

**“It May Look Good But Does it
Actually Work?” Developing
Evidence-Informed Approaches to
the Design, Delivery and Evaluation
of Early Childhood Programmes**

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The Presentation

1. The nature of the problem: typical approaches to designing services for children
2. An alternative approach that is outcomes-focused and evidence-informed
3. An example – the Media Initiative for Children* in Northern Ireland
4. Issues and challenges
5. Next steps

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1. The nature of the problem: typical approaches to designing services for children* ...

*These arguments are taken and adapted from the Common Language framework developed by Dartington-i (see: www.commonlanguage.org.uk)

1. The nature of the problem: typical approaches to designing services for children ...



Investments

**1. The nature of the problem:
typical approaches to designing
services for children ...**



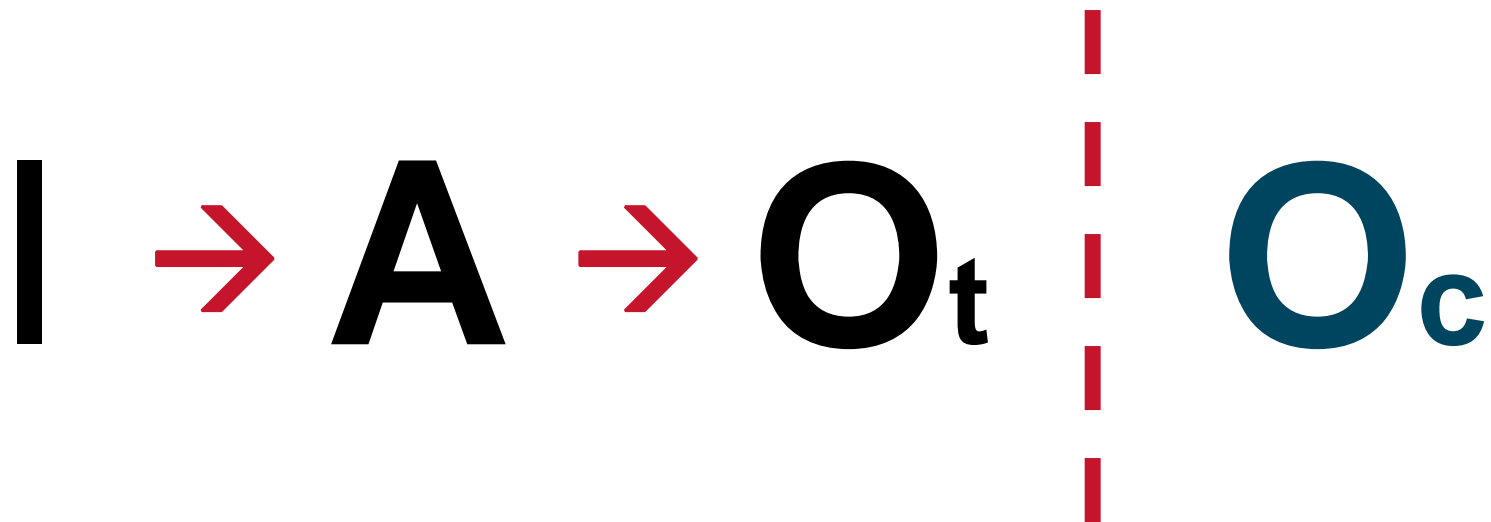
Activities

**1. The nature of the problem:
typical approaches to designing
services for children ...**



Outputs

1. The nature of the problem: typical approaches to designing services for children ...



Outcomes

2. An alternative approach that is ...

- a. Outcomes-focused
- b. Evidence-based

a. Outcomes-focused ...

O_c

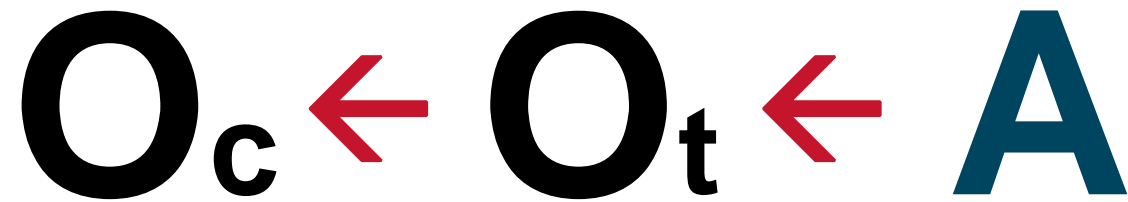
Outcomes

a. Outcomes-focused ...

$$O_c \leftarrow O_t$$

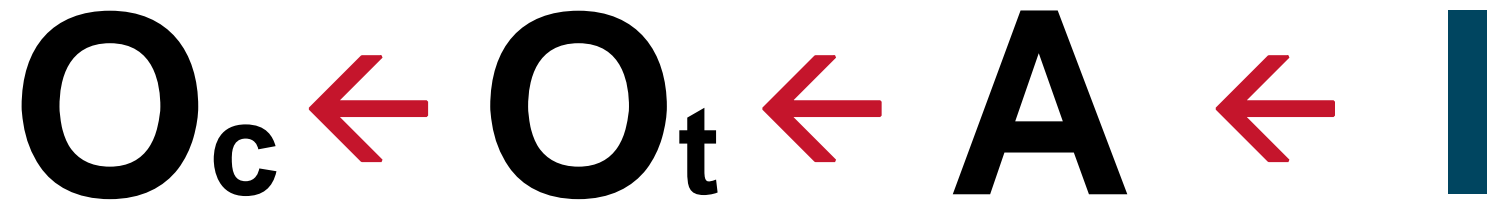
Outputs

a. Outcomes-focused ...



