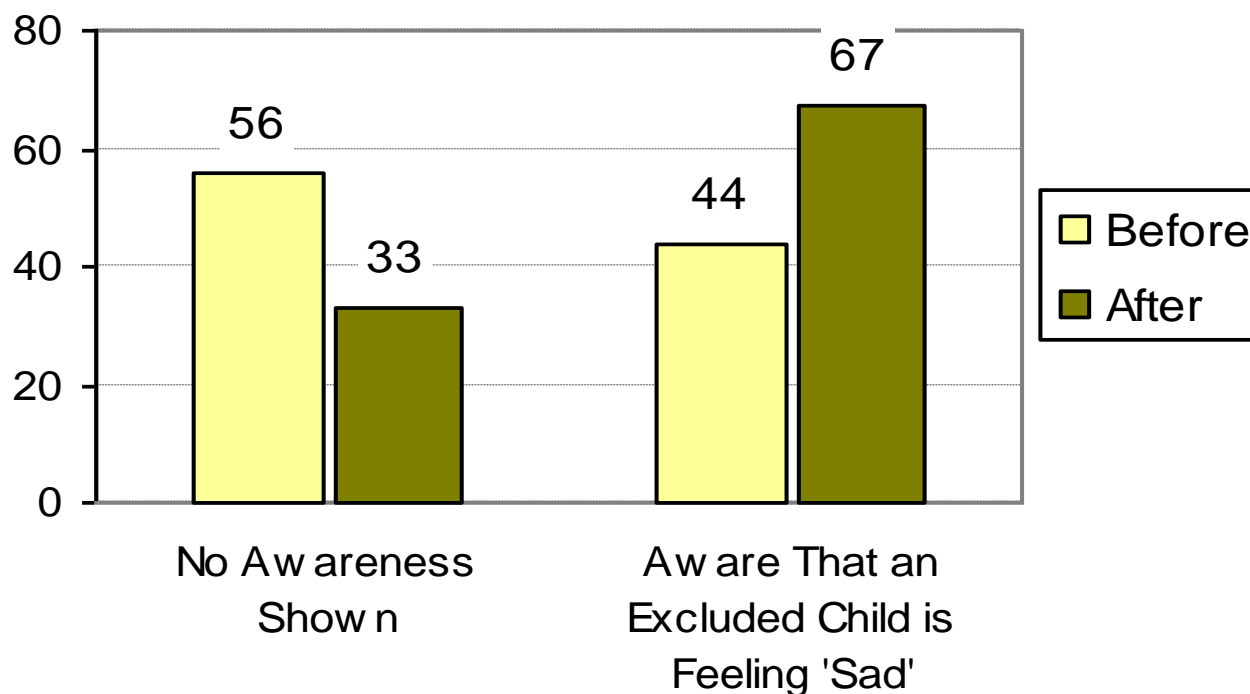
Pilot Programme Results

1. Ability to recognise instances of exclusion without prompting



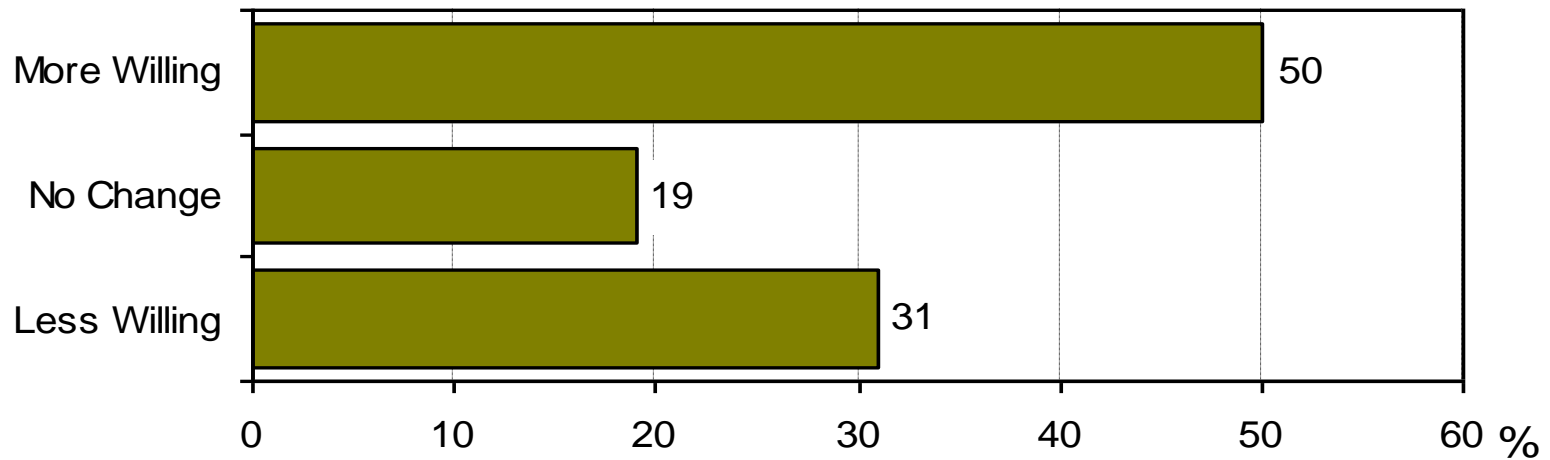
Pilot Programme Results

2. Ability to understand how being excluded makes someone feel



Pilot Programme Results

3. Willingness to play with others, including those who are different



Pilot Programme Results



Summary of Results

After just three weeks the pilot programme was found to increase children's:

- willingness to play with others including some of those who are different to themselves
- ability to understand how being excluded makes someone feel
- ability to recognise instances of exclusion without prompting
- 2005 follow up 1,000 children study published in the International Journal of Early Education

Media Initiative for Children / Respecting Difference Programme

- Development of 5 x 60 second cartoons (racism, sectarianism, physical discrimination, Irish Travellers and bullying)
- National TV coverage on adult/children's programming 3 times per year / 3 weeks
- Recognition of the power and role of the media
- Awareness, ownership and safety



Resources



- Help children learn about and express feelings/ Breaking the culture of silence
- Open up conversations in a developmentally appropriate way about some of the symbols which have and are still causing conflict in Northern Ireland in an effort to normalise these
- Create a model of empowering children to take part in discussions about inclusion rather than waiting until they are 'old enough to communicate' according to adult expectations
- Local relevance, culturally and contextually appropriate

Resources are designed to

Help children talk
about symbols
which have and still
cause conflict in
Northern Ireland



Training for Teachers, Parents and Management Teams

- 4 days initial training
- 1 day Follow-up training
- Cluster support training 7 x 5hrs support visits and 3 x 3hr cluster training
- 3 x 2hr Parents workshops
- 1 x 2hr training workshop for management committee



Reflecting on Prejudices

- An important part of the training is enabling participants (teachers and parents) to reflect on their first memories of difference
- Providing a safe training environment for people to have a meaningful dialogue about culture and ethnicity
- Encourage dialogue around symbols and issues of conflict



Training for Implementation

- Using the resources to discuss diversity and challenge stereotypes and prejudices
