

the early years organisation

promoting high quality care, education, family
support and community development



Pii

Peace Initiatives Institute

STRICT INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION EMBARGO – 9 February 2004

Media Initiative for Children

An innovative educational programme aimed at teaching young children (3-5 years old) to respect differences between themselves and others is being launched on Monday 9 February 2004.

The programme, launched as a pilot, is called the 'Media Initiative for Children' and, for the first time, will use a coordinated approach of mass media and the pre-school setting to explore with young children the value of respecting and including others who are different.

Differences

The programme will focus on the following three types of difference:

- Physical (often used by prejudice against disability)
- Racial (often used by racism)
- Cultural differences (often used by sectarianism)

Media

The advertisements will be carried during children's programming times on UTV, Channel 4 and RTE. Animation is the principal creative method and the advertisements and pre-school curricula will feature a small community of characters to illustrate behaviours and emotions.

Who is doing this?

The initiative, developed by NIPPA – the Early Years Organisation and the Colorado-based charity Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii) over a two year period, has been significantly influenced by an Advisory Council Board comprised of thought leaders from education, media, community and charitable organisations (see page 2 for members of this council).

Aim of campaign

To increase awareness, promote understanding and increase the young children's inclusion of others who are different from themselves through the respect for self and others.

Why Northern Ireland?

Despite the continuing divisiveness on a political level, the people of Northern Ireland have made and continue to make significant progress in building a more peaceful

society. This allows the focus to shift towards the well being of younger children which will help to make society more peaceful over the long term.

Compelling research has also substantiated the need for this work to be carried out with children in Northern Ireland. In June 2002, Dr Paul Connolly, Alan Smith and Berni Kelly published a report, called "Too Young to Notice", showing the affect that cultural and political influence has on the awareness and behaviour of 3-6 year olds in Northern Ireland. Likewise, as discrimination against ethnic minorities and people with disabilities increases in Northern Ireland, it is likely that young children will be influenced in these areas as well.

Measurement

Baseline attitudinal research is being carried out prior to the launch of the campaign. Follow up research will be conducted at appropriate intervals after the media initiative begins in order to measure possible changes in attitude and behaviour. Ten groups are taking part in the pilot. The full programme will be rolled out across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland over the next few years.

Results

Between the ages of 3-5 children acquire core values that drive actions in later life. It is therefore hoped that upon completion of the Media Initiative Curriculum:

- more young children in Northern Ireland will recognise instances of exclusion;
- more young children will understand how it feels; and
- more of them will be willing to include others who are different from themselves.

Advisory Council Members

Paul Connolly	Queen's University Belfast
Maurna Crozier	Community Relations Council, Belfast
Siobhan Fitzpatrick	NIPPA – the Early Years Organisation, Belfast
Tony Gallagher	Queen's University Belfast
Peter Logue	Channel 4 Television, Belfast
Michaela Mackin	Community Relations Council, Belfast
Martin Melarkey	The Nerve Centre, Londonderry/Derry
Colin Parry	The Peace Centre, Warrington
Alan Smith	University of Ulster, Coleraine
Paul Smyth	Public Achievement, Belfast
Ian White	Glencree Centre for Reconciliation, Wicklow
Doug Borne	Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii), Colorado
Paul Harris	Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii), Colorado
David McCay	Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii), Colorado
Diane Osgood	Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii), France

For further information, please visit: www.mifc-pii.org or contact:

Colum Conway, NIPPA - the Early Years Organisation - Telephone: (028) 90 662825

Website: www.nippa.org

or

Paul Harris, Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii) - Telephone: (0) 7791 619 782

Website: www.pii-mifc.org

Respecting Difference

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 2 states: State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed options or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

"Respecting difference" is part of a media initiative that aims to:

- Increase awareness among all young children 3 to 5 years of age, their parents and teachers in Northern Ireland about diversity, different cultural traditions, festivals and orientations;
- Demonstrate respect for others who are different;
- Encourage understanding of others who are different from us;
- Demonstrate the benefits of:
 - a) **behaving** in a way that respects other people who are different from themselves and
 - b) **accepting** and including those who are different rather than ridiculing, fighting with or rejecting them;
- Create a long-term 'climate shift' in the young children's perceptions that may indirectly, influence their parents.

The Media Initiative for Children (www.mifc-pii.org) uses three short TV advertisements to convey the message of respecting difference. This curriculum has been designed to accompany the advertising campaign and aims to support the view that TV advertisements and interactive classroom curricula, aimed at 3 to 5 year olds, can contribute to:

- Shaping children's values and their later perspectives and actions as adults;
- Children acquiring core values that drive actions in later life;
- Children influencing parents to change their attitudes and behaviours.



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Peace Initiatives Institute

5 February 2004

Mr Chris Stewart
OFM/DFM
Block A
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3SR

*cc. Ken Fazel
Heather Stevens.*



Dear Mr Stewart

RE: Media Initiative for Children

We are pleased to inform you about an exciting new educational programme being launched as a pilot on Monday 9 February 2004.

The programme, called 'The Media Initiative for Children' (www.mifc-pii.org) has been developed by NIPPA - the Early Years Organisation and the Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii) and will use a coordinated approach of television adverts and interactive pre-school curricula to encourage very young children to understand and respect of three types of differences:

- Physical (often used by prejudice against disability)
- Racial (often used by racism)
- Cultural differences (often used by sectarianism) between themselves and others.

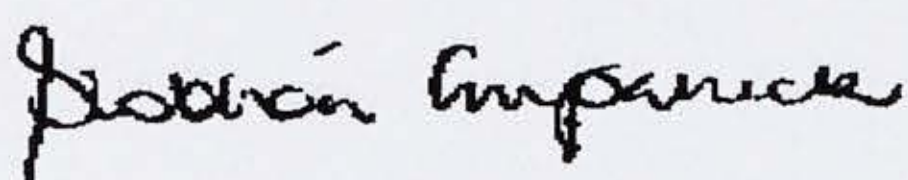
The programme supports directly Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The programme is supported and has been influenced significantly by a strong Advisory Council Board comprised of leaders from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We have attached a summary of the programme for your interest so that you and your organisation can be informed of it when the pilot phase is made public on 9 February. You will note the strict information embargo on the attached summary and we would be grateful for compliance with this.

Baseline attitudinal research on the programme is being carried out in selected pre-schools under the direction of Dr Paul Connolly and further follow up research will be commissioned at appropriate intervals. This will enable us to measure possible changes in attitude and behaviour of young children through media and curriculum effectiveness. We look forward to being able to share the results of the pilot programme with you in the coming months.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us on the telephone numbers below.

Yours sincerely



Slobhan Fitzpatrick
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