

# BBC News: 25 April 2005

## Children focus on wiping out hate

**A new programme for small children aims to wipe out sectarianism, racism and physical prejudice.**



The Media Initiative for Children, launched in Belfast on Tuesday, will be offered to thousands of pre-school children on both sides of the border.

The programme aims to teach young children to value one another

Its goal is to tackle deep-rooted prejudice in a way that is "child's play".

Colourful puppets, puzzles, song and dance and television will be among the methods used to get the message across.

The programme is a joint initiative between The Peace Initiatives Institute (PII) in the United States of America and Nippa, the early years organisation in Northern Ireland.

Together, they hope to teach young children the value of respecting and including others who are different from themselves.

After a six-week pilot scheme in February 2004, the programme is now being formally launched throughout Northern Ireland.

Initially, the MIFC-N.I. programme is being taught in 200 schools, touching more than 1,000 pre-school age children and their teachers, parents and siblings.

The multi-year programme will continue to expand throughout Northern Ireland, and PII and Nippa plan to extend the programme to the Republic of Ireland in the near future.

### **Lessons for life**

Pre-schoolers who have already participated in the training in Northern Ireland said they had learned: "You shouldn't leave anybody else out."

"The colour of a person's skin shouldn't stop you from

playing with them.

"It's what is on the inside that is important.

"We have to learn to trust each other."

A spokesperson for MIFC said research had shown that young children absorbed the attitudes of adults in their community.

As children grow older, attitudes become core values that influence actions throughout life - and perpetuate conflicts.

By teaching children a different way of thinking and acting, the goal of Media Initiatives For Children is to reduce violence in conflicted societies over the long term.