Early Years development through play for Traveller children

An evaluation by Dr Robbie McVeigh, An Dúchán
In Memory of Carmen Stewart and Angela Ruddy
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. BACKGROUND TO TOYBOX</strong></td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins of the Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toybox: the first three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. BASELINE DATA</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. POLICY ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller-specific policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Force on the Travelling Community and Traveller Education Strategy in the Republic of Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. EVALUATION CONSULTATIONS</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveller Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toybox Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders and Steering Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavee Point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions from the Consultations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. ANALYSIS OF IMPACT</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. CONCLUSIONS</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDICES</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword & Executive Summary
Foreword

The Toybox Project began to be developed at a time when it seemed, with the emergence of a Promoting Social Inclusion initiative for Travellers, that there was a degree of policy urgency around tackling the inequalities which have left Irish Travellers as probably the most marginalised and excluded section of our society.

Sadly, much of that urgency has faded without, once again, a great deal having changed for Travellers. PSI has failed to deliver, and whilst there have been useful projects and initiatives since, including the development of the Equality Commission’s Traveller education strategy, the Roma EDEM initiative on employment and education, and NICCY’s research on Travellers’ experience of education, progress seems slow and modest rather than the step change that is required.

Toybox, at least, operational since 2003, has served as a beacon of progress and to indicate what is possible with positive collaboration between NGOs and the statutory sector, and with realistic financial support from Government.

This is a critical evaluation because, as the evaluator Robbie McVeigh points out, the relative funding security of the project for the next two years enables a process of reflection and redirection about what can make the project better. But it is, according to everyone familiar with it, a success story, an example of good practice, and (above all) a project that is making a real difference to the lives of young Traveller children.

Since the evaluation was written, additional funding has been confirmed which has enabled Toybox not only to complete its regional scope, employing new staff in the Armagh, Ballymena and Magherafelt areas where there were none before, but also to begin to provide follow-up support to children whose involvement in Toybox had ended as they moved to pre-school and primary school.

Toybox is about asserting that not only is equality of opportunity important to Traveller children’s education, but so is making measurable progress towards equality of outcome. In that, and in its commitment to partnership and shared learning, we believe the project has something to contribute as a model of good practice to an urgently needed and truly effective Traveller education strategy.

April 2007
Executive Summary

Discussions to establish a Toybox project for Traveller children aged 0-4 years began in 2000 between Save the Children, NIPPA the early years organisation, the Traveller Support Movement and health visitors. The contexts for the project proposed were a) the increasingly positive policy environment for Traveller issues signalled by the establishment of a government Promoting Social Inclusion initiative at the end of 1999; and b) the Department of Education’s New TSN statistics which indicated Traveller children were significantly under represented in take up of pre-school provision. To this was added the empirical awareness of Traveller Support Groups and teachers that Traveller children’s readiness to learn at the point of entry into primary school was generally less than that of Settled children, and that this deficit constituted a real inequality whose impact widened over time.

Modelled initially on a Save the Children Toybox project underway in Herefordshire, England, this proposal differed in two important respects. Firstly, rather than being based in a local geographical area the project aimed ambitiously to reach out to the Traveller population across nearly all of Northern Ireland. Secondly, rather than focusing solely, as in Herefordshire, on enhancing the social, physical and emotional development of young Traveller children, the proposal aimed additionally to actively promote their enrolment in pre-school settings. As the project has developed it has increasingly developed its own evidence-based approach to practice based on the evolving needs of the project.

In September 2002, Save the Children and NIPPA submitted an application to the Northern Ireland Executive Fund for Children. This application was successful and the project was launched in August 2003. The Project has been funded for a three year period from August 2003 to August 2006 by the Northern Ireland Executive Fund for Children. A total grant of £503,400 was received for the first 3 years of the project. Save the Children provided funding of £60,000.

The Toybox Project aims to tackle disadvantage, exclusion and poor educational attainments experienced by Traveller children through supporting them from birth to 4 years-old. The Project supports a full-time Project Co-ordinator and seven part-time Outreach Play workers plus a part-time administrator. NIPPA the early years organisation is the partner responsible for the operational implementation of the project, but this can only be achieved through significant input from both partners in terms of management, resources policy formulation and intervention. Service delivery focuses on the work of the Toybox workers who visit Traveller families in their own homes on a weekly basis, bringing a box of toys, arts materials and books. During the weekly sessions the Toybox worker plays with and engages the child on an individual basis alongside the parent, developing his/her range of communication, creative, motor, speech and language and social skills, using the High/Scope model. The project also seeks to enhance parents’ understanding of the importance of stimulation and play in their children’s early years, towards the social and educational development of their children.

Emphasising its regional character, the project operates in Belfast, Derry/Strabane/Omagh, Newry/South Armagh and Coalisland/Armagh.

In August 2006, Toybox completed its initial three year commitment. It has secured further resourcing for another two year period, not simply to maintain its existing level of provision but to expand. This evaluation, completed in November 2006, has been undertaken therefore in the context of addressing a generally successful project without immediate resourcing concerns.

The structure and methodology of the evaluation followed the framework provided by NIPPA and Save the Children. The core task is set by the instruction to:

use both quantitative and qualitative measurements to determine what impact the programme is having in bringing about positive and sustainable changes in the lives of Traveller children and their families and in the wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives.

The three main elements in the broader evaluation framework are: 1. the objectives and indicators found in the Toybox application to the Children’s Fund; 2. Save the Children’s rights-based Global Impact Monitoring framework (GIM); and 3. the identified High Level Outcomes of the Children’s Services Planning (CSP) process.

The total number of children who have accessed the Toybox project was 273 up to the end of April 2006. At any given time around 140 children and their families are engaged with Toybox. The project has comprehensively passed its target figure of 150 contacts. The project has also made a significant and sustained impact in terms of its support for Traveller parents’ learning and self confidence.
In terms of service delivery, the Toybox project has been a very successful project in engaging Traveller families and supporting the development of Traveller children through play. Furthermore it has been very successful at filling the gap and being a catalyst between Traveller families and statutory support services, health visitors, social workers and others in the statutory sector. The project is innovative in both its strategic structure and its operational implementation and it represents a potentially successful model for child development for other disadvantaged groups. The two most influential aspects towards the success of Toybox have been the building up of confidence and relationships between Toybox workers and Traveller parents and the bringing of the project into the homes of Travellers. Through the process, social, economic and physical barriers are removed which would otherwise restrict their participation in preschool provision.

While a number of factors, including the unreliability of data, make it difficult to conclude emphatically the extent to which Toybox has been responsible to date for increased enrolment of Traveller children in pre-school settings, the facts are that Traveller enrolment has increased over the period of the project and that those children who enroll after involvement with Toybox are, in the eyes of teachers, health visitors and play workers who come into contact with them, more confident and better prepared in terms of social, physical and emotional skills.

A critical issue addressed in this evaluation is that of institutional racism in the education system, and whether an unintended consequence of the project might be to expose greater numbers of young children to anti-Traveller racism by improving pre-school enrolment. The evaluation considers Toybox’s responsibility to more effectively integrate this analysis into its practice, and to re-establish (after the demise of Traveller Movement NI) a ‘Traveller voice’ in the strategic direction of the project.

In terms of key recommendations, the project is working successfully within its current partnership and resourcing model. There may, however, be a strong case for mainstreaming at some time in the future. Certainly the need and demand for the service is unlikely to disappear in the short to medium term.

The Project should aspire to engage the whole Traveller pre-school population and parents across the north of Ireland. This obviously has huge resource implications (and some ideological and project rationale implications since not all Travellers are ‘disadvantaged’).

The Project should find capacity to allow an increased element of ‘follow-up’ with children whose engagement with Toybox has ended, as they move on to pre-school and school levels.

And finally, the Project should engage with the wider education system in a more structured and proactive way. At its heart, Toybox should reflexively address two complementary questions: Are Traveller children eager to learn and ready for school? Are schools eager to teach and ready for Travellers? It cannot possibly answer either one of these on its own. However, it has made a major and innovative contribution in this area over the first three years and it is capable of making an even greater and more focused one over the next two or three.
Background to Toybox
1. Background to Toybox

Origins of the Project
The Toybox project began with an approach by Save the Children in 2000 to the DHSSPS Family Policy Unit in support of a Northern Ireland-wide Sure Start Project specifically for young Traveller children, based on their socio-economic disadvantage, low participation in pre-school provision, and the more positive contemporary policy environment that had begun to emerge with the designation of Irish Travellers as a priority focus for the new Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) initiative.

In its submission to DHSSPS, Save The Children highlighted the fact that Travellers were recognised as a distinct group within the terms of the Race Relations (NI) 1997 Order and that they could therefore no longer be considered as ‘merely another community of need’, alongside other ‘communities’. Save the Children argued that Sure Start was both an opportunity to address Traveller needs and attitudes around health, education, play and learning, and a coherent part of the emerging PSI working group strategy. Save the Children further stressed that the key issue was the question of how and whether Travellers would benefit from the Sure Start programme in a coherent way, if it was not implemented with an integrated, Northern Ireland-wide approach.

In its response to Save the Children, the DHSSPS Family Policy Unit recognised the ‘inequalities in health and well-being which exist between Travellers and the rest of the population in Northern Ireland, and that there is a need to address these as a matter of priority’. However the Department was not prepared to support the case for the Save the Children model for a Northern Ireland-wide Sure Start for Travellers, arguing that Sure Start was a locally-based programme targeting areas of highest need, typically the size of the catchment area of a local primary school, rather than being designed to cater for specific vulnerable groups. The DHSSPS response also argued that Travellers would enjoy the same rights of access to services in ‘Sure Start areas’ as other families.

In consequence of this refusal, Save the Children, in partnership with NIPPA, the early years organisation and Traveller Movement NI, submitted an application to the Northern Ireland Executive Fund for Children in September 2002 seeking support to deliver the Toybox Project. This application was successful and the project was launched in August 2003. The Project has been funded for a three-year period from August 2003 to August 2006. A total grant of £503,400 was received from the Executive Fund for the first 3 years of the project. Save the Children contributed £60,000 of its own funds. In May 2006 the organisations received confirmation of a further two years’ funding for the project.

Description of the Project
The Toybox Project aims to tackle disadvantage, exclusion and poor educational attainments experienced by Traveller children through supporting them in their very early years, aged 0-4. The Project supports a full-time Project Co-ordinator and six part-time Outreach Play workers plus a part-time administrator. (A seventh play worker working alongside Toybox is funded through a local Sure Start programme in Newry.) It also receives a significant element of further support from the two partner organisations in terms of management, resources and, crucially, policy formulation and intervention. Service delivery focuses on the work of the Play workers who visit Traveller families on a weekly basis, bringing a box of toys, arts materials and books. During the weekly sessions the Toybox worker plays with and engages the child, developing his/her range of communication, creative, motor, speech and language and social skills. Parents of the children are also actively brought into the session, the aim being to develop and support their parenting skills in terms of interaction with their children within a play and development setting. The project also seeks to enhance parents’ understanding of the importance of stimulation and play in their children’s early years, towards the social and educational development of their children.

The project operates in Belfast, Derry/Strabane/ Omagh, Newry/South Armagh and Coalisland/ Armagh. The project emphasises its regional character. Within resource and other constraints it aspires to provide its service to any Traveller family across Northern Ireland without means testing or any other restrictive barrier. This approach also allows it to deliver its service in the context of Traveller-specific migration patterns and nomadic or other movement within Northern Ireland as well as movement into and from Northern Ireland. In launching the project in 2003 the partner organisations took the pragmatic decision to omit the Northern Board area from the regional cover because of the absence there of a Traveller support group which would provide a necessary ‘introduction’ and support for its work. However ‘expansion funding’ provided by DHSSPS to take effect from Autumn 2006 will enable the now more experienced project to provide the Toybox service to children in the Ballymena and Magherafelt areas.
**Project Partners**

The Toybox Project was conceived as an initiative designed, developed and delivered by a partnership of Save the Children, NIPPA and Traveller Movement NI. NIPPA is the lead agency in terms of service delivery and team management. Staffing difficulties in Traveller Movement NI meant that it was less involved in the project from the beginning than the other two partners and its involvement ended with the effective winding up of the organisation in 2005. There has, however, continued to be significant involvement of the Traveller Support Movement (TSM) through local Travellers Support Groups at a Steering Group level.

**Save the Children**

works for children in the UK and around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence. Save the Children records that Northern Ireland has the youngest population of any region in the UK and suggests that the key issues affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland are the impact of living in a situation of conflict, high levels of poverty, discrimination against ethnic minorities and the fact that children in some communities, including Travellers, do not have proper access to education and health services. In Northern Ireland, Save the Children works through a variety of partnership approaches to support and promote community level action on objectives. It seeks to involve children and young people as active participants and stakeholders in its work. These partnerships range from small community groups to regional NGOs, public bodies and government departments. Evidence from partnerships, together with independent research and policy analysis, is used to advocate for change to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children. Save the Children works to:

- ensure the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage government to direct the maximum available resources towards children;
- fight to eradicate child poverty and ensure the poorest children have access to high quality public services;
- promote quality inclusive education as a key route out of poverty and the means to prevent future poverty;
- ensure that specific groups of children learn about and understand their role as global and local citizens and take action to help build a more just and equitable world - making it a better place for vulnerable children.

**NIPPA**

the early years organisation is the largest early years NGO in Northern Ireland. It is a non-profit making organisation and has been working since 1965 to promote high quality childcare for children aged 0-14 and their families. NIPPA’s vision is that:

- all children are strong, competent and visible in their communities;
- all children are physically and psychologically healthy, eager to learn and to respect those that are different.

When it started its work NIPPA stood for Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroup Association, but as work developed this was changed to NIPPA the early years organisation. Currently NIPPA provides information, support, advice and training for parents, childcare providers, employers and local authorities. It also provides a consultancy service which contributes advice, training and support on a range of strategic, policy and lobbying issues related to early years.