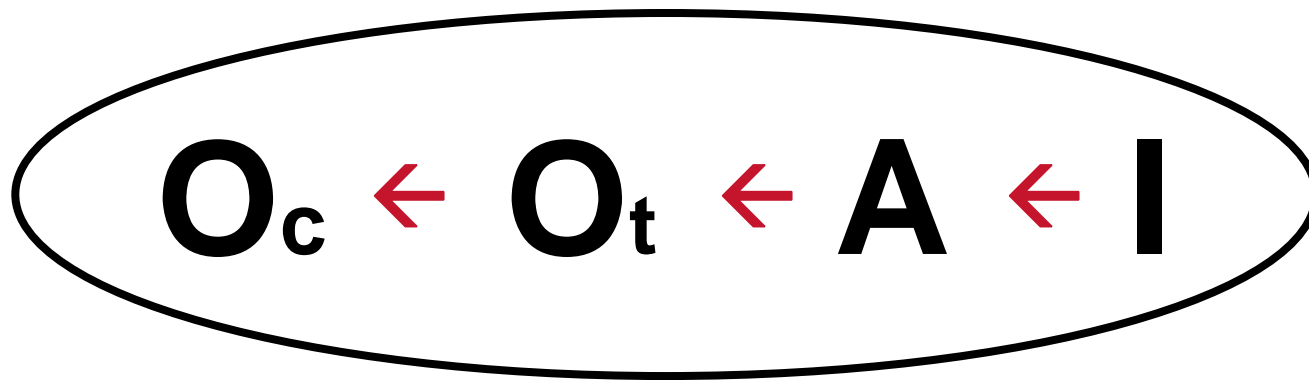
Activities

a. Outcomes-focused ...



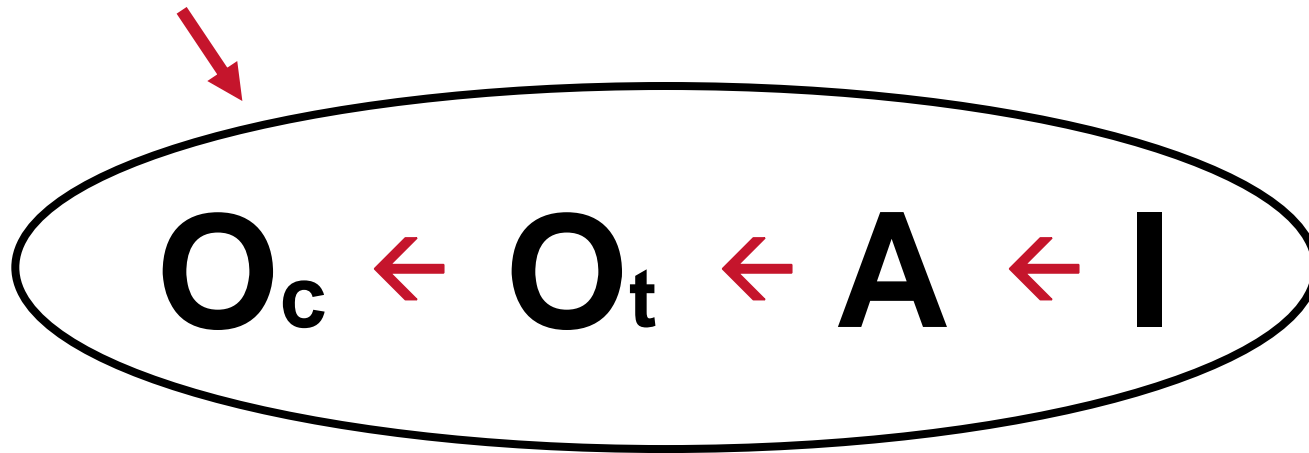
Investments

b. Evidence-informed ...



b. Evidence-informed ...

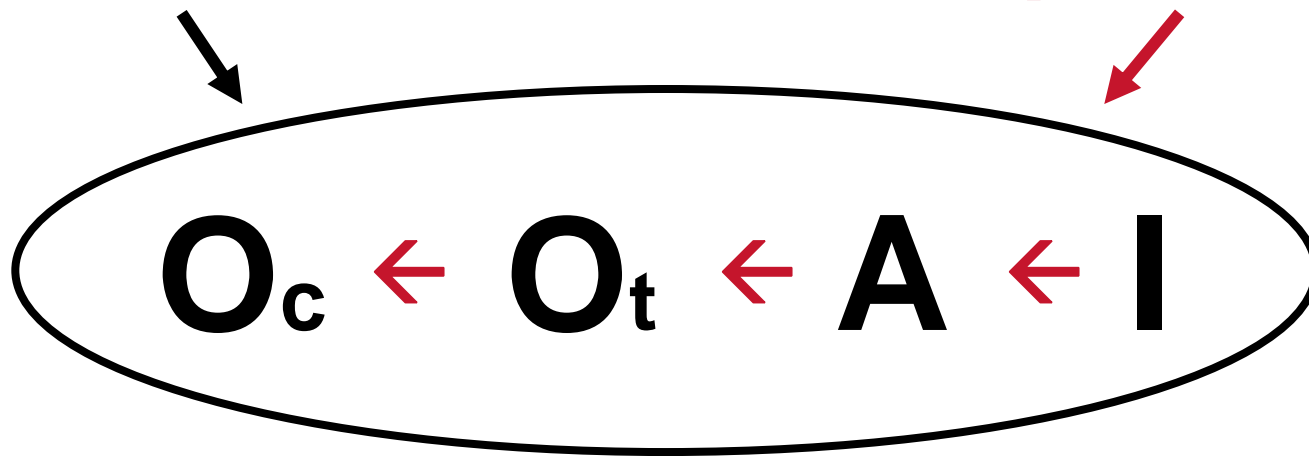
Consultation



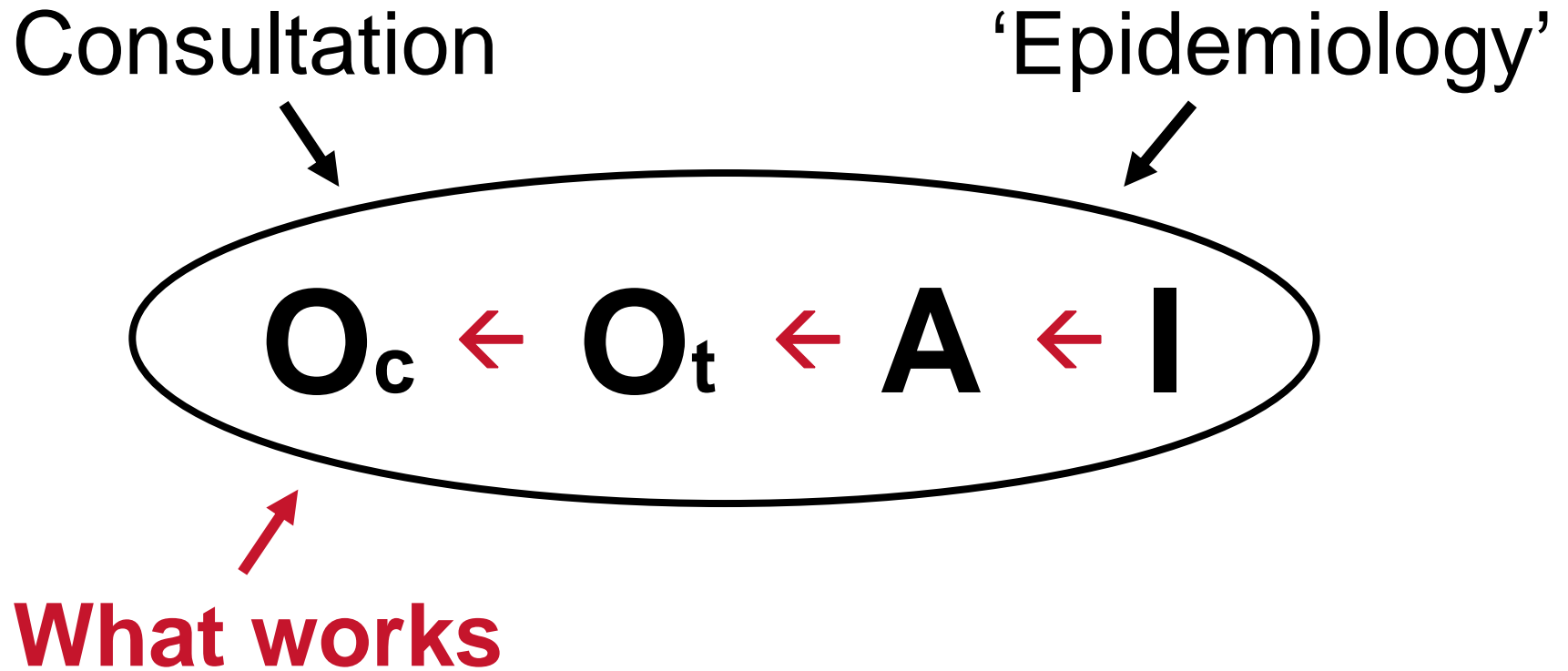
b. Evidence-informed ...

Consultation

