

Early Years and Transitions Sub Group Report

This sub group consists of members from Traveller parents; DE Early Years team; SELB, WELB, Barnardos; Dungannon Sure Start and Early Years, the organisation for young children. To date we have had 5 meetings which have been well attended and members have participated in useful discussions.

The key objectives of our sub group were: To encourage the participation of Traveller parents to get their views and opinions on what the educational needs of Traveller children aged 0 - 4.

To highlight good practice and produce evidence to encourage Traveller parents to engage their children in Early Education.

In relation to these two objectives, Traveller parents participated in open discussion about their children's early learning experiences. These positive experiences were recognised by the members of the sub group and agreed that they should be shared with all parents. This led to the innovative idea of producing a DVD to capture the many positive experiences Traveller parents and children have had in relation to Early Years Education. It has been designed as a tool to map the education journey from birth to P.1. The film highlights examples of good practice and the many benefits of engaging in early education for parents and children.

Giving Traveller parents the experience of commenting on Early Education experiences in the DVD has raised their confidence and self esteem and will be very useful to other parents. This should allow them opportunities to get involved in similar experiences.

The sub group agreed on Goals, Outcomes, Indicators and Projected Activities; see attached Appendix 1.

The sub group also agreed on issues and recommendations: see attached Appendix 2.

Consultation with Traveller children; see appendix 3

The reason for doing the Consultation was a result of the parents sharing examples of what their children were saying. It was agreed that children's views and experiences should be listened to and valued.

Reviewing the responses highlighted in red from the Consultation indicates that the current support from the Toybox worker is having a positive impact on the children in the transition process.

This is something to consider for further development to support children and their families going to Primary school.

In the response from the P1 children, it was evident that the support given by the Toybox worker was remembered, given that this consultation was carried out 1 year later.

The Project worker and the Barnardos Pre School will be given the findings to highlight the concerns that children had regarding starting school. This will provide further support and intervention for families.

APPENDIX 1

| Goals | Outcomes | Indicators | Projected Activity | Resource Implications | Lead Organisation |
|--|--|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
| The development of an inclusive school environment for Traveller children and their parents in all schools. | All Traveller children to avail of Pre School Education | More Traveller children enrolling in Pre School | Use of Toybox Model in all areas to support parents in many ways i.e., filling in of application forms, accompanying parents and children on visits. | Continuation of funding from DE | Early Years, the organisation for young children |
| To enable Traveller children and parents to fully participate in the education process. | Effective home – Pre School links are maintained with Traveller families | Pre School/Nurseries have an alternative Communication Policy in place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Toybox Development Worker • Staff to engage in home visits for new families | | Early Years, the organisation for young children |
| | Transitions are effectively managed by Pre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme to suit individual needs of child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive communication with all agencies i.e. | | Early Years, the organisation for young children/ DE |

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|---|--|--|--|---------------------|
| Schools and Nurseries | <p>is established early in first term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and children are happy. | <p>health visitor; Toybox staff; Traveller Advisory teacher prior to child starting.</p> | | |
| <p>Attendance is effectively managed by the Pre School /Nursery</p> <p>Settings to be granted additional places to meet the needs of Traveller children</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in attendance • Child is aware of the importance of their attendance. • More Traveller children enrolling in Pre School/Nursery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy in relation to missed days and follow up on pattern of poor attendance. • DE recognise the nomadic lifestyle of Traveller families | | <p>DE</p> <p>DE</p> |

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|---|---|--|--|------------------------------|---|
| | Parents to become more involved in Early Education | More Traveller children engaging in the Toybox project and engaging in the 2YR OLD programme, Nursery and P. 1. | Production of a DVD highlighting the many benefits of engaging in Early Education | Cost paid for by Early Years | Early Years , the organisation for young children |
| To ensure equality of opportunity for all Traveller children both in accessing and experiencing education. | Traveller children to become more confident in going to Pre School and Primary school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in attendance at Pre School and Primary School • Children and Parents to feel respected, valued and confident • The Voice of the Child is listened to | Facilitate a Consultation with Children on what can be done and improved to allow them to fully participate in the Education process in all areas of the North | | Early Years , the organisation for young children |

APPENDIX 2

Issues and Recommendations

| Issues | Recommendation |
|---|--|
| Lack of communication between Education, Health Care and Voluntary Sector | Key Worker System – specific person to follow the education and welfare of a particular child and children |
| Lack of Information sharing with parents about the services available to get their children involved in Education | All Professionals feeding in relevant information to Toybox Staff |
| Lack of Empowerment of Traveller Parents | Training and skilling of parents regarding information and available services |
| Inadequate support from home to Pre-school and Pre-school to Primary school | Identifying where the best practice exists and addressing gaps in provision through effective use of existing resources i.e. Toybox, Traveller Support Groups and Statutory Agencies |
| (Pre-school Enrolment Form) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of ethnic identification at Pre-school level | Include ethnic identifiers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the Pre-school Enrolment Form • All PEAGS groups including the voluntary sector to include numbers • Ethnic Identification collected, collated and published annually as part of the annual census for all pre- school settings |

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Flexibility in the PEAG Enrolment process to allow for the Nomadic way of life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Nursery/Pre-school has flexibility of an allowance of 1 place to accommodate this situation. • DE should consider amending current school access requirements to make this mandatory |
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Summary

- Improvement of communication and exchange of information
- Improvement of communication to parents
- Addressing gaps in provision and rolling out examples of good practice to ensure smooth transition
- Ethnic Identifiers on all PEAGS forms by January 2011
- DE to consider amendment of school access requirements to reflect Traveller nomadic way of life
- Produced DVD to give parents positive messages and encouragement about engaging in Early Education
- DE to consider how best to distribute the DVD
- Consultation with Traveller children

APPENDIX 3

Department of Education

Consultation with Traveller Children

Introduction

This report summarises the findings from a consultation carried out by Early Years – the organisation for young children with pre-school and primary 1 children.