**Traveller Movement NI**

has clearly been unable to function as a regional Traveller organisation since 2005 when it transferred its assets to the Belfast-based Traveller support organisation, An Munia Tober, and closed its office and released all remaining staff. It subsequently dissolved formally. It is also clear that capacity issues over the previous two years meant that in practice it was unable to act, from the outset of Toybox, as one of the strategic partners. This has had the consequence, however, that the project has not had the formal engagement of a strategic partner from the Traveller Support Movement. The demise of Traveller Movement NI was of course the responsibility of neither the Toybox Project nor the partner organisations. This situation did, however, radically change the vision behind the project and, arguably, the manner of project delivery - although the partner organisations emphasise that project delivery has been in close co-operation with local Traveller support organisations. It also, more positively and creatively, now opens up the opportunity for a place within the project for a new, more active and engaged partner from the Traveller Support Movement in its next phase.
Toybox: the first three years

In August 2006, Toybox completed its initial three year commitment. It has secured further resourcing for another two year period. This evaluation is therefore addressing a generally successful project without immediate resourcing concerns. The focus is therefore on the consolidation and improvement of an already successful delivery. The project is evaluated in depth below but it is useful at this stage to confirm that the project has met its core aim of ‘bringing about positive and sustainable changes in the lives of Traveller children and their families and in the wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives’ over the past three years. Although Toybox did not always situate itself in this context, this evaluation approaches the work over the past three years as a pilot project. In other words the project was and is a radical model and from this perspective might be expected to revise outcomes in the context of its experience of what works and does not work through its practice.

One of the immediate strengths of the project is the manifest strength of the team. This is reflected in the attitude of workers:

Another aspect relating to the success of Toybox to date, and indeed the future, is our team commitment to the children and families and the project as a whole. It is our “pride and joy”.

This area of work can be very challenging and isolating, so the fact that the team has stayed together, without ‘burn out’ or turnover, is in itself a marked strength of the project.

The strength of the team is even more marked given that over this period the first Project Co-ordinator, Carmen Stewart, fell ill and subsequently died. This loss was obviously deeply felt by all the staff and people are keen to recognise the contribution that she made:

It is important to acknowledge all the great foundations laid by our late Manager Carmen Stewart. We feel that it’s important that this is recognised and remembered.

One very positive influence on the success of Toybox was the privilege of having an inspiring, Traveller-focused line manager in Carmen. In fact, it was her enthusiasm, support and zest for the project that led us and the project to success – so much so that we as a team quickly realised after her death that the greatest tribute that we could pay to her, and her family, was to give more to ensure the continuing success of a project that was very close to her heart.

While this sad loss clearly had a significant emotional impact on the project and its workers, it did not significantly affect the delivery of the service. It is of special credit to the workers and to their late Co-ordinator that this was achieved in the most difficult circumstances. The illness and death did, however, obviously have practical as well as emotional impact on the project. Staffing decisions in the context of responding to Carmen’s illness were taken by NIPPA and agreed by Save the Children. The original job specification for the Project Co-ordinator was to provide operational management for the project.

When the Co-ordinator first became ill early on in the life of the project, the decision was taken to split the post, bringing in two part-time managers, with one worker – present Project Co-ordinator Kathleen O’Kane - focusing on practice support and development, and another handling operational management. The benefits of Kathleen’s experience and focus on practice were so clear that when Carmen came back to work, it was decided to keep Kathleen on as a support to practice development. By the time Carmen left for the second bout of illness from which tragically she was to die, the operational ‘systems’ were in place and it was felt by the Toybox partners that Kathleen could handle both aspects. In short, the requirements of the management role have not significantly changed as the Project enters its next phase of delivery. Moreover, management issues were handled appropriately and positively through a very difficult time for the project.
02
Baseline Data
Demography

The ethnicity question for the 2001 Northern Ireland census included the category ‘Irish Traveller’. Table One provides a detailed statistical breakdown for the Traveller population across Northern Ireland. These statistics need to be treated with some care, however. While the Census makes efforts to address the specific challenges of recording a nomadic population, it seems likely that a substantial number of Travellers are being missed. For example, racism and anti-Traveller attitudes may discourage people from identifying as Travellers even if they return a census form. Other factors like nomadism and non-literacy may also impact on the representation of Travellers through non-completion of census forms.

With this caveat, according to the Northern Ireland census the population of Travellers in 2001 was just over 1700, representing 0.10% of the total population of Northern Ireland. Analysis of the Traveller population across the 26 District Council areas shows Belfast, Derry, Dungannon and Newry and Mourne to be the Council areas with the largest Traveller populations. (These are the four areas in which the Toybox project has been delivered). Craigavon, Fermanagh and Omagh also had relatively large numbers of Travellers within their populations. (Omagh subsequently developed as an area of work for the Derry/Strabane Toybox team.)

### Table One: Travellers by District Council Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Area</th>
<th>All persons</th>
<th>Irish Traveller</th>
<th>% of total pop</th>
<th>% of Traveller pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>1685267</td>
<td>1710</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>48336</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ards</td>
<td>73244</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>54260</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>58609</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymoney</td>
<td>26889</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbridge</td>
<td>41389</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>277391</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>14.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>37659</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlereagh</td>
<td>66488</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleraine</td>
<td>56316</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>32582</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>80670</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>7.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>105066</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>63826</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungannon</td>
<td>47735</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>9.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>57528</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>5.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavee</td>
<td>30828</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limavady</td>
<td>32421</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>108694</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magherafelt</td>
<td>39779</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moyle</td>
<td>15929</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
<td>87057</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>13.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtownabbey</td>
<td>79995</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Down</td>
<td>76323</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh</td>
<td>47949</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>6.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strabane</td>
<td>38248</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It bears emphasis that the 2001 Census-suggested total Traveller population in Northern Ireland of 1710 is likely for various reasons to represent a substantial underestimate of the Traveller population. While this data represents a baseline of sorts and certainly indicates fairly accurately geographical concentrations of the Traveller population, it needs to be treated with caution. This said, it provides further detail on the breakdown of the Traveller population by age and gender and also data on age and highest level of qualification. For example, it generates a figure of 162 children between 0-4 in 2001. This doesn’t fit with the Toybox experience on the ground:

1 Despite positive efforts from the Census Office in this regard, it seems particularly likely that the more nomadic a population, the less likely the census is to cover the whole population. It is also the case that the most nomadic Travellers may well not be in Northern Ireland on the census date but rather travelling in the south of Ireland or Britain or Europe, yet these Travellers remain part of the Toybox constituency. It is also clear from Toybox experience and from elsewhere that some Travellers ‘pass’ as settled because of the perceived negative consequences of being identified as a Traveller. For example, some of the Toybox parents have done this quite deliberately in school ethnicity questions because they do not want to be discriminated against as Travellers.
We have around 140 children involved in the project at any one time. That would mean effectively a 90% coverage of that [162] cohort. We wouldn’t claim that is the case. We would be extremely surprised if we were working with 90% of the children. We know that there are a significant number of children in areas that we do not presently cover. What this illustrates is the poor quality of any statistics relating to Travellers and that relates back to the statistics that we have on education from DE. (Save the Children)

In the course of its work, Toybox has probably become the best placed agency in the statutory or voluntary sector to currently offer a realistic estimate or ‘guestimate’ of real numbers in terms of the size of the pre-school Traveller population across Northern Ireland. Save the Children and NIPPA estimated in 2002 that there were between 300-400 Traveller children aged 0-4 in Northern Ireland, living primarily in and around 10 population centres - Belfast, Derry, Strabane, Omagh, Craigavon, Coalisland, Armagh, Toome, Newry and South Armagh. This estimation has been revised downwards slightly by the Toybox team in 2006 based on work over the past three years - to between 300 and 350. As a rough estimate we therefore suggest a year cohort of around 90 in each year group – in other words in terms of the Toybox constituency, there are around 90 0-1 year olds, 90 1-2 year olds, 90 2-3 year olds, and 90 3-4 year olds in Northern Ireland. (There is no marked reduction in the birth-rate among Travellers paralleling the reduction in the Settled community so we can assume that this figure is holding fairly constant.) It bears emphasis that some of these children are part of families that are highly nomadic, so they only spend a proportion of their time in Northern Ireland (and within the remit of Toybox).

There is some other more detailed and more specific data available from the Census and other sources (see Tables Two and Three). The NIHE Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland 2002 is a particularly useful source. Generally, Travellers have a very distinctive population profile in comparison to the Settled community. They exhibit very high birth rates and very high infant mortality rates and high mortality rates at a younger age and relatively short life expectancy. We also have sources for particular baseline data in other more particular areas like accommodation, health and education.

Table Two: Travellers in Northern Ireland by Sex and Age²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1744</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 4</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 17</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 19</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 59</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 and over</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Source Census 2001 Table S303
Table Three: Travellers in Northern Ireland by Age and Highest Level of Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No qualifications</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 to 24</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 44</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 74</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table population:
All persons aged 16-74 = 1077

Traveller Accommodation

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive report Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment in Northern Ireland 2002 generated a broad range of data detailing Traveller accommodation as well as other aspects of Traveller identity. We need again to emphasis the caveat in terms of such data. This was in effect a census – it identified 452 households across Northern Ireland and attempted to interview the head of household in all of them. It achieved 316 respondents or about 70% of the total population identified. So the data can be taken to be illustrative but not safely representative of the whole Traveller population. Nevertheless, it illustrates important aspects with direct bearing on the provision of education to Travellers.

Table Four: Location of Traveller Households (District Council)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dungannon</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strabane</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magherafelt</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>316</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 316 respondents

3 Source: Census 2001 Table S323
Table Five: Current Tenure by District Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td></td>
<td>Derry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Newry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dungannon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Housing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serviced Site</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side of the road</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperated site</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented home</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>316</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 316 respondents

Table Six: Current Tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Housing</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serviced Site</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side of the road</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operated site</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented home</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouped Accommodation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned land</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented site</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned home</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Accommodation</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>316</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 316 respondents

This data therefore gives important detail to the whole of the Traveller constituency with which Toybox works or aspires to work. Significantly, there is a broad range of accommodation patterns for Travellers in Northern Ireland. This ranges from numbers of families in NIHE public housing, through Traveller-specific ‘group housing’ schemes, to varying degrees of nomadism including a presence by highly mobile ‘Traveller traders’.
Traveller Education
There is also a level of data on Travellers in education in Northern Ireland. This offers detail on Traveller participation and participation rates in the education system as well as other detail in terms of geographical spread. Some of this data was instrumental to the development of Toybox. For example, the Department of Education estimated in its New Targeting Social Need report (2001) that only 18% of Traveller children went to pre-school in 1998/99, compared to 56% of the settled population. This significant variance was a core baseline statistic highlighting the need for Traveller-specific intervention and supporting the case for the Toybox project and its resourcing by the Northern Ireland Executive Children’s Fund.

Table Seven: Pre-school participation rates for Travellers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Travellers</th>
<th>All children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998/99</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NI school census
1. Figures relate to children in nursery schools and classes, reception classes and attending voluntary and private pre-schools.
2. Percentages are derived from year 1 cohort for subsequent school year.

More recent statistics, however, suggest a decrease of this variance over recent years although continuing to highlight a marked difference between Traveller children and other children. Clearly Traveller participation in pre-school has increased but so has Settled participation (see Table Seven).

Table Eight: Traveller Children in Pre-School Education and P1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre school</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% age preschool over P1</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Department of Education explains: ‘because of the need for us to suppress small numbers, breaking the above figures down by Education & Library Board (ELB) would mean a lot of suppression on the table’. However, they can provide a breakdown of Travellers in all schools by ELB and sector for 2005/06 which provides further useful perspective on Traveller children in education in Northern Ireland.
Table Nine: Traveller Children in Education by ELB and education level 2005-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELB</th>
<th>Pre-school</th>
<th>Nursery and reception</th>
<th>Primary (y1 to y7)</th>
<th>Post primary</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELB</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELB</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEELB</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEELB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELB</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI TOTAL</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** denotes less than 5 pupils
* # denotes figure suppressed to protect potential identification of individuals

The Department of Education statistics therefore suggest a marked increase in Traveller participation rates over the period of the Toybox project. The development of the Pre-School Expansion Programme by DE in 1998 has clearly had some effect in increasing availability of pre-school places and increasing the respective percentage participation rates for both Traveller children and Settled children.

The statistics therefore suggest an increase of participation by Traveller children and all children in Northern Ireland, in pre-school provision over the 7-year period September 1998 to June 2005. They suggest that Traveller children’s participation has increased significantly- an overall actual increase of 45.6% (63.9%-18.3%). This is slightly higher than the overall increase of 41.2% for settled children (97.4%-56.2%). They also confirm that a marked difference remains between the participation of Traveller and Settled children.

It bears emphasis, however, that these statistics need to be problematised and treated with caution. We know, for example, that there are more students in Traveller-specific pre-school provision in the BELB area alone than the less than 10 indicated in Table Nine. For this data to be robust, it is dependent on the school census recording all Travellers in the pre-school situation. For whatever reason, this clearly isn’t happening at present. The accuracy of the participation rate is obviously dependent on the accuracy of the Traveller pre-school population from which it is generated. Thus any percentage participation rate has to be treated with great caution – it is at best a percentage of a good ‘guestimate’. The actual numbers attending have declined over recent years without any obvious reason to suggest that the overall population has declined. More positively, however, they at least suggest a general increase in uptake. In the absence of any other significant interventions in the area, it seems likely that Toybox can take credit for much of the increase, whatever its actual size. While PEAGs created a context in which more places were available and supported the development of Traveller-only pre-school provision, Toybox has been the only Traveller-specific intervention over a period in which the Department of Education statistics suggest a significant increase in the uptake of pre-school places by Travellers.
3. Policy Environment

Legal Context
Travellers are named as a ‘racial group’ in the Race Relations Order (NI) 1997. The legislation states that they are ‘a community of people commonly so called who are identified by themselves and by others, as people with a ‘shared history, culture and traditions, including historically a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland’. They are therefore recognised as a minority ethnic group. This situation contrasts slightly with Britain (where Travellers are recognised as an ethnic group through case law) and the south of Ireland (where Traveller ethnicity continues to be contested although ‘membership of the Travelling community’ is a category protected by anti-discrimination legislation).

While the causes of Traveller disadvantage and exclusion in Northern Ireland remain contested, the reality of the disadvantage is generally accepted. Travellers are arguably the most disadvantaged and socially excluded community in Northern Ireland. Recently this has been recognised through government intervention to increase Traveller inclusion. As indicated by the OFMDFM Race Equality Strategy:

The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 recognises Irish Travellers as a racial group within the meaning of the law. It defines the Irish Traveller community as “a community of people commonly so called who are identified (by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.” Any reference in [the Race Equality Strategy] to “members of minority ethnic communities” includes Irish Travellers. (OFMDFM 2005: 10)

The Race Equality Strategy goes on to define Travellers as ‘an indigenous minority ethnic group’ (2006: 27). In other words, any ambiguity as to the ethnicity of Travellers was removed by the Race Relations Order 1997 and this has been integrated into Government policy on racism and minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.

Institutional Racism
In the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the MacPherson Report, there should be a general awareness of the importance of identifying and tackling ‘institutionalised racism’ across the statutory sector. This applies to the educational system in Northern Ireland as much as anywhere else. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry encouraged a fundamental rethink of British policy on racism and policing. It also prompted a wider re-evaluation of the place of race in the criminal justice system. Most current policy and practice is rooted in the discussions and findings of the Lawrence Inquiry. This had implications for the whole of the criminal justice system, not just the police. The inquiry generated much discussion on the subject of ‘racism’ and ‘institutional racism’. These definitions continue to inform both debate and practice:

6.4 “Racism” in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form.

6.34 “Institutional Racism” consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (MacPherson 1999)

This clearly has specific implications in terms of Travellers as a socially-excluded, disadvantaged and discriminated against ethnic group. We can suggest therefore a specific application of the Lawrence definition in terms of institutionalised anti-Traveller racism:

“Anti-Traveller racism” in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which advantage Settled People or disadvantage Travellers because of their culture or ethnicity. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form.

“Institutional Anti-Traveller Racism” consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to Travellers because of their culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage Travellers. (after MacPherson 1999)

The Toybox intervention should be understood and situated in the context of the concept of institutional
racism. In particular this means that an assessment of service delivery by the educational system in this context should be central to Toybox practice. More generally, we should expect post-MacPherson that the educational system in Northern Ireland is fully aware of, and sensitised to, the implications of the concept of institutional racism.

**Traveller-specific policy**

In terms of Traveller specific policy in Northern Ireland, there are three key statutory policy contexts: the analysis and recommendations of the PSI Working Group, the Race Equality Strategy and the Shared Future ‘good relations’ policy. The PSI recommendations on Traveller education as well as the Government response to them provide a backdrop to all subsequent policy development. The OFMDFM document, *A Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005 – 2010* (2005) integrates Travellers across its analysis – it makes clear that Travellers are part of race equality interventions. It also identifies as one of its four identified education ‘priority areas,’ the ‘serious underachievement of Traveller children’ (OFMDFM 2005: 80). It is less clear, however, what the action should be within this priority area - it makes very little specific commitment on Traveller inequality. This was subsequently compounded by the way in which the Race equality Strategy Implementation Plan (OFMDFM 2006) addresses the situation of Travellers only in the context of the broad strategic aim:

To build capacity within minority ethnic communities to develop a vibrant and sustainable minority ethnic sector at both local and regional level and to help minority ethnic people to fulfil the Government’s aim of a shared future for Northern Ireland. (2006: 127)

This translates into only one commitment on Traveller-specific work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>How action contributes to Strategic Aim</th>
<th>Target date for completion</th>
<th>Outcome measure</th>
<th>Evaluation?</th>
<th>Key Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To continue to progress the recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group (PSIWG) on Travellers Report</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Evaluation of progress on recommendations</td>
<td>Y/N If Yes Results</td>
<td>Elaine McFeeters, DE Equality Unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This does, however, at least make clear that the recommendations of the PSI Working Group on Travellers should be seen as the key meter of success in terms of race equality and Travellers in education.

For this reason, the Race Equality Strategy is a significant one in terms of support and impact for the aims and objectives of the Toybox project. It also establishes the Race Equality Forum as a key mechanism for implementation:

5.6 The Race Equality Forum has been set up to help draw up an action plan to implement this strategy and to monitor and review progress. It also has responsibility to monitor and review progress on the implementation of the response to the recommendations in the PSI Working Group Report on Travellers....

Currently there are three thematic groups operating under the aegis of the Race Equality Forum: on Travellers issues (which oversees the implementation of the response to the recommendations in the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group Report on Travellers); on language; and on racial incidents. (2006: 55)

Finally, A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland should provide an additional context for anti-racist work with Travellers. This document does not, however, mention Travellers at all which is clearly a problem since Travellers arguably represent the most segregated community in the north. It does, however, set the ‘Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations’. It also has a specific focus on ethnicity and racism so its relevance for Travellers and policies towards Travellers are fairly unambiguous. Moreover, it indicates very clearly that ‘parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically’.

Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically. Good relations must build on the significant progress that has been made on the equality agenda. No one is arguing for an artificially homogeneous Northern Ireland and no one will be asked to suppress or give up their chosen identity. However, the costs of a divided society - whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations - are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deep-rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism. Policy that simply adapts to, but does not alter these challenges, results in inefficient resource allocations. These are not sustainable in the medium to long-term. (2005: 15)

This policy commitment should impact very directly on the provision of services to Travellers generally and in terms of education provision more specifically. It is fairly unambiguous and it is difficult to see how continued segregated provision at any level can be justified in this context. Certainly, we could expect interventions which expressly encourage integration of Travellers into ‘mainstream’ education provision to be actively supported in this context.

Task Force on the Travelling Community and Traveller Education Strategy in the Republic of Ireland

Both general developments around Traveller support as well as more specific interventions around Traveller education in Northern Ireland should also be situated in terms of the evolution of policy in the Republic of Ireland. While their situation is not exactly the same, there are obviously many similarities between that of Travellers north and south of the border. Broadly, the situation of Travellers has been more mainstreamed – certainly in terms of the concerns of national government. There has also been a concerted attempt to address some of these issues over the past ten years. More negatively the issue of Traveller ethnicity remains contested by some branches of Government in the south of Ireland. This makes it unclear what paradigm is to be used to address Traveller inequality in general and education disadvantage in particular. All of this activity clearly has reference to the situation in Northern Ireland and it is important that a project like Toybox pays close attention to positive and negative lessons from the Republic of Ireland. There are two key initiatives in this context: first, the Task Force on the Travelling Community and secondly, the Traveller Education Strategy (TES).

The Task Force reported in 1995 and a good deal of its work addressed directly the educational situation of Travellers. It was regarded as a very positive mainstreaming of Traveller issues and it established both a conceptual analysis and a level of implementation mechanisms that promised to transform the situation of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland. The TES is an outworking of its analysis of Traveller education:
The 1995 Task Force on the Traveller Community made 167 recommendations in the field of Traveller Education, i.e. more than half of the total number in the report. This is a reflection of the complexity of the education service provision, from early years to adult, from formal schooling to youth work. The number of recommendations is also a measure of the challenge facing those responsible for, or with an interest in, the promotion of Traveller education.

Continuity and cohesion across the various areas of responsibility are necessary to maximise the potential benefits Travellers might accrue from education. But if we are to successfully address the ongoing and emerging challenges this must be balanced with innovation and fresh thinking. Our concern is to ensure the highest standards of practice possible and at the same time the cost-effectiveness of the educational service to Travellers. The development and implementation of a Traveller Education Strategy has the potential to guarantee maximum benefit to Travellers and reasonable cost to the Government.

The main objective of the Traveller Education Strategy will be to ensure equality of outcomes for Travellers from education. It will map out the way forward in relation to Traveller education, taking account of the complexity of the issues involved, the history of provision and existing measures. It will mark out the challenges for the future and clearly identify ways to approach those challenges.

Given that it is over ten years since the Task Force began its deliberations and eight since it reported, the strategy for Traveller education would necessarily review developments since then, including the implementation or partial implementation of some of the recommendations, the publication of the Monitoring Committee Report and take account of other developments and new thinking.

There are recent precedents for the development of such specifically direct, targeted initiatives within the Department of Education and Science, e.g. in the areas of lifelong learning and early years education. There is also a precedent in the Department of Health and Children, which flows directly from the Task Force Report. Traveller Health: A National Strategy was published in 2002. The development of this strategy appears to have been a very useful process for those involved in the national Traveller health strategy. (Department of Education and Science 2003)

The TES remains in development. However, there are already some key elements in the public domain including a review of pre-school education provision for Travellers. Toybox should be aware of these developments as they happen and use them to inform its own policy and practice.

In combination then, the PSI Working Group recommendations, the Race Equality Strategy, the Shared Future policy and the TES form the policy framework for work with Travellers in Northern Ireland. There are also a number of non-Traveller specific policy and legislative issues that impact directly or indirectly on the Toybox project.
Evaluation Framework & Methodology
The structure and methodology of the evaluation followed the framework provided by NIPPA and Save the Children. The core elements therefore consist of: Baseline Data; Policy Environment; Project Analysis; Stakeholder Analysis; Findings; Conclusions and Recommendations. The evaluation framework was provided by NIPPA and Save the Children. The core task is set by the instruction to:

use both quantitative and qualitative measurements to determine what impact the programme is having in bringing about positive and sustainable changes in the lives of Traveller children and their families and in the wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives.

The three main elements in the broader evaluation framework are:

1. the objectives and indicators found in the Toybox application to the Children’s Fund;
2. Save the Children’s Global Impact Monitoring Framework (GIM); and
3. the identified High Level Outcomes of the Children’s Services Planning (CSP) process.

These three elements in the evaluation framework have equal status but the GIM framework informs all other elements. These three key elements reflect the institutional culture of the different partners and funders in the project and, while they generally complement each other, they may at times appear to contradict. For example, the Children’s Fund objective to ‘increase the enrolment of Traveller children aged 4 in pre-school settings to at least 40%’ could be taken to be a key indicator of GIM dimension of change 4: ‘increased equality and reduced discrimination’. Equally, however, increasing attendance at pre-school might have the unintended consequence of increasing the experience of discrimination by these children. (Certainly, fear of racism and discrimination is often mentioned by Travellers as a key reason for non-participation in formal education.) The tensions within the framework are therefore recognised from the beginning, in that it aims to measure both intended and unintended outcomes.
This project outline was used to generate the following evaluation framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Save the Children Global Impact Monitoring ’Dimensions of Change’</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Changes in the lives of children and young people</td>
<td>Assessment of parents and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolment and attendance at pre-school and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Changes in policies and practices affecting children’s and young people’s</td>
<td>Assessment of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Changes in children’s and young people’s participation and active citizenship</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Changes in equity and non-discrimination of children and young people</td>
<td>Assessment of Traveller Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movement/Pavee Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Changes in civil societies’ and communities’ capacity to support children’s</td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Fund Application ‘Measurable Outputs/Outcomes’</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance child development through play, reading, creativity, sensory experience</td>
<td>Improved motor skills, concentration, speech and language, sensory awareness – measure through observation, parents, Health Visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120 children (approx) involved in Year 1. 30 ‘new’ children involved in Year 2 as 4 year olds are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enrolled in pre-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased parental involvement in play and learning experience</td>
<td>Evidence of usage of play materials between home visits, evidence of parental confidence and interaction with child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrolment of children in pre-school settings</td>
<td>Develop links with local pre-schools, and parental knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At least 40% of children aged 4 enrolled in pre-school settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced level of development for pre-school enrolled children</td>
<td>Develop baseline with pre-school teachers, Traveller liaison teachers, Health Visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor perceived improvements with teachers, Traveller Liaison Teachers, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote confidence of parents in education process</td>
<td>Develop direct contacts between local primary schools and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping exercise to identify numbers of children 0-4 and their resource needs</td>
<td>Encourage parental participation in adult classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Manager to co-ordinate and liaise with Area CYPCs and Childcare Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline data to inform Children’s Services Planning etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Evaluation Framework For Toybox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Level Outcomes of the Children’s Services Planning Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All pregnant women, new parents and babies thrive</td>
<td>Assessment of Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children are ready for school and learning</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children and young people make a positive contribution that is valued</td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This evaluation framework raised a number of issues. First, there were issues with baseline data since, as we have already seen, this often doesn’t exist in an appropriate form and it generally needs to be regarded with caution. We also need to accept the limitations of baseline data generated by the evaluation itself while recognising that this data is the most robust currently available in the area. More positively, however, we also need to privilege the grounded expertise of the Toybox team in this area. After three years of work, while they do not and could not have perfect data, they have the best estimates available in terms of baseline data.

Second, the bulk of the primary analysis with participants – particularly Traveller parents and stakeholders – had already been completed in an internal interim evaluation report commissioned by Save the Children and NIPPA. Conscious of the negative consequences of ‘over-evaluating’ and ‘over-consulting’ the Traveller community in particular, the present evaluation did not attempt to generate further primary data from this source unless serious weaknesses in the existing data were identified. This was the case in the absence of a ‘children’s voice’ and further research was conducted towards this end by the current evaluator with the support of the Toybox team. Third, the stakeholder analysis was core to the whole process. The internal evaluation had already conducted extensive evaluation with stakeholders. Much of this analysis was incorporated into this report. This was also supplemented by a stakeholder focus group at the stage of the final draft. The evaluators took responsibility for conducting and analysing the focus groups sessions but NIPPA and Save the Children generated and energised the focus groups. Fourth, there was a serious absence in the whole project in terms of partners from the Traveller Support Movement following the ‘winding up’ of Traveller Movement NI. This was of course a fault of neither the project nor the other partner organisations but it profoundly changed the dynamics of the project since there is no obvious structural place for a ‘Traveller voice’ in the project management. We suggested that this gap was addressed by tying in one of the southern-based Traveller organisations as a partner or ‘consultant’ in the stakeholder analysis process. Pavee Point appeared to be the most appropriate potential partner. Fortunately, they were happy to become involved in the evaluation process in a consultative role.

The ‘critical conclusions’ expected by the invitation to tender document were put in context by the continued funding for the Toybox project for a further two years. The focus of the conclusions of the evaluation is therefore towards developing and improving delivery of a key intervention seeking to transform the experience of pre-school education for Traveller children in Northern Ireland.
As outlined above, this evaluation draws on a previous internal interim evaluation. This had included consultations which had taken place with a range of project stakeholders. A series of survey forms was designed to reflect the aims and objectives of the original terms of reference for the evaluation as set out by Save the Children/NIPPA. These survey forms/questionnaires posed a number of open ended questions which were targeted to allow respondents to provide the relevant information so that an assessment could be made of how well the Toybox project had met its original targets. Data from this process is included in the present evaluation. The evaluation also undertook renewed consultation with workers, the Project Co-ordinator, and relevant NIPPA and Save the Children personnel. It undertook new evaluative research with Traveller children. It also included a discussion with key stakeholder groups and organisations and the Toybox Strategic Management Group.

