



**Monday 20 November**

**"We can stop the bullies - bullying is wrong!"**

Building on the successful research and best practice of the Media Initiative for Children a new cartoon featuring a new character – Bukola – had its premier at the Moviehouse, Dublin Road today (Monday 20 November). This development is part of a major new programme to help young children in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland learn to oppose bullying while developing respect for themselves and others.

NIPPA, Northern Ireland's largest early years organisation, in partnership with the Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii) of the U.S., the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) in the Republic of Ireland launched the programme to mark the beginning of Anti-Bullying Week and Universal Children's Day (20<sup>th</sup> November 2006).

As well as the introduction of Bukola, a media campaign, pre-school activities and resources will be introduced to help parents and teachers deal with bullying behaviour and support children who have been bullied as well as children who are exhibiting bullying behaviour. The media campaign will be shown during children's and adults TV programmes on UTV, RTE and Channel 4 from today.

The event also included the launch of anti-bullying resources for primary and secondary schools by NICCY and the launch of cross border funding from the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) through the Cross Border Consortium, to roll the media initiative project out across 200 pre schools in Northern Ireland / Republic of Ireland. A simultaneous launch took place in the OCO offices in Dublin.

The bullying message is newest in a series of media messages, to help pre school children deal with sectarianism, racism and physical discrimination. The messages were developed by NIPPA and the Peace Initiatives Institute (United States) supported by a group of experts from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and based on extensive consultations with young children.

Over 5000 children have involved in the programme to date and the result for the 1000 children study carried out by Prof Paul Connolly, Queen's University Belfast shows a very



promising impact by the programme on the behaviour and attitudes of children, teachers and parents.

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive of NIPPA said; " Research results indicate a significant change in the behaviour of young children who have embarked on the Media Initiative programme which to date has dealt with sectarianism, racism and physical difference.

"The new message is part of NIPPA's ten year strategy to build strong, competent children who can value and respect others who are different. I would like to take this opportunity to thank OCO, NICCY and SEUPB for investing in the Media Initiative and making possible the development of this anti-bullying message and the roll out of the programme to so many more children."

Barney McNeany, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, said; "Bullying has been in the news lately in a lot of forms. This cartoon is a vital step in helping children understand at an early stage that bullying is wrong and that they can take steps together to stop their friends suffering bullying. At the same time as we are jointly launching this cartoon, NICCY is publishing guidance for primary and post-primary schools to help pupils and teachers help stop bullying."

Des Fegan, representative of the Cross Border Consortium, speaking today at the launch, "The Cross Border Consortium is pleased to have been able to contribute funding to the programme which will help build a more peaceful Northern Ireland and Border region."

The Media Initiative for Children supports directly Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – which recognises the rights of the child to grow up in an environment of understanding, dignity, freedom, peace and equality.

For further information on the programme please visit [www.nippa.org](http://www.nippa.org) or [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org) or contact NIPPA – the Early Years Organisation on [t] 028 9066 2825.

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For further information, please contact Jenny Greenaway/Christine Crawford at Pagoda Public Relations

[e] [jenny.greenaway@pagodapr.com](mailto:jenny.greenaway@pagodapr.com)

[t] 028 9032 8291

[m] 079 0870 9187