



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 16th October 2018

PUPPET PLAY ENCOURAGES YOUNG CHILDREN TO RESPECT DIFFERENCE

Young children from rural areas in Northern Ireland and the border counties are set to benefit from a new £1.2m project that will place respecting difference at the heart of learning with the use of puppets and cartoon messages.

The 'Rural Respecting Difference Programme', recently launched in Emyvale, Co. Monaghan, is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Match-funding for this project has been provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland.

The launch was part of a wider celebration of EU Peace funding for early years services in the Southern Border Counties and Northern Ireland over the last 21 years.

Over a 3-year period, the 'Rural Respecting Difference Programme' will engage with young children attending rural preschool, daycare and afterschool settings to build a better understanding of physical, social, ethnic and cultural differences. The project is based on the Media Initiative for Children (MIFC)TM which helps children to understand the meaning of acceptance, inclusion and respect for others. The programme supports services in the border counties to achieve standards within national quality frameworks e.g. Siolta and Aistear.

The project will be delivered via a number of engaging, innovative and fun based teaching methods including the use of specially created persona puppets. Each puppet has been developed with its own identity and media message and offers a non-threatening, effective and child friendly way to develop emotional literacy and empower young children. The project will also extend beyond the children to benefit parents, staff, management committees of early years settings and the wider community.



The project will be delivered by the Rural Development Council, in partnership with Early Years – the organisation for young children and the National Childhood Network. To date, 29 settings have been accepted onto the Programme with potential to impact on 2000 young children.

Speaking about the project, Teresa Canavan, Chief Executive, Rural Development Council, said, **“We are delighted to be involved in this project working alongside recognised leaders in the childcare sector. Research has found strong and robust evidence that early intervention programmes such as this are effective in improving outcomes for young children in relation to their social and emotional development and awareness of and attitudes towards cultural difference. We look forward to witnessing the results of this 3-year project.”**

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), said: **“Unfortunately social segregation still exists within many towns and villages on both sides of the border; to help reduce this one of the core objectives of the EU’s PEACE IV Programme is to encourage greater levels of mutual respect and understanding in order to create a more peaceful and stable society.**

“This project builds upon similar, highly successful, work funded under the previous PEACE III Programme. It will engage with thousands of young people, living in more rural areas, who are mainly educated with those of a similar background and have little limited opportunity to learn about different cultures and traditions. The project will provide them with new opportunities to positively interact with people from another background,” she continued.

For more information contact Joyce McMullan, Programme Officer, (E: jmcmullan@rdc.org.uk).

- ENDS



Notes to Editor

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland.
- It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.
- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The PEACE IV Programme has a value of €270 million and aims to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu
- The Rural Respecting Difference Programme is delivered by the Rural Development Council, Early Years – the organisation for young children and the National Childhood Network.
- The project seeks to engage 80 rural settings over a 3 year period.
- To date 29 settings have secured a place on the Programme – see list below:
 - Aughnacloy Playgroup, Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone
 - Building Blocks Day Nursery, Toome, Co. Antrim
 - Carrickmacross Pre-school Playgroup, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan
 - Carryduff Playgroup, Carryduff, Co. Down
 - Daisychain Daycare and Preschool, Culloville, Newry. Co. Armagh
 - Doagh Preschool Playgroup, Doagh, Co. Antrim
 - First Steps Day Nursery, Warrenpoint, Co. Down
 - Happy Days Community Childcare, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim
 - Happy Faces Daycare, Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh
 - Happy Hills Day Nursery, Markethill, Armagh, Co. Armagh
 - Hollyhouse Private Day Nursery, Dollingstown, Co. Down
 - Jolly Jesters, Dromore, Co. Down
 - Kids Academy Tandragee, Tandragee, Co. Armagh
 - Kids Central, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry
 - Kids Korner, Lisdoonan, Carrickmacross Co. Monaghan
 - Kidzone Playgroup, Bessbrook, Newry, Co. Armagh
 - Krafty Kidz, Coalisland, Co. Tyrone



- Little Stars Preschool, Killyleagh, Downpatrick, Co. Down
- Little Treasures, Killeel, Co. Down
- Naiscoil Lorcan, Omeath, Co. Louth
- New Beginnings Day Care, Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh
- Paddington Out of School Club, Galbally, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone
- Rainbow Community Childcare, Eglis, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone
- Saintfield Playgroup, Saintfield, Co. Down
- The Play Station Afterschools, Greenisland, Co. Antrim
- The Wendy House, Rampark, Dundalk, Co. Louth
- Tots & Co Playgroup, Monasterboice, Drogheda, Co. Louth
- Tots to Teens, Carrowhatta, Scotstown, Co. Monaghan
- Washingford Daycare, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone

For more information contact Joyce McMullan, Programme Officer, RDC

Tel – 028 86766980

Email – jmcmullan@rdc.org.uk