### Traveller Parents

Seventeen Traveller families were consulted during the internal Toybox evaluation. These families represented a total of 34 children receiving play and learning support through Toybox. For the majority of Travellers consulted, the initiative to take part in Toybox was taken by their Toybox play worker:

> I was living in a caravan and Rita came onto the site and explained the project to me, she started with other children on the site so I became involved.

Other important recruitment mechanisms for the initiative were word of mouth from other Traveller families and from health care professionals that were already working with Traveller families. Traveller parents confirmed that they felt that there has been a major difference made to the readiness of the Traveller children for playschool. Most of the parents consulted felt that their own skills in playing with their children and helping them learn had improved as a result of Toybox:

> I am more involved in their learning. I was afraid of giving them scissors, Angela gave me the confidence to trust them and give them scissors. I was keeping them as babies all the time. I would recommend this to any mother to try it.

We now get him to describe things, everyday things, to bring on his speech. We are more switched on to how children can learn through play.

> We now get him to describe things, everyday things, to bring on his speech. We are more switched on to how children can learn through play.

It has brought him on. He does what he is told. Deirdre is brilliant with him. He is starting nursery in September and I know that he’ll be OK. He loves to see Deirdre coming and would love sometimes to go home with her.

They both learnt a lot. At the start my daughter was afraid of the sand, now she’s not, Deirdre showed her the sand and all different things. When she starts school she won’t be nervous. My son is now at school, he’s 5? and was with the project at the start. He is getting on well and I think the project helped him. He called Deirdre his teacher so he wasn’t afraid of his teacher and wanted to go to school.

> They both learnt a lot. At the start my daughter was afraid of the sand, now she’s not, Deirdre showed her the sand and all different things. When she starts school she won’t be nervous. My son is now at school, he’s 5? and was with the project at the start. He is getting on well and I think the project helped him. He called Deirdre his teacher so he wasn’t afraid of his teacher and wanted to go to school.

A great difference. Now when I go into Tesco’s my daughter goes to look for books and paints - she does this with Catherine. When Catherine leaves there’s an uproar, she wants Catherine to stay!

My son wouldn’t even move at the start of this project, Lorraine learnt him how to move, he started creeping after toys. My other son loves school, he learnt all his colours before he went to school, through Toybox. He loves sticking things with the glue, they’ve come on great since Lorraine started to come.

> My son wouldn’t even move at the start of this project, Lorraine learnt him how to move, he started creeping after toys. My other son loves school, he learnt all his colours before he went to school, through Toybox. He loves sticking things with the glue, they’ve come on great since Lorraine started to come.

It has made her more clever and cheerful. She knows her colours now. It makes her share.

> It has made her more clever and cheerful. She knows her colours now. It makes her share.

It has learnt my son how to have confidence and persevere until a thing was finished, e.g. jigsaws. It’ll do the same for my daughter.

> It has learnt my son how to have confidence and persevere until a thing was finished, e.g. jigsaws. It’ll do the same for my daughter.

It has given my son confidence, at the start he wouldn’t go to the mothers & toddlers group, and now he loves it. He wouldn’t speak to our health visitor but would speak to Rita in our home. He now knows his colours and fruits and how to share. Rita sings to him and reads him books, he now sings to himself. We’d be lost without her.

> It has given my son confidence, at the start he wouldn’t go to the mothers & toddlers group, and now he loves it. He wouldn’t speak to our health visitor but would speak to Rita in our home. He now knows his colours and fruits and how to share. Rita sings to him and reads him books, he now sings to himself. We’d be lost without her.

My daughter loves it, there’s so many things to do and she loves that. It gives time for her although she is a bright girl and there’s probably other children would need it more.

> My daughter loves it, there’s so many things to do and she loves that. It gives time for her although she is a bright girl and there’s probably other children would need it more.

It has definitely helped my 3 and 5 year olds in reading. My 3 year old was nervous at first at playschool, she took to Rita straight away. The playthings were the same as at school so she took better to the school.

> It has definitely helped my 3 and 5 year olds in reading. My 3 year old was nervous at first at playschool, she took to Rita straight away. The playthings were the same as at school so she took better to the school.

Mine have learnt an awful lot. They get excited the day Kirstie & Rita are due to come. My 4 year old is with Kirstie and my 2 year old is with Rita. It
also gives me an hour’s break but I also like to play with the toys. The children have improved greatly in their colours, reading, stories and play. They also learn to share and it has made them more ready for school. It helped my 4 year old at school as her imagination was brought on. My 5 year old also joins in the sessions when he’s here.

My son has picked up things really well that I couldn’t teach him, the Toy Woman has done this. My other son now also knows his colours. I would be happy for my son to go to school now.

I have no way of getting her to a playschool so the Toybox is all I can give her. I would prefer her here with Angela where I can see her. I know that Angela is very good with her, I think that she’ll be ready for primary school.

It brought out things in me that I didn’t know I had. Angela encouraged me to go to education and she got it set up for me. If you had come to me before Toybox I probably wouldn’t have come out to speak with you. Angela helps me if I have something to do at the school.

It gives me heart to see Rita and Kirstie coming, it lifts my heart to see them play with the children and how much the children enjoy it.

Two thirds of those consulted were identified as having ‘no education’ while most others had received a ‘basic education’. This again highlights the serious educational disadvantage of Traveller parents. Half of those consulted said they had directly suffered discrimination while a further third failed to respond to this question. There was strong evidence of Toybox supporting educational opportunities for Traveller parents:

I never would have been doing literacy classes or passed my driving test if it wasn’t for your encouragement.

When asked what Toybox had done well, the bringing of books and toys and the fact that their children were learning were the two most cited benefits of the project. The only suggested improvement was in terms of frequency: ‘we could do with it more than once per week’. With the exception of one parent who felt that her child, while enjoying the Toybox initiative greatly and while benefiting from this enjoyment, did not really need the project, all other parents stressed how disappointed they would be if Toybox ceased.

Traveller Children

The specific attempt to ‘consult’ with the children comes out of the obvious need to centre the children in the project, something very actively supported by the partner organisations. This is challenging in terms of the age of the children involved – it is obviously specifically difficult to find methodologies which allow very young children to ‘evaluate’ a service in any meaningful way. Nevertheless, it is possible to help the children ‘evaluate’ the project in a way that at least provides a “children’s voice” perspective on the project. Both partner organisations are committed to this in principle and had some practical experience to draw upon. The evaluation therefore remained very much dependent on the skills of the Toybox workers to probe sensitively and appropriately to get a genuine response from very young children. We focused on children whose involvement in the Toybox project had come to an end, since these children are older and easier to engage in a meaningful way. We looked to include three simple elements to the conversation if possible:

1. What did X or the ‘teacher’ or the ‘Toylady’ do when they were playing with the toys with you?
2. Why do you think they were doing the toys with you?
3. Is there anything that would make the toys better or more fun?

We spoke to children from every Toybox area and with recognition that what was most useful and appropriate was sensitively generated subjective qualitative data rather than hard quantitative data. This aspect of the evaluation was important and groundbreaking. It could very usefully be repeated annually with children ending their involvement with Toybox, using improvements in methodology noted here.

The purpose of the consultations was to complete the overall Toybox Evaluation by giving consideration to the voice of the child regarding children’s views on the Toybox Initiative. Given the child-centred approach of both Save the Children and NIPPA, it was especially important to listen to children’s responses in order to fully evaluate the initiative – and to find a methodology to allow this to be done effectively and sensitively with very young children. The methodology employed included the use of puppets, and of photographs of the children playing with the toys, and photographs of Toybox staff.

On each visit, the children immediately recognised and were very excited to see the Toybox staff member/members. They also recognised all the
Toybox workers from photographs. Responses to what the staff did with the children on the visits showed that a wide range of activities were provided and that staff interacted in a sensitive manner. These activities along with sensitive interactions would have provided children with opportunities for problem solving, language development, emotional satisfaction and creativity. The excited and eager way the children greeted the Toybox staff would seem to indicate that children had really enjoyed the visits and good relationships had been developed. This would create an appropriate environment to help children learn about social relationships and develop positive attitudes to themselves, to others, and to future learning.

Questions about why the staff were doing the activities with the children can be more difficult for children of this age group to respond to. Research shows that it is easier for young children to respond to 'what' questions rather than 'why' questions which require more abstract thinking. Perhaps too, not enough thought was given to how these questions were phrased or extended. One child understood that her parents had attended 'workshops' which had led to the visits. Perhaps this conversation could have been extended to enquire if the child had any understanding of what the workshops were about. Another child responded “she does it because she likes me.” In terms of helping children to develop positive attitudes towards themselves this would seem to be quite significant.

Children indicated that they were very happy with the visits: “I liked everything.” In terms of what would have made it better it would appear that it was more of a ‘wish list’ of toys which children focused on: “She could bring a bike.” It would seem that from the children’s perspective the staff visits had been a very positive experience and something they looked forward to: “I really miss her.”

Responses from the majority of the children who had moved on to school indicated that they were eager to learn and were enjoying the school environment. Some of the responses indicated some degree of integration with non-Traveller children. When a few of the children named friends at school, the Toybox staff member was able to say: “that is not a child from the Travelling community. “For one child school was not such a good experience: “I hate school, the teacher roars at me.”

Giving the children a voice to express their views on the Toybox Initiative shows that it was a very positive experience and something they looked forward to. Children had build up good relationships with the staff and mutual respect was in evidence. The self esteem that comes with being valued by significant adults will empower children to develop other relationships.

The majority of children appeared to be enjoying school life and were displaying an eagerness to learn. Although some reported broadly negative experiences of school, none of the children indicated that they had experienced anti-Traveller racism. Once again, however, it bears emphasis that racism is an abstract concept that it is difficult for such young children to engage with. The majority of the children were very confident, evidence of both the strengths of Traveller culture and the effectiveness of Toybox.

As suggested earlier, this ‘consultation’ was an important pilot research project with a group of young Travellers. However, it illustrates that useful and meaningful data can be generated by creatively finding ways to listen to children’s perspectives on a project like this. It would be useful to review the suggested questions and assess if these could be improved next time. The Project should also consider asking questions around children’s play activities outside of the project to try to gain an insight into culturally specific play which could then be incorporated into the Toybox Initiative. The research should also find ways of addressing the experience of anti-Traveller racism in school and elsewhere, notwithstanding the difficulties and challenges of discussing the concept with young children.

Save the Children/NIPPA

As suggested above, the Toybox Project has both emerged from and developed an innovative partnership between the two organisations. Partnership and cooperation has been very positive and linkages are very well developed with a clear sense of which organisation is responsible for different elements of the project. There is also a clear sense of both the distinction and the integration of the policy development and service delivery aspects of the project. The model suggests some of the work is being done by the organisations generally rather than specifically through the Toybox project, but this is not seen as being problematic and appears to work very effectively for both organisations. Thus for Save the Children:

> We don’t see a project like Toybox as a stand alone project – we put it in the context of wider work we are doing to impact on children’s rights. So we see a connection between that work and the partnership we are just beginning with An Munia Tober on Traveller education policy development; we’d see a connection between

4 A total of 17 children aged between 4 and 6 years old took part: Belfast 6 children; Newry/South Armagh 4 children; Derry/Strabane 3 children; and Coalisland/Dungannon 4 children.
Toybox and the Roma Eudem project we worked on with the Equality Commission, and the Travellers Thematic Group (of the OFMDFM) that we sit on. So this is the wider social and political context element that you might not see in a project that is to some extent a service delivery model. Toybox is understood by us and promoted by us in terms of those wider policy engagements that we are involved in. NIPPA is involved through structures like area childcare partnerships and children’s services planning processes, promoting the messages and the importance of Toybox. So, at a strategic management level, we are having those wider contexts and impacts.

And NIPPA:

There are aspects of that that we wouldn’t expect the staff on the ground to do because Toybox is linked into our overall organisational structure which has both a service delivery and a policy component. Our mission is about all children in Northern Ireland. This project is very much bolted into that. This particular group of children have particular needs and are particularly vulnerable and therefore there is the direct service delivery, but also the challenge to make sure that this does happen in a wider political and social policy context. From our point of view that part of the work will be harder driven now than it would have been in the first couple of years where our priority was getting the project off the ground and getting practice going. The next two years give us an opportunity to push that policy context much more strongly.

We would agree that the issue is more to do with the education system than Travellers themselves, but as an organisation, alongside Travellers and others, we would be continuing to push hard for the system to change. We use a project like Toybox to drive that change.

The organisations place an emphasis on the autonomy of staff to define appropriate service and this is manifestly rewarded in terms of staff commitment and the quality of service delivery. The only concern in this regard is workers may be working too hard in the sense that they are working outside hours to complete paperwork and other duties in order to fulfil the service they deem appropriate. This is noted by the organisations as a quality of a very strong team and a characteristic of work in the sector, but they are aware that it should be monitored in order to make sure that workers are not putting undue pressure upon themselves because of their commitment to the project.

Toybox Staff

The importance of worker autonomy is also recognised by the team. This is clearly rewarded in terms of staff commitment, integrity and professionalism:

Toybox has been a very successful project and I could add a very enjoyable one to be a part of. I think a major part of this is due to the relationship building with the Traveller families who have really welcomed us into their homes and been so appreciative of our coming with play ideas and resources to help with their children’s development.

I think a very important part of the success of the project is that we are really appreciated for the work that we do, not just by the Traveller families but also by our line managers all down the line. For myself, that’s a really important part of me being happy in the work.

Having the freedom to plan our sessions around the children as we know them, having the freedom to order the resources that we need, I think that was very important.

There is generally very positive recognition of the links to NIPPA and Save the Children and of the positive support when it is needed:

As a team member, I’ve felt good support from NIPPA in our work, e.g. when I approached them and told them how hard it’s been to find a 0-4yr old book reflecting same gender parents, [NIPPA] offered to find the money for parents I’m working with, to produce a book - hopefully that will happen over the summer.

It was observed that most of the Toybox workers tend to regard Toybox as a NIPPA project. This is fairly natural given the working structures of the project and not particularly problematic to the partner organisations. It does, however, perhaps undervalue the strength of the partnership involved, and further recognition of the effectiveness of the partnership model could do no harm.