Aim

The aim of the consultation with both pre-school and primary 1 children was to seek the views of what young children feel and think about school, transitions and the support they and their families are given.

The responses of the children will help influence the support given to children and their families.

The UNCRC enshrines the principle of listening to children and clearly states in Article 12 that a *“child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views feely and the views of the child be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”*

Sample

Children from Traveller families throughout Northern Ireland were involved in the process. Consultations were carried out in a variety of locations e.g.-schools, children’s own homes in both small groups and individually.

55 children in their pre-school year and 30 children in Primary 1 were involved in the consultation.

Following training from Early Years, – 8 Toybox workers and 1 Barnardos Pre-School Leader carried out the Consultations.

A pilot was carried out prior to the consultation to ensure the questions were appropriate for the age range of the children and that the methods used were responsive to the voice of the child.

Areas Represented: Armagh
Belfast
Coalisland/Dungannon
Craigavon
Derry
Magherafelt/ Ballymena
Newry
Omagh/Strabane

Creative methods used during consultation

“Traditional methods of consultation with young children require imagination, rethinking , if the views and experiences of young children are to be listened to by adults”. Clarke and Moss

Children are individuals and use a variety of ways to communicate their perspectives. To ensure children’s views and experiences, especially if it is regarding a particular issue, are being listened to and valued it must be done using methods relevant to their levels of understanding. The methods used in this consultation were -

The Wish Catcher

The wish catcher offers young children an opportunity to articulate what could be better, different, or changed in the world around them. The wish catcher provides a way to hear or hold children’s aspirations whilst its defined, bounded spaces reflect the limitations of adult’s ability to change a situation.

Puppets – Informal Conversations

The staff interacted informally with the children working in small groups or with individual children. Using puppets as “intermediaries” provides a natural way for children to communicate with adults. The questions focused on the information required by the Department of Education and were adapted to ensure they were age appropriate.

Children's Drawings

“Through their creative representations we hear each child’s voice and can respond to it.” Loris Malaguzzi

Drawings offer children of all ages and abilities the opportunity to represent their priorities, feelings, ideas and views using their visual language.

Ethical Issues

“All educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for persons, respect for knowledge, respect for democratic values and respect for the quality of educational research”. Bera
Guidelines

“Listening is not a right. There needs to be space to respect children’s need for privacy, while opening channels for communication for all those who wish to do so.” Clarke and Moss

Ethical issues were an important consideration and permission was gained from parents and children. A letter was drawn up explaining to parents the nature of the consultation, asking parent/carer written permission for their child to take part.

Conclusion

The findings of this research reveal that children of pre-school and Primary 1 ages are very capable of voicing opinions, views and needs if the process is structured in an appropriate way. The research strengthens the importance of why children must be viewed as ***“active subjects, citizens with rights, experts in their own lives and active participants in research”*** Peter Moss, thus ensuring their views and voices are heard.

Voice of the Child Consultation

| Responses from Pre-school Traveller Children | |
|---|--|
| Question | Response |
| 1. What do you think school is like? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Big ➤ You have to do work; ➤ it's good ➤ Toys, lots ➤ If you go you can't come home when you want; ➤ I don't want to go on the bus. |
| 2. What do you think you will enjoy doing at school? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outside ➤ Skateboard ➤ Playing ➤ Friends ➤ Write ➤ Boxing ➤ Getting books ➤ Music ➤ Playing football. |
| 3. Is there anyone you would like to go to school with you on the first day? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Toybox worker ➤ My ol'nan; ➤ You (several children made this response); ➤ You and mammy ➤ My mummy and daddy; ➤ Will you come with me? ➤ My brothers and sisters ➤ Are you coming too? |
| 4. Is there anything we could do to make it better going to school? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tell the teacher ➤ Don't know; ➤ I'll come with you to meet the teacher; ➤ Can you pick me up in your car when I want to come home? ➤ Take me on the bus ➤ If I saw Paddy (brother). |

Responses from Primary 1 Traveller Children

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Response</i> |
|---|--|
| 1. Was there anything that made you worried when you started school? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Everyone was making a noise ➤ I didn't have any friends ➤ No my cousin goes to my school ➤ No I wanted to go to school ➤ I didn't have a uniform ➤ I didn't want to go on the bus. |
| 2. What was your favourite thing at school this year? | <p>The kitchen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New clothes ➤ Playing outside with friends but you're not allowed if it is raining ➤ My teacher – I love my teacher ➤ Learn numbers ➤ You can eat pizza for lunch ➤ Dressing up ➤ My teacher says I am good at reading. |
| 3. Was there anyone who took you to school on the first day? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ You and mammy (several children made this response relating to the Toybox support worker); ➤ You and mammy and daddy ➤ Daddy and mammy; ➤ No I'm a big boy I didn't need anyone ➤ Mummy walked me to school but she couldn't stay – she had to go to Asda; ➤ My mummy put me on the bus – I wanted mummy to come but there were no seats. |
| 4. Did it make it better for you going to school? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Yes ➤ Aye ➤ I wanted my mummy to come ➤ I have lots of cousins and friends at school. |