- Planning to integrate the programme into the National Preschool and Primary school curriculum
- Working in partnership with parents
- Engagement in community change and advocacy
- Linking the research messages to policy messages – Young children must be visible in the Northern Ireland Cohesion and Shared Future Agenda

Parents as Key partners

- Home activities
- Parent Workshops
- Outreach programmes



Parent Education and Support

Workshops

- 3 workshops
- First workshop - reflecting on their own first memories of difference and impact of conflict
- Second workshop – supporting children with issues of physical discrimination, racism, sectarianism
- Third workshop – supporting children with issues of bullying and ethnicity

Community engagement and empowerment

- A Community development approach
- Social justice, participation, self determination, sustainable communities
- Community change model



Programme roll out - Going to scale

- 80 pre school settings per year in Northern Ireland / Republic of Ireland since 2005
- 5,000 children per year involved in Respecting Difference Programme
- 240 pre school staff trained annually
- Rigorous implementation coupled with random control evaluation
- Outcomes focus / Measurement of attitudes of children, parents and teachers
- Research programme involving further 3,000 children underway and will be available June 2009
- Advocacy programme with likely and unlikely allies
- Evidenced based practice leading to changes in Education policy

Linkages

- International Working Group on Peace Building (World Forum 2004) Action plan for next 3 years building on recommendations from book / next meeting in Belfast in June 2009 as part of World Forum on Early Care and Education
- Cyprus invited to join the International Working Group as formal member
- European Peace Network formed
- Testing out the Respecting Difference programme in Serbia, Scotland and Rwanda
- Joint Learning Initiative on Ethnicity and Diversity (Bernard Van Leer and Atlantic Philanthropies 2008)
- Aim to produce an international programmatic, evidence based tool kit with an advocacy component by June 2010
- Links and learning with the ECD in Emergencies Group



Nelson Mandela

“No child is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. Children must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Contacts

- **For more detailed information on the local and international dimensions of the work contact siobhanf@early-years.org**