There was very little negative feedback from staff in terms of their relationship with NIPPA and Save the Children. Some workers indicated a ‘disappointment’ when organisations were unable to take responsibility for a work situation on site in which
conditions made play sessions dangerous. This reflects a constant issue around ‘drawing a line’ in terms of worker responsibility. On the one hand, workers cannot and should not become proto-social workers or community workers; on the other, they need to build a positive relationship with families and they have to decide what limits to place in terms of work environments that are often far from perfect. This issue is managed through recognition that workers have a great autonomy to draw these limits themselves. This ‘instinctive’ approach to when to intervene and support and when not to is largely effective. It is also clear that it works best in contexts in which there is a clear point of referral – a local Traveller Support Group or Traveller Liaison Officer or Traveller partnership group. This allows workers to help to effect positive changes without becoming or being seen as responsible for those changes.

In terms of core service delivery, the staff are very confident of the success and appropriateness of the intervention and the impact of their work is closely and effectively monitored and evaluated. The one to one attention is recognised as particularly beneficial. The major benefits to Traveller children were seen as developing their range of speech, play, motor skills, emotional, negotiation and conflict management skills, providing a range of resources and stimulation for children in their home and improving the child’s confidence and readiness for pre-school or primary school. The introduction of the High/Scope framework of advancing the development of children, into the Toybox Project in 2004, has formalised the learning progress that children are obtaining through Toybox. Staff are confident of the appropriateness of the methodology involved:

I believe the impact of the Toybox team being trained and delivering the High/Scope method of childcare will be possibly the most positive contribution to Traveller children we work with. Already I have seen some families change through having tools such as simple steps to Conflict Resolution.

Support for Traveller parents is also well monitored and identified. In particular, Toybox has worked with Traveller parents to increase confidence and self esteem. There has been a particular focus obviously on explaining and illustrating the benefits and value of play for the early years development of the child. This has been accompanied by the well-monitored improved ability of parents to interact with their children in a structured but informal educational context.

It is clear that the empathic approach of Toybox workers has been particularly important in gaining the trust and support of the Traveller families. Delivery of the project in the child’s own home was also seen as a major benefit. Despite the challenges of working in the home environment which can often carry a host of distractions, and the further challenge of working in site environments that are often less than ideal, workers were strongly supportive of the effectiveness and necessity of the home-based model. The partnership and networking approach between Toybox staff and other professionals was also recognised as a core aspect of the effectiveness of the service delivery.

**Stakeholders and Steering Group**

The evaluation involved a series of consultations with stakeholders and the Toybox Steering Group. This involved participants from different statutory and voluntary organisations with an interest in Traveller education, including schools, Education & Library Boards, Traveller health projects, Traveller education projects and local Traveller Support Groups. These consultations confirmed very broad and positive support for the Toybox project. There were no obvious differences between the responses of stakeholders in the Traveller Support Movement and the statutory sector. There is a general appreciation of the difficulties and challenges of working in the sector, particularly from Traveller Support Groups:

In our area a large number of nomadic Travellers arrived – about twenty families - and we had no facilities for those Travellers. Our priority at that time was to get them toilets and water because the reality was that the children’s health was in jeopardy and it’s about prioritising what is needed. You have to be very flexible and address the priorities, and then look at the broader picture. People are doing their best but the way that I see it, we can only have best practice once we have a site and it’s safe for children and safe for parents and safe for staff to undertake a piece of work. We have a situation where we are working with families at the side of the road – and a very busy road at that – there’s a basic safety issue for everybody involved.

Clearly Toybox cannot and should not assume responsibility for addressing wider issues of service delivery to Travellers. Nevertheless, this is a reminder of the reality of the context in which the Toybox intervention is made.
Generally Toybox is seen as a model of good practice and partnership working in the sector. Put simply, there is a belief across the sector that Toybox is making a significant difference in terms of early years education for Traveller children:

This is one of the best projects I’ve come across and I’m fully behind it.

I would like to see the project built into a long term educational support project across primary and post primary education so that full impact could be recorded.

Life would go back to being very hard work (without Toybox). It was like knocking your head off a brick wall prior to the Toybox intervention. Traveller parents did not have the confidence to play and talk to their child, especially in front of qualified staff. Now they do and it is great to see this.

I am very supportive of Toybox, it is a great project and sits well with our Respecting Difference Initiative. Toybox staff have undertaken the Respecting Difference training. Our materials would be useful to Toybox. I intend introducing more Traveller-specific materials into our project.

How can the Toybox initiative and this good practice be mirrored through the whole of the sector?

The thing that I wanted to say about Toybox was that it has the ability to pick up the children that slip through the net – the children who don’t go to the play group, it prepares them for school, just for some reason or other they have been missed and yet they are ready for school.

In the previous internal evaluation, there were less sanguine assessments from some stakeholders in the statutory education sector, although these were couched less in terms of criticisms of the project than uncertainty as to impact:

I am not too familiar with the workings of the project. I know of it but not the detail, so I cannot comment regarding its impact.

It is hard to define the impact of Toybox. It seems to have had an impact in terms of switching parents on to what’s available. It is good at picking up early problems especially in health, and it is a good referral to other services. It gives primary schools and pre-schools an early warning about educational problems. Supporting the parent and improving parenting skills is very important. There is strong anecdotal and verbal evidence to say that Toybox makes a difference.

More generally, responses from the education sector - both pre-schools and primary schools - confirmed that an impact had been made in terms of increased involvement of Traveller parents in the early years play and development of their children. Responses also confirmed that Traveller parents had become more involved in their child’s play and learning, through the Toybox project.

Most of the external stakeholders felt that Toybox had increased the enrolment of Traveller children in pre-school settings. Some, however, felt that Toybox did not directly contribute to increasing enrolments of Traveller children or were unsure:

We have one little boy who is a Traveller in our pre-school. He probably wouldn’t have gone to pre-school without the support of the Toybox project as his parents didn’t want to use the nursery. That being said, Social Services is where we get most of our Traveller referrals from.

Our numbers probably have increased because of Toybox since our pre-school staff haven’t the time to go down and encourage the parents to send their children, especially the youngest child as Travellers hold on for as long as they can. Toybox encourages them to go so, yes, it has helped enrolment.

We have two Travellers at the moment and both of these would have come to us anyway.

The increase in Traveller children at our playgroup is largely through our own efforts. However a very good link has been built up with Toybox over the past 18 months, they make enrolment easier for the parents rather than make it happen. About 65% of our recruitment is through self referral.

Toybox initially helps Travellers to become aware of what’s available in our playgroup, they definitely play a role in highlighting that the service is there but Traveller parents are also very good at advertising to each other. I’d say however that without Toybox we wouldn’t get the other Traveller families that haven’t heard about us.

Toybox wouldn’t really have had an impact in enrolment in our pre-school. We heard about one

---

5 The Stakeholders group contained a broad range of statutory and community based organisations and representatives including teachers, health workers, Traveller support workers and Traveller educational support workers.
child from the principal of one of the local primary schools because he had Traveller children in his school. We contacted the Play worker for some Traveller materials and although this didn’t happen the Toybox worker visits the child outside of the pre-school.

The Traveller community in Derry know each other well. Our playgroup is on the site. Toybox has made a big difference in the way children play and explore materials and in the length of time they’ll sit with an activity or toy, but I wouldn’t necessarily say it has made the difference in our enrolment. It wouldn’t really have influenced them sending the children to the playgroup.

A large majority of external stakeholders confirmed that Toybox improved the development readiness of Traveller children entering pre-school. The support for Traveller children through the Toybox approach has clearly met the objective of helping children make the transition from the family home to preschool provision.

Most respondents confirmed their opinion that Traveller parents gained confidence through their liaison with Toybox, confidence to play with and educate their children, confidence to interact with teachers and other professionals and confidence to consider and take up education themselves. It was also generally accepted that Toybox had generated more interaction between Traveller parents and schools. Toybox has also helped to signpost Traveller parents and other adult Travellers into adult education. Many Travellers do have problems in both recognising their rights or articulating and asserting them and Toybox has played a key role in raising awareness around rights for access to education. It was widely accepted that Toybox, along with other agencies, had a role to play in bringing about a reduction in discrimination against Travellers.

The holistic approach of Toybox was cited as a particularly important model. The method of teaching the parent while teaching the child, and vice versa, is an innovative model, particularly for this severely disadvantaged group. The emergence of the Toybox project as a catalyst between the range of statutory and voluntary services for the Traveller community and Travellers themselves, is a good model of effective working, maximising partnerships and working towards raising the profile of Travellers, tackling social exclusion and improving quality of services.

The main areas of criticism or suggestions for improvements to service delivery were:

- It was felt by some respondents that staff were limited in terms of time available to them to work with the children, this pressure on the human resource comes mainly from the part-time nature of the Play worker’s post.
- A number of respondents felt that Toybox was too restrictive in terms of age group of children involved, and would like to see Toybox working with older children. The availability of the project to Travellers in other areas was also cited as a possible development.
- The project should seek to employ members of the Traveller community.

All consultees wanted to see Toybox continue, suggesting broad endorsement and support for the project across the statutory and voluntary sectors. There was support among some for mainstream funding. A number of respondents felt that Toybox should be mainstreamed into the Department of Education. There was also support for Toybox to cover all of Northern Ireland and for the upper age limit of 4 to be increased.

There is strong evidence of strong, positive partnerships being forged between Toybox and Traveller Support Groups and statutory sector service providers. Broadly too, there is strong evidence of positive endorsement of Toybox by those statutory service actors most engaged with the Toybox project.

From pre-schools:

- I think that there has been a lot of hidden benefits that have made Toybox even broader than we expected. In terms of social and emotional needs, but particularly in terms of children’s health. I can see a big difference and the fact that the connection is there [across different agencies]. If a child is not reaching its appropriate milestone, in their health or something – it’s very hard to do because you have to build up that trust with parents. I think the workers have built up that trust.

And health workers:

- It links into the health visiting service. We would have very close links with the Toybox project and we would work together to support families. I'm
thinking in particular of how we have looked after children in situations where the parent was finding it very difficult and didn’t have the skills to play with her child and had to be with them in a supervised situation. It’s trying to facilitate parents like that…. There’s been a lot of linking together and awareness between health visitors and the Toybox project that has benefitted both of them.

And teachers:

From a schools point of view, I was completely unaware of Toybox until this time last year when [one of the Toybox workers] came up and told me that she had two families to introduce. There’s a site near the school that we would have a lot of children coming from. That’s my only regret that I was unaware of what she had been doing all year with these children While there were still a few teething problems. It was a fantastic opportunity – to have her acting as a link-person there between the community and school. These were families that we weren’t aware of even. These families don’t come to school looking for places – you would have had to go out looking for them. That was my only regret – that I was unaware of what she had been doing all year with these children. But it made a fantastic impact on the families that she dealt with. They had a trusting relationship with [the Toybox worker] and that then transferred to school. They have all been used to an educational structure. They had a respect for resources. Their attendance has been very good. The parents themselves have been up to school which is another bonus – that wouldn’t have happened before. These are all positive things that I would like to say about Toybox.

We can suggest in terms of some of the earlier discussions, that this might also usefully be turned on its head. Clearly the Toybox intervention should be about ensuring that Travellers are both ‘eager to learn’ and ‘ready for school’. Equally, however, in terms of its social context obligations, Toybox must do its best to ensure that schools are ‘eager to teach Travellers’ and ‘ready for Travellers’ in a grounded institutional and policy sense as well as in terms of general attitudes. This, finally, and importantly, brings us to the issue of institutional racism. The stakeholders discussion provided new evidence and grounded discussion on the way that anti-Traveller racism impacts on Toybox and Traveller children more generally. This was particularly important since this didn’t emerge strongly from consultations with the staff team. While a grounded analysis of anti-Traveller racism is evident in Toybox at a policy level, it doesn’t feature prominently in the self-analysis of Toybox practice delivery. Generally, there is a good awareness of the intensity of anti-Traveller racism across the sector and, equally, an awareness of the difficulties of addressing this racism:

There’s a reality – I have neighbours that have children that are in school with some of the [Traveller children] that I work with and one of them said: ‘Does so-and-so ever wash himself?’ This is from a six year old child. I had a workshop with Traveller women and one of the issues that came up was how do Traveller children cope within the education system? The majority of mothers said that they had no problems – and I was trying to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. It is quite difficult to tease out what the issues were. But these children are going in and facing it from day one. We can sit here and talk about good practice and poor practice but there is still an underlying discrimination going on all the time.

Some of the families that I’m working with don’t and can’t find ways of giving their children coping mechanisms to deal with this [racism] – because
have been terrified of going into the school. They’ve accompanied parents on occasion because they get them in. Parents can be afraid. I have the year – they’re bending over backwards just to accept them – particularly nomadic Travellers, particularly in the middle of that’s willing to accept them. If they get them into a school at all they have experiences of being treated very poorly and it’s not because the children couldn’t do the work or the children weren’t ready for school. But that was the big issue, families don’t know how to cope when situations evolve. Another reaction is that families can completely over-react. If a Traveller child gets its pigtail pulled, immediately that’s racist harassment and bullying. Instead of saying that there’s not a child in Northern Ireland that doesn’t get its pigtail pulled. It’s getting the balance.

Travellers will tend to gravitate towards a particular school because there’s safety in numbers. And then the numbers start to grow and it enhances the problem in a sense. We have schools who are saying: ‘We don’t want to be known as the Gyppo school’. Once that starts to happen – the resentment even in the staff starts to grow - it’s very hard to overcome that.

We had the experience of being rung by one school who was saying: ‘The teacher can’t teach because of the smell of the room’ [because there was a Traveller child in the class]. So we had one of the support workers go in – I said ‘Don’t make it obvious but see if there’s a problem’. And she came back and said honestly there’s nothing wrong with that child. It turned out that the teacher was using the opportunity to pick on the child because the Principal was out of the school, to complain about the child. Those wee incidents are the kind of things that build up. And we told the parents but she still wanted the child to go to that school because there were other Travellers there.

Parents are afraid to challenge because they have been discriminated through the years and have experiences of being treated very poorly themselves. If they get them into a school at all that’s willing to accept them - particularly nomadic Travellers, particularly in the middle of the year - they’re bending over backwards just to get them in. Parents can be afraid. I have accompanied parents on occasion because they have been terrified of going into the school.

While the solutions to this reality are complex, it is clear that changing the attitudes of individual teachers or schools is not enough:

It can’t just depend on the individual ethos of the school. If they are going to apply Section 75, then there has to be legislative and policy pressure put on these schools to meet the needs of these kids. We would have been happy to deliver anti-discrimination training to all schools that had Traveller children enrolled. But there’s unfortunately no obligation on schools to take up this training. It’s on offer – it was offered to every one of them. Certainly, some of the schools that we offered training to, I can say hand on heart are definitely in need of it, because of the institutionalised racism children are coming up against day in and day out.

This discussion begins to reveal the profound nature of institutional anti-Traveller racism within the education system which Toybox has to work against. However, this is not generally picked up by Toybox workers who tend to see the schools they have worked with as broadly supportive. Generally this reading was supported by the consultation with children – only one child reported a very negative experience of school. Individual teachers and schools may of course be broadly supportive but this doesn’t mean that these kinds of attitudes and practices aren’t routinely implicit or explicit across the system. If we take the example of the one negative experience of a child who had experienced Toybox before moving on to school: ‘I hate school, the teacher roars at me’ – we begin to see both the complexity of the situation and the challenge to the Toybox intervention. Perhaps this child is mistaken when he or she thinks the teacher ‘roars’ at him; perhaps the teacher ‘roars’ at this child because he or she is a ‘bad’ teacher; or perhaps the teacher ‘roars’ at this child because they do not want Travellers in the classroom at all and do not want the school to become, as described above, ‘a Gyppo school’. Of course, it may be a combination of all of these factors – but this is a fine illustration of the challenges that Toybox faces.

Pavee Point

The current weaknesses of the Toybox intervention in terms of the strategic partnership with the Traveller Support Movement are fully acknowledged by the other partners. As we have seen, the effective winding up of Traveller Movement NI and its subsequent non-involvement in the project is not the responsibility of Toybox or NIPPA or Save the Children. It does, however, present Toybox with a new challenge and a new opportunity to re-engage...
with the Traveller Support Movement in a re-energised and positive way. This was positively recognised in the context of the evaluation process and the decision to invite Pavee Point to engage with the evaluation with a view to developing further this relationship in a structure appropriate to Save the Children, NIPPA and Pavee Point. Pavee Point undertook to participate in the discussions with the partner organisations and stakeholders and to offer its perspective on the draft evaluation. Pavee Point suggested a useful distinction between diversity and disadvantage in the work of Toybox:

This project is addressing two fundamental areas: diversity and disadvantage. Diversity related to Traveller culture and disadvantage related to economic and social disadvantage and exclusion. These two concepts when intertwined require a more complex response to addressing the issues of inclusion, particularly where issues of racism are prevalent. It is evident from the aims and the actions of the project that the issue of disadvantage was addressed significantly. The intersection with diversity is less obvious although it is clear that staff were sensitive, empathic and helpful above and beyond their duties in their engagement with the community. However in enhancing the project some critical questions need to be addressed. (Murray 2006)

There was therefore a recognition of a specific need for further reflection on issues of diversity and racism. The Pavee Point response to the discussions and the evaluation provided useful critical reflection on the overall project. The key elements in this analysis are first, recognition of the importance and success of the project and second, recognition of the need for further critical reflection on practice. Thus the positive work is acknowledged:

From the information available in the evaluation it would appear that the Toybox project is offering a service of quality to the Traveller community with knock on affects to other service providers, in particular positive links with the health services. It is an innovative project in the Northern Irish context and obviously benefits from a committed team, supportive management structures and substantial resourcing. This targeted Traveller project will benefit from the incorporation of the recommendations suggested by the evaluator. However, we would suggest that some further critical reflection might enhance this project as a model of high quality practice. (Murray 2006)

But the need for further reflection, challenge, change and improvement is also mentioned:

[This] needs to focus on the Toybox Project as well as the education system. A new aim could include supporting parents to effectively work with the education and social services systems rather than simply engaging in and teaching people about the importance of play with their children. The Recommendations [in this evaluation] suggest that the project is not operating to a ‘cultural deficit model’. The fact that there is no mention of culture and that there is little or no evidence of an intercultural approach raises questions. This does not take away from the fact that the project is making a good impact within the community, but critical questions still need to be asked. (Murray 2006)

In terms of the overall evaluation, this perspective confirms the need to find ways of positively reconnecting the project to the perspectives and lessons of the Traveller Support Movement. In particular, there is a need to ensure that both Traveller parents and the wider Traveller community are active participants in the Toybox project. If this is done appropriately and successfully, the second phase of the project can become even more effective and successful.

Conclusions from the Consultations
The consultations were particularly illuminating in terms of the institutional context in which the Toybox intervention is made. There is evidence of a general misunderstanding of what institutionalised anti-Traveller racism is across the sector. There is a specific challenge to Toybox to make sense of this concept and examine how it structures its work. If the institutional racism of the educational system is not being changed at the same time as Traveller children are being supported into that system, then arguably Toybox is not fully meeting its commitment to address the ‘wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives’. Obviously in the Toybox context, the most immediate and relevant social context for Traveller children and Toybox is the educational system. The challenge of addressing institutionalised racism in education is, of course, not a new one. But in the Toybox context, this analysis must be grounded in an appropriate understanding of the embedded nature of institutionalised anti-Traveller racism. Put simply, alongside supporting Traveller children to become ‘eager to learn’ and ‘ready for school’, Toybox must do its best to ensure that both schools and the wider statutory education system are ‘eager to teach’ and ‘ready for Travellers’.
Analysis of Impact
6. Analysis of Impact

The evaluation framework raises a series of questions regarding Toybox performance: has Toybox achieved its targeted outcomes; has it made positive impacts on the lives of Traveller children; has it met Children’s Services Planners’ high level outcomes? The evidence suggests some positive impact in all areas with impact at or above expectation in most areas. In terms of simply quantifiable indicators and targets, Toybox is well above target in terms of children and families supported as participants (see Table 10). The DE figures are not robust enough to effectively test participation and participation rates (as they stand they suggest Traveller participation in pre-school in decline but participation rates increasing). However, Toybox internal monitoring shows a strong correlation between Toybox contact and enrolment.

Table Ten: Analysis of children supported by Toybox (as at 31st May 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No. of families currently on programme</th>
<th>Total no. of children currently on programme</th>
<th>Total no. of children who have accessed Toybox to date</th>
<th>No. of families who have moved on in last month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newry/S.Armagh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh/Strabane</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalisland/Armagh</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
<td><strong>149</strong></td>
<td><strong>273</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of children who had accessed the Toybox project (at May 2006) was 273. At any given time around 140 children and their families are engaged with Toybox. The project has comprehensively passed its target figure of 150 contacts. The project has also made a significant and sustained impact in terms of its support for Traveller parents.

Table Eleven: Parent Education Classes supported by Toybox (as at 31st May 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential Skills/Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory/Driving</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Driving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Health Worker</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent &amp; Toddler/ Personal Development</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project currently operates in four areas: Belfast, Coalisland/Armagh, Newry/South Armagh and Derry/Strabane/Omagh. Active consideration is being given to expanding the project in Magherafelt/Ballymena and Armagh.

In terms of other indicators and outcomes, also see a very favourable impact from the Toybox intervention as detailed in the evaluation framework below. Broadly, therefore, the Toybox Project has been extremely successful in meeting its core aim of ‘bringing about positive and sustainable changes in the lives of Traveller children and their families and in the wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives’ over the past three years.
## Evaluation Framework for Toybox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Save the Children Global Impact Monitoring ‘Dimensions of Change’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Changes in the lives of children and young people</td>
<td>Assessment of parents and children</td>
<td>Yes, very clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox staff</td>
<td>Yes, very clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolment and attendance at pre-school and school</td>
<td>Yes, very clear although available statutory-source quantitative data is questionable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Changes in policies and practices affecting children’s and young people’s rights</td>
<td>Assessment of stakeholders</td>
<td>Yes, but incremental and intervention at partner organisation level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Changes in children’s and young people’s participation and active citizenship</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox staff</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
<td>Yes, unequivocally in terms of participation in education. Other impact less tangible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Changes in equity and non-discrimination of children and young people</td>
<td>Assessment of Traveller Support Movement/ Pavee Point</td>
<td>Contradictory. Perhaps exclusion is exchanged for participation involving more not less experience of discrimination. The project needs to engage with and operationalise the concept of institutional racism. Critical reflection needs to focus on the Toybox Project as well as the education system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Changes in civil societies’ and communities’ capacity to support children’s rights</td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
<td>Yes. Clear but incremental at policy level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Children’s Fund Application ‘Measurable Outputs/Outcomes’**                     |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| Enhance child development through play, reading, creativity, sensory experience    | Improved motor skills, concentration, speech and language, sensory awareness – measure through observation, parents, Health Visitors | Yes, very clear. Confirmed by all participants and stakeholders     |
| Increased parental involvement in play and learning experience                     | Evidence of usage of play materials between home visits, evidence of parental confidence and interaction with child | Yes, very clear. Confirmed by all participants.                     |
### Evaluation Framework for Toybox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Change</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Fund Application ‘Measurable Outputs/Outcomes’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrolment of children in pre-school settings</td>
<td>Develop links with local pre-schools, and parental knowledge</td>
<td>Achieved but need for more structured, policy level engagement with pre-school sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At least 40% of children aged 4 enrolled in pre-school settings</td>
<td>Statutory data clearly supports impact but is not particularly robust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced level of development for pre-school enrolled children</td>
<td>Develop baseline with pre-school teachers, Traveller liaison teachers, Health Visitors</td>
<td>Yes, very clear. Confirmed by all participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor perceived improvements with teachers, Traveller Liaison Teachers, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote confidence of parents in education process</td>
<td>Develop direct contacts between local primary schools and parents.</td>
<td>Yes, positive although driven by practical and individual need rather than policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage parental participation in adult classes</td>
<td>Yes, evidence of informal engagement and initial progress both basic and profound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping exercise to identify numbers of children 0-4 and their resource needs</td>
<td>Project Manager to co-ordinate and liaise with Area CYPCs and Childcare Partnerships</td>
<td>Yes. Database complete. Estimate complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline data to inform CSPs etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Level Outcomes of the Children’s Services Planning Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All pregnant women, new parents and babies thrive</td>
<td>Assessment of Stakeholders</td>
<td>Toybox makes a significant positive impact on new mothers in terms of enhancing their parenting skill and play skills. Less impact with new fathers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children are ready for school and learning</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox Staff</td>
<td>Toybox contributes significantly to the readiness of Traveller children for pre-school and primary school and introduces learning to children through play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of Pre-school staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children and young people are involved in decisions that affect them</td>
<td>Assessment of Save the Children/NIPPA</td>
<td>Impact indirect through Save the Children and NIPPA. Important pilot evaluation conducted with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children and young people make a positive contribution that is valued</td>
<td>Assessment of Toybox Staff</td>
<td>Impact is medium- and long term but already some evidence of tension between value placed on children by Toybox and labelling of children as ‘disruptive’ in pre-school context. In other words, the Toybox ‘valuing’ may not always translate into other educational contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions
7. Conclusions

We have situated this evaluation of Toybox in terms of four key issues: first, it is an important, innovative model with wider implications for work with other groups of Travellers and other socially excluded and discriminated against groups; second, the first three years of Toybox should be regarded as a ‘pilot’ and evaluated from this perspective; third, the evaluation is unconnected to pursuit of renewed funding – this is an important positive and supports a radical, reflexive analysis of what worked and what didn’t; fourth, the relationship of the Toybox project to the Traveller Support Movement needs to be both problematised and re-energised.

Regarding the project as a pilot means that, first, mistakes are as valuable as successes and, second, that the reflexive evaluation of the first phase of the project is particularly important. If there are any weaknesses to be identified or lessons to be learned, it is important to correct these now to go into the second phase.

In terms of the difference - and perhaps implicit tension - between service delivery and policy-focused aspects of the mission statement, this is sensibly managed in terms of a distinction between the delivery focus of the team and the wider Traveller-specific and children-specific policy work of the two organisations. It would be useful, however, to formally integrate these elements of the work to ensure that the lessons of delivery are used to inform policy interventions and vice versa. For example, a formal policy commitment to integration of Traveller children in mainstream education is given context by what the Toybox Team has learned about why some parents do not appear to support integration. Whether this happens because Travellers want segregated provision or because existing provision is explicitly or implicitly anti-Traveller or for some other reason is obviously crucial to policy development.

In terms of the staff team, Toybox has a very strong, committed, professional and united workforce. The team has reviewed and refined practice over the past three years in an exemplary reflexive manner.

In terms of service delivery, the Toybox project has been a very successful project in terms of engaging Traveller families and supporting the development of Traveller children through play. Furthermore it has been very successful at filling the gap and being a catalyst between Traveller families and statutory support services, health visitors, social workers and others in the statutory sector. The project is innovative in both its strategic structure and its operational implementation and it represents a potential successful model for child development for other disadvantaged groups. The two most influential aspects towards the success of Toybox have been the building up of confidence and relationships between Toybox workers and Traveller parents and the bringing of the project into the homes of Travellers. Through the process, social, economic and physical barriers are removed which would otherwise restrict their participation in pre-school provision. The Toybox staff are commended for their professionalism and dedication to their work and for their ability to establish excellent rapport and relationships with Traveller parents and the children. They have displayed a commitment and dedication to their work and an empathy with the Traveller community that has contributed significantly to its success.

The Project team has delivered the Toybox project successfully in the four selected areas within a budget that could justify being enlarged to allow for increased working hours of Play workers and/or additional Play worker staff. The consultation indicates that the demand for the service from existing and new Traveller families (within existing areas and in new areas) would justify a major expansion within the project. Further development and resourcing of the project is crucial to build on the excellent work and progress made to date, which can have significant short term and long term impacts in terms of both Traveller education and educational provision for Travellers.

Changes at policy level are more incremental, but the Save the Children/NIPPA partnership has a clear strategy for effecting change and tying this change to lessons learned from this new model of service delivery.

Toybox has developed and maintained a very strong team. There are very few problems/issues at the level of practice. Delivery of the core service to parents and children is very effective and very impressive. This element is difficult to quantify with external indicators other than through enrolment and attendance and, as we have seen, official statistics are not robust enough to allow any meaningful quantifiable comparator. However, the competency and professionalism of the Toybox team is exemplary and their judgement is of a highly successful intervention. Their self-evaluation is very detailed and rigorous and their professional judgements well-grounded.
Staff have maintained a difficult balance in terms of their formal role as Toybox workers and dependency on an informal and positive relationship to make the scheme work. This has been managed well and staff are not proxy social workers or community development workers. Their protocol - that referral to an appropriate individual or agency is best practice - works in the existing project, but might have further difficulties in areas without a local Traveller Support Group.

There were some limitations and criticisms of the intervention. Some of these may be addressed and some are simply a consequence of working within a context of profound underfunding for other Traveller support work. There is an ongoing question of how Toybox operates in a context in which the traveller Support Movement is profoundly under-resourced and routinely in ‘crisis’. This was most obviously illustrated by the ‘collapse’ of Traveller Movement NI, but it is endemic in the field. At any given time, the local Traveller Support Group will tend to be in some degree of funding pressure.

There are, however, other issues that might be addressed within the Toybox remit. Certainly, staff feel that the inability to follow-up at pre-school and school level (in other than exceptional circumstances), means children who have finished their Toybox experience are not always getting appropriate follow-up support. Clearly this responsibility sits outside the formal remit of Toybox but it is frustrating for staff and for the project if good work is not being sustained and supported by any follow-on support or infrastructure.

There are some Traveller children in the current areas of operation that are being ‘missed’ by Toybox due to a lack of capacity. There are also areas in which Toybox does not operate but where there is identified need or demand. Most of these do not have an existing Traveller Support Movement infrastructure. The latter factor makes expansion particularly difficult and challenging since it becomes difficult to see how the project can operate effectively without a referral protocol.

There is little activity in terms of pre-school provision that is not directly practice-led – in other words, intervention with specific pre-school providers happens to support a specific child integrate in a pre-school context but tends not to address the broader institutional context. These issues are, however, addressed more directly by the broader Traveller-related work of NIPPA and Save the Children. But it is still appropriate and necessary to ask how does Toybox as Toybox address the issue of the quality and suitability of educational provision? This is the most immediate and relevant aspect of ‘wider social and political contexts’ which the Toybox mission statement addresses. It is certainly appropriate and necessary to routinely ask the question: ‘Is there a problem with the education system rather than a problem with Travellers?’

Finally there is a profoundly important question around how Toybox should address the power differential between settled organisations, project and workers, and the Traveller community as passive ‘clients’. This raises the related question of where is anti-racism in the picture? While the project is very explicit in its recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group and its workers are universally sensitive to Traveller cultural difference, the representation of empowered, settled ‘experts’ delivering to disempowered and passive Traveller clients is an ever present danger. As we shall see, there certainly are ways of challenging this and staff have tried to be sensitive on issues like this, but it is an inescapable dynamic within the project. This reality was, of course, made much worse by the inability of Traveller Movement NI to play its role as a strategic partner in the project.

There was a telling discussion in the stakeholder’s focus group which focused on the ‘over-reaction’ of Traveller parents to incidents of anti-Traveller racism. The reality, however, is that the question of how Travellers should appropriately respond to racism is primarily a question for Travellers. This illustrates a wider issue in terms of the institutional context in which the Toybox intervention is made. There is often little understanding across the statutory and voluntary sectors of the difference between institutionalised anti-Traveller racism and a ‘bit of banter’ or the kind of interactions that all children experience in the education system. Alongside this is a misunderstanding of Traveller ‘coping mechanisms’. Traditionally Travellers dealt with anti-Traveller racism and tensions within the Traveller community by ‘moving on’. This was a successful and grounded method of conflict management. From this perspective, disengagement from the educational system may be a completely sensible and appropriate educational choice. Put this in the context of institutionalised racism and the decision can seem even more sensible – we might ask what possible point there is to subjecting a child to continuous racism without any prospect of changing the experience? This is a fine illustration of the core
challenge at the very heart of the Toybox intervention. If the institutional racism of the educational system is not being changed at the same time as Traveller children are being supported into that system, then Toybox is not meeting its commitment to address the ‘wider social and political contexts which impinge on their lives’. The most immediate and relevant social context for Traveller children and Toybox is the educational system. The challenge of addressing racism in education is, of course, not a new one. There are a host of anti-racist models to be drawn on from the Black British experience to South Africa to Australia. Clearly Toybox cannot address these issues in a vacuum but it is important that the process of addressing them be integrated across the whole Toybox intervention. This analysis must be grounded in an appropriate understanding of the embedded nature of institutionalised anti-Traveller racism. This is confirmation if it were needed of the necessity of Toybox grounding or re-grounding its practice and intervention in an engaged partnership with the Traveller Support Movement.

Generally, however, this is a very good and impressive project which has done remarkable innovative work over the past three years. It provides a model for effective partnership work and service delivery in this and related areas.
Recommendations 08
8. Recommendations

The project is based on an innovative and successful partnership between NIPPA and Save the Children. Precisely perhaps because this is working so well, its success is not particularly remarked upon. But this aspect of the work deserves further study as a model exercise in effective partnership in the area. As we observed, staff tend to regard the project as a ‘NIPPA project’. At one level this is perhaps inevitable given that NIPPA is the lead agency and that administration and line management responsibilities sit with them as well. This also is not regarded as particularly problematic by Save the Children – so long as the service delivery is of a routinely high standard, this is not significant. However, since one of the core strengths of the project is that it is an innovative and positive partnership between the two organisations, there may be some value in instilling this in staff as well as making sure that the external branding of the project emphasises the centrality and importance of this partnership. A key part of extending and improving this partnership approach is the question of involving Traveller organisations in the model.

With this in mind, it bears emphasis that the Project is not operating to a ‘cultural deficit’ model. Nevertheless the absolute power differential between Settled people as experts and practitioners and ‘teachers’, and Travellers as ‘clients’ is very marked within the project. Moreover, the abstract recognition of the importance and value of Traveller culture is less crucial than the question of how this recognition is made active and organic to the methodology of Toybox. The Project needs to ask what Travellers collectively bring to the Project and regard them as active partners rather than passive clients. The whole Traveller community – the Traveller Support Movement, Traveller activists, Traveller parents and Traveller children – needs to be engaged in ensuring that, in Martin Collins’ memorable phrase, Toybox is educating for liberation rather than to ‘domesticate’. Towards this end, the Project should negotiate a new relationship with a partner from the Traveller Support Movement at the beginning of its next phase – clearly the question of how this is managed rests with the two lead organisations and any potential TSM partner. But it is imperative that this is done if the project is to meet its core aims and objectives. The Project should also address the Traveller/Settled power differential – and the potential institutional racism associated with it - in a number of ways:

1. Toybox should look at the ways in which the use of Traveller-specific, Traveller appropriate resources can be increased. The Project should also consider the setting up of a Toybox library within local partner Traveller Support Groups. This initiative was successful in the Herefordshire Early Years Traveller project which provided a model for Toybox.

2. Toybox should increase the use of Traveller story tellers and other informal educational Traveller community resources.

3. Toybox should develop a model of skilling up Traveller support workers/work placements. The project has some experience of challenges and difficulties that arise from this kind of initiative but these should be used to develop and enhance the model rather than excuse any absence of activity.

4. The Project should recognise formally the need for Travellers’ own racism survival skills that come from parents and the wider community. For example, the question of what to do when someone calls you a ‘knacker’ or a ‘Gyppo’ or a ‘Stoke’ is routinely present for all Traveller children in the education system. Only other Travellers can effectively or appropriately help answer this question for Traveller children.

There should therefore be a broader focus on identifying Traveller educators and ‘experts’ in the widest sense of the term and identifying ways in which they could formally or informally integrate into service delivery.

Alongside this, the project might usefully commission a piece of research from an organisation like An Múna Tober examining how young Travellers play (and played one or two generations ago). This would begin to situate the work in the context of recognition of ethnic and cultural specificity rather than any implicit or explicit assumption of cultural deficit.

In terms of the practicalities of renewing partnership with the Traveller Support Movement, the Project could very usefully formalise and integrate support from TSM through links that have already been established with Pavee Point. It is vital that the Project secures a strategic partner within the TSM to replace Traveller Movement NI and ensure a critical Traveller engagement with the project.

---

6 “Sure Start” is a British Government programme intended to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. Sure Start in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. Sure Start was introduced in Northern Ireland during 2000/01. In July 2000, Ministerial approval was given for 15 programmes across Northern Ireland, with full year funding for these programmes amounting to £4 million. The programme suggests.

7 The introduction of Sure Start in Northern Ireland means that some 10,000 children aged under the age of four and their families have access to the services provided through the programme… Each of the 15 successful Sure Start programmes in the initial round of bidding targeted at least one deprived ward as defined using the Robson and....
Further thought should be given to actively linking the policy and service delivery aspects of the project in a reflective manner. For example, a session on this theme with all the key workers would create an appropriate space for developing this aspect of the work.

The Project could be more proactive in raising its profile amongst the policy makers and implementers locally. It should create more operational and strategic working partnerships with local Childcare Partnerships, Sure Start projects and in particular Children’s Services Planners.

More generally, Toybox could usefully review its strategic use of publicity. While the formal project launch was very successful and widely reported, there is an opportunity for further local press and publicity work – informing people about the project and celebrating its successes.

The project is working successfully within its current partnership and resourcing model. There may, however, be a strong case for mainstreaming at some time in the future. Certainly the need and demand for the service is unlikely to disappear in the short to medium term. In this context, Sure Start may appear to be an appropriate context for mainstreaming although it bears emphasis that Toybox has been successful precisely because it is a regional rather than a local model.6

The other recommendations that follow are put in the context of budgeting and resource restraints. The Project could usefully be developed in these areas and along these lines but not without a proportionate increase in budget and resourcing.

The Project should aspire to engage the whole Traveller pre-school population and parents across the north of Ireland. This obviously has huge resource implications (and some ideological and project rationale implications since not all Travellers are ‘disadvantaged’).

The Project should find capacity to allow an increased element of ‘follow-up’ with children who have experienced Toybox but have moved on to pre-school and school levels. Staff are happy to do this but it clearly has implications in terms of management of current workload.

The Project should engage with the wider pre-school system in a more structured and proactive way. Staff are happy to do this but it needs to be developed in the context of Save the Children and NIPPA’s wider policy-related work. In this context, it is particularly important that the lessons and experience of Toybox should inform the work of the statutory Forum on Traveller Education. At its heart, Toybox should reflectively address two complimentary questions: Are Traveller children eager to learn and ready for school? Are schools eager to teach and ready for Travellers? Toybox cannot possibly answer either one of these on its own. However, it has made a major and innovative contribution in this area over the first three years and it is capable of making an even greater and more focused one over the next two years or more.

Bibliography
Department of Education 2001 New Targeting Social Need (NTSN). Analysis of existing information on education participation, achievement and outcomes for disadvantaged individuals and groups.

Department of Education 2003. ‘Traveller Education Strategy: Scope & Terms of Reference 17/10/03’.


Appendix 1

Consultations carried out with children to seek their views on the Toybox Initiative

Introduction
The purpose of the consultations was to complete the overall Toybox Evaluation by giving consideration to the voice of the child regarding children’s views on the Toybox Initiative. Given that the outcomes for children are clearly stated in the aims of the project, it is important to listen to children’s responses in order to fully evaluate the initiative.

Key questions
The three main questions, which the researcher and evaluator Robbie McVeigh were keen to obtain children’s perspectives on, were:-

1. What did the ‘toy lady’ do when she was with you?
2. Why do you think she was doing the toys with you?
3. Is there anything that would make the toys better or more fun?

Sample
Consultations were carried out in each of the four areas where the project was implemented – Belfast, Derry/Strabane, Newry/South Armagh and Coalisland/Dungannon.

A total of 17 children aged between 4 and 6 years old took part:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newry/South Armagh</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry/Strabane</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalisland/Dungannon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methodology
It was felt that in order to help the children voice genuine responses to these questions appropriate methods needed to be applied.

Puppets were used to engage children in conversations around the key questions. Puppets can often attract a child’s interest and some children find it easier and more fun to talk through the puppets rather than talk directly to the adults.

Photographs showing the children playing with the toys and interacting with the Toybox staff were also used.

A selection of the toys used during the project was also available.

The children consulted were ‘graduates’ of the initiative and therefore it was felt that something concrete may be needed to jog children’s memories. It was, after all, eight months since some of the children had participated in the programme.

The following are examples of the guidelines, (on ways of using the puppets, to help obtain children’s responses) which were given to NIPPA staff carrying out the consultations:-

“I have brought two little friends with me to meet you, their names are Jimmy and Kim they want to say hello to you.” (Children can shake hands with the puppets)

“They are very excited to come and see you to-day and they want to talk to you about some things.”

“Jim wants to know about the lady in the photograph, who is she?”

“Kim says, what did she do when she came to visit you?”

“Jim wants to know why she came to play with you?”

“Kim is wondering what toy you like playing with best?”

Children’s Responses to Consultation Visits

NIPPA early years specialists carried out the consultations accompanied by the Toybox project worker/s for that area.

On each visit, the children immediately recognised and were very excited to see the Toybox staff member/members.

Responses included:

“Kirstie/ Rita, I really miss you.”

“Angela I love you.”

“Shirley are you coming to see us to-day?”

When asked about the ladies in the photographs, responses included:

“That’s Deirdre she came to visit me.”

“That’s Kirstie and Rita.”
When the children were asked why the staff came to play with them, responses included:

“Cause she likes me”
“She came to give us toys and play with us”
“Don’t know”
“Our mummies and daddies went to their workshops, went to their work”
“She brought us toys to play with”
“She gave us toys and played with us”

Children talked about the activities they engaged in with the staff:

“Animals that stick”
“Painting and dough”
“She brought cars and mine went faster”
“We made snowmen with dough and she played cars, it went under the TV she should have driven it faster”
“Playing doctors, Shirley and Isaac were sick, I injected Shirley’s belly.”
“Saying, Mary had a little Lamb” (recited this nursery rhyme in full, followed by Humpty Dumpty)

Children’s favourite activities included:

“I liked the story books best” (2 children)
“I like the water”
“I liked dressing up as the princess”
“A rocket, I could hit bad aliens with it”
“The rockets pump it up and go up into space”
“Choo choo train”
“Drawing dinosaurs”

When asked if there were any toys they didn’t like or any activities they did not like doing, children’s responses included:

“I liked everything”
“I liked her coming”
“There was nothing I didn’t like”

When asked if there was anything that would have made the toys/ visits better, responses included:

“A bike” When adult asked how would it fit into the car the child replied “Just squeeze it and push the boot down hard”
“Balloons”
“Bring cars and puzzles”

Other responses:

During one of the consultations, children talked about the staff bringing them school bags for starting school and this led on to talk about school:

“It’s great fun”
“I learn words, I like words and singing”
“I like painting”
“I like laughing”

“The teacher’s teaching you how to write cards and things”
“My friends at school are Naomi, Manny and Paddy”

At another consultation visit one little boy was proudly wearing two medals around his neck. When asked what he had got the medals for he replied: “running”. His favourite time at school was playtime and his friend was Frances (non-Traveller).
Responses regarding school from other consultation visits included:

“I like school, I like people, my teacher is called Mrs [x]”

“I hate school, the teacher roars at me”

“I like reading and writing best”

“I like it when we play tig tag”

“I have one day left at school, then I am off for a hundred days, then I go into P2”

Visual Responses
Children communicate in many ways and during one of the consultations the children made pictures of their recollections of the visits (for the puppets to take away!) These included:

“This is a picture of me, Angela and the fire engine”

“This is me dressed up like a princess, this is the castle”

“This is Angela”

Assessment of Responses to Key Questions

What the staff did when they were playing with the children

Responses to what the staff did with the children on the visits showed that a wide range of activities were provided and that staff interacted in a sensitive manner. These activities along with sensitive interactions would have provided children with opportunities for problem solving, language development, emotional satisfaction and creativity.

The excited and eager way the children greeted the Toybox staff would seem to indicate that children had really enjoyed the visits and good relationships had been developed. This would create an appropriate environment to help children learn about social relationships and develop positive attitudes to themselves, others and to future learning.

Although children will play and learn through play, whether or not we provide the resources, research shows that the involvement of a sensitive adult can lead to higher level thinking. According to Vygotsky children learn best in a social context and ‘scaffolding’ a child while promoting independence will take children to the edge of their zone of proximal development (reach their full potential).

Why do you think they were doing the toys with you?
Questions about why the staff were doing the activities with the children can be more difficult for children of this age group to respond to. Research shows that it is easier for young children to respond to ‘what’ questions rather than ‘why’ questions which require more abstract thinking. Perhaps too, not enough thought was given to how these questions were phrased or extended.

One child understood that her parents had attended ‘workshops’ which had led to the visits. Perhaps this conversation could have been extended to enquire if the child had any understanding of what the workshops were about.

Another child responded “she does it because she likes me.” In terms of helping children to develop positive attitudes towards themselves this would seem to be quite significant.

Is there anything that would make the toys better or more fun?
Children indicated that they were very happy with the visits, “I liked everything.”

In terms of what would have made it better it would appear that it was more of a ‘wish list’ of toys which children focused on, “She could bring a bike.”

It would seem that from the children’s perspective the staff visits had been a very positive experience and something they looked forward to. “I really miss her.”

Conversations about school life

Responses from the majority of the children, who had moved on to school, would indicate that they were eager to learn and were enjoying the school environment.

“I like school”

“I know how to spell cat, C-A-T”

“I love singing in the singing corner”

Some of the responses indicated some degree of integration with non-Traveller children. When a few of the children named friends at school, the Toybox staff member was able to say “that is not a child from the Travelling community.”

The little boy who was proudly wearing two medals, which he had been presented with at sports day, was a child, with whom the Toybox staff member had initially found it hard to engage. Apparently he needed a lot of encouragement to participate in the play during the early home visits.
For one child school was not such a good experience, “I hate school, the teacher roars at me.”

During conversations with one group of children around the ‘happy and sad’ faces of the puppets, discussions followed about what made the children happy and sad at school.

“I am sad when John and Willie are naughty to me, I kick them.” The Toybox staff member knew that they were referring to other Traveller children, demonstrating that conflict between children arises for many reasons.

Summary/Conclusion

Giving the children a voice to express their views on the Toybox Initiative shows that it was a very positive experience for them. Children had build up good relationships with the staff and mutual respect was in evidence. The self esteem that comes with being valued by significant adults will empower children to develop other relationships.

The majority of children appeared to be enjoying school life and were displaying an eagerness to learn. None of the children indicated that they had experienced anti-Traveller racism at school. However, the right questions may not have been asked to reveal evidence on this issue, as this was not one of the key objectives of these consultations. In addition the Belfast group of children were attending a school for Traveller children only.

The majority of the children were very confident, although research seems to suggest that Traveller children are more confident than other children because of their experiences of having to be very independent at home and of being looked after by siblings.

Recommendations for further consultations

- Review the suggested questions to assess if these could be improved.
  Consider asking questions around children’s play activities outside of the project to try to gain an insight into cultural specific play which could then be incorporated into the work of the Toybox project.
Appendix 2

PSI Working Group Report on Travellers
Recommendations on Education and Government Response

In 2000 a Promoting Social Inclusion working group, including Traveller Movement NI, Save the Children and Barnardo’s alongside Government Department representatives, produced a report containing 33 recommendations, the largest section of these focused on education. Government responded in late 2002, accepting at least the thrust of all but one recommendation (it emphatically rejected the report’s call to close St. Mary’s Traveller-only primary school in Belfast).

This appendix lists just four of those recommendations and the Government responses to them – those that are most relevant to Toybox. These cover the need for target setting and effective monitoring (Recommendation 4); the need for a targeted initiative to promote use of pre-school provision by Travellers (Recommendation 14); facilitating the development of a family/community based learning culture among Travellers (Recommendation 21); and the collection of systematic data relating to Traveller education (Recommendation 22).

The Toybox project has, within the limitations of its resources, attempted to address the core principles and practice of these recommendations through its activities. Sadly, despite the passage of five years or more since the report, progress by Government and statutory organisations in addressing most of the 32 accepted recommendations has been poor.

Even the Traveller thematic group, which was established within the remit of the Race Equality Forum to monitor the implementation of the recommendations by Government Departments, failed to develop a coherent role and is not currently continuing to be convened by OFMDFM – leaving no comprehensive monitoring mechanism in place.

Recommendation 4

All Government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies should establish and/or identify an existing Unit, headed by a senior officer, to oversee the provision of services for Travellers within its particular area of responsibility. The unit should:

- Ensure that the needs of Travellers are named and addressed in a culturally appropriate manner in all aspects of the organisation’s work;
- Set clearly defined priorities, targets and timescales in relation to plans to address the identified needs of Travellers;
- Establish comprehensive monitoring systems to provide data on the take-up and use of the organisation’s services by Travellers and on the extent to which targets and priorities set have been met;
- Include representatives from Traveller and voluntary organisations and also establish effective systems of consultation and participation with the Traveller community more generally.

All Government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies should ensure that all of their staff receive anti-racist training with regard to working with and meeting the needs of Travellers. Each organisation should consult with the Equality Commission on the nature and evaluation of such training and bear in mind any relevant guidelines for training it or other organisations such as the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities have produced. The outcome of this should be reported to the Inter-Agency Forum.

Such training should aim to:

- Increase awareness of the cultures and lifestyles of Travellers;
- Develop an appreciation of the concepts of racism, institutional racism and sedentarism and their effects upon Travellers;
- Increase awareness of the particular needs of Travellers within the specific organisation’s area of responsibility and how staff should most appropriately address these needs;
- With regard to education and schools, anti-racist training should be included within initial teacher training and also provided to allied professionals such as Advisers, Education Welfare Officers and Educational Psychologists.
Government Response:

The Government supports the establishment of effective systems for identifying and monitoring the needs of Travellers and evaluating the effectiveness of existing provision.

However, we are not persuaded that the model proposed in Recommendation 4 is necessarily the best way of achieving this in all cases, although certain bodies have used this sort of approach: for example within the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), a sergeant in each District Command Unit has responsibility for liaison with members of minority groups and for offering support to victims of racist incidents.

While there is a need for to establish clear responsibilities and appropriate arrangements for liaison within organisations that have regular dealings with Travellers, this need not require specialist Traveller Units or dedicated Traveller liaison officers. There are a variety of different – highly effective - arrangements already in place to ensure that needs are identified and met and that there is good liaison over Travellers’ issues. Precise structures and liaison with Travellers should be a matter for the management of the Department or organisation concerned. A contact list for key Government Departments and Agencies, the Northern Ireland Office and the police is included at Annex 3.

On the issue of anti-racist training, Departments have already accomplished much in the context of their section 75 obligations. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, with Departments, will consider the need for further training on race issues generally and on Travellers issues in particular. The approach will be to ensure that staff participate in training which is appropriate to their needs, with those who have direct contact with the public being prioritised.

All Departments will consider the need for specialised training in communicating with and understanding the needs of traditionally marginalised groups in the context of their Equality Schemes.

Actions and timescale:

- All Departments to review liaison arrangements – by end 2004
- All Departments to review training needs and to consider need for further training on Travellers issues - by end 2004.
- Departments to exchange examples of best practice within the context of the Race Forum on an ongoing basis.

Lead Department:

All Departments. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to co-ordinate.

Recommendation No. 14

The Department of Education should establish a targeted initiative aimed at promoting use of integrated (off-site) nursery and pre-school provision by Travellers. In addition, and where necessary, the Department of Education should also facilitate good quality on-site pre-school provision by consideration of core funding, staff training and service support. Moreover, Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools should establish linkages between on-site provision and mainstream nursery and primary schools to help facilitate the subsequent transfer of Traveller children from these pre-school groups.

Government response:

The Government supports action to improve Traveller participation in education. The Department of Education is committed to working with relevant Non Departmental Public Bodies, agencies and voluntary groups including Traveller representatives, to explore initiatives to improve Traveller children participation. The Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools support a range of initiatives to improve the education of Traveller children and their access to education.

The Pre-School Education Advisory Groups exercise a degree of flexibility when dealing with Travellers, which is not extended to the non-Traveller population - ongoing.

The Traveller Liaison Officers across the Education and Library Boards continue to promote up-take and facilitate access of Traveller children to pre-school education. In addition, the forum for the Education of Travellers’ Children (NI) is currently devising guidelines for the successful transfer of Traveller children from nursery and pre-school to primary schools.

Special consideration will be given to access to pre-school education of Traveller children from a nomadic background.

Action and timescale:

To initiate a specific 2/3 year drive to enhance the participation of Traveller children in integrated nursery and pre-school education, entailing:

- the ascertaining of present levels of participation by Traveller children and the associated Early Learning Centres;
• identifying potential children numbers and centres and targeting growth accordingly;
• providing Traveller parents with necessary information as to availability of provision;
• providing nursery and pre-school education centres with necessary guidance and curriculum support;
• providing Traveller parents with an associated learning programme such as DELTA (Developing Everyone’s Learning and Thinking Abilities) during the period April 2003 - April 2005.

Lead Department:
The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 21
The Department of Education, in association with Education and Library Boards and in collaboration with Traveller Organisations, should help facilitate the development of a family/community based learning culture among Travellers.

More specifically, this should include working in partnership with Traveller organisations and the Traveller community, the proposed Traveller Support Workers (Recommendation 3) and Traveller Liaison Officers from other relevant Departments and Agencies, particularly DHSSPS and DEL (Recommendation 4) to:

• Ensure the fullest access of Travellers to programmes such as DHSSPS’s Sure-Start, potentially through a Northern Ireland wide approach, as well as Out of School hours learning and childcare initiatives through the New Opportunities Fund;
• Establish family literacy centres with access to adult education within existing Traveller communities where appropriate;
• Develop broader programmes of intervention aimed at linking such educational initiatives with training and employment programmes (e.g. Traveller education workers, classroom assistants and youth workers) and capacity building measures more broadly within the Traveller community.

Government response:
The Government accepts the thrust of the recommendation.

There is an urgent requirement to have culturally appropriate provision designed to meet the specific needs of adult Travellers, both individually and collectively. Many adult Travellers lack literacy and feel intimidated by formal situations i.e. FE Colleges etc. A desire has been expressed for the provision of literacy, self development and creative classes in a non threatening environment.

Action and timescale:
Initiate a programme (as in the thrust of Recommendation 14) in geographical area(s) of identified need and demand, to enhance the participation of Travellers in training and employment programmes relevant to the needs of the Traveller community, and, adult education with college-site links. Programme to run from September 2003 - April 2005.

Lead Department:
The Department of Education.

Recommendation No. 22
Within its overall ethnic monitoring procedures, the Department of Education should collect systematic data on applications for admission and selection, school suspensions and exclusions, school attendance and educational achievement (including levels of attainment at formal Key Stages) for Traveller children. Such data should be collected and presented in a form suitable to allow the measurement of progress in relation to targets and priorities set.

Government response:
The Government accepts this recommendation and considers that it should apply to all categories of children from a minority ethnic background (including Traveller children).

The Forum for the Education of Traveller Children has already begun to gather such data in schools. A review is to commence in April 2003, and implementation of outcomes to begin by January 2004.

The Forum has initiated a five-Board collation of baseline statistics. This is being undertaken initially for the 2001/2002 school year and thereafter annually. The data pertains to specific information on each Traveller child in Northern Ireland. Areas covered are:

• Pre-School uptake
• Individual attendance percentages
• Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy
• Examination results
• End of Key Stage levels
• EOTAS (Education Other Than At School)
• After-school provision
This information should inform future provision. As part of its overall ethnic monitoring procedures, the Department collects and analyses data on the qualifications and destinations of Traveller school leavers. Data on Travellers is now also collated in the Summary of Annual Examination Results.

In 2002/2003 schools will electronically report the ethnicity codes for included pupils at Key Stage 3 via the Electronic Data Interchange to Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment. Individual pupil data is not recorded at Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2; therefore a project will be initiated to manually collect ethnicity data on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils. The review is due to commence during April 2003.

**Action and timescale:**

Begin project to collect manually, ethnicity data on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils - April 2003.

**Lead Department:**
The Department of Education.
“Education shall aim at developing the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active life in a free society and foster respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others.”

Article 29 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Education needs to be about liberating Travellers, not about domesticating them. True Education will give Travellers the tools to challenge their oppression rather than teaching them how to become acceptable in a settled world.”

Martin Collins, Pavee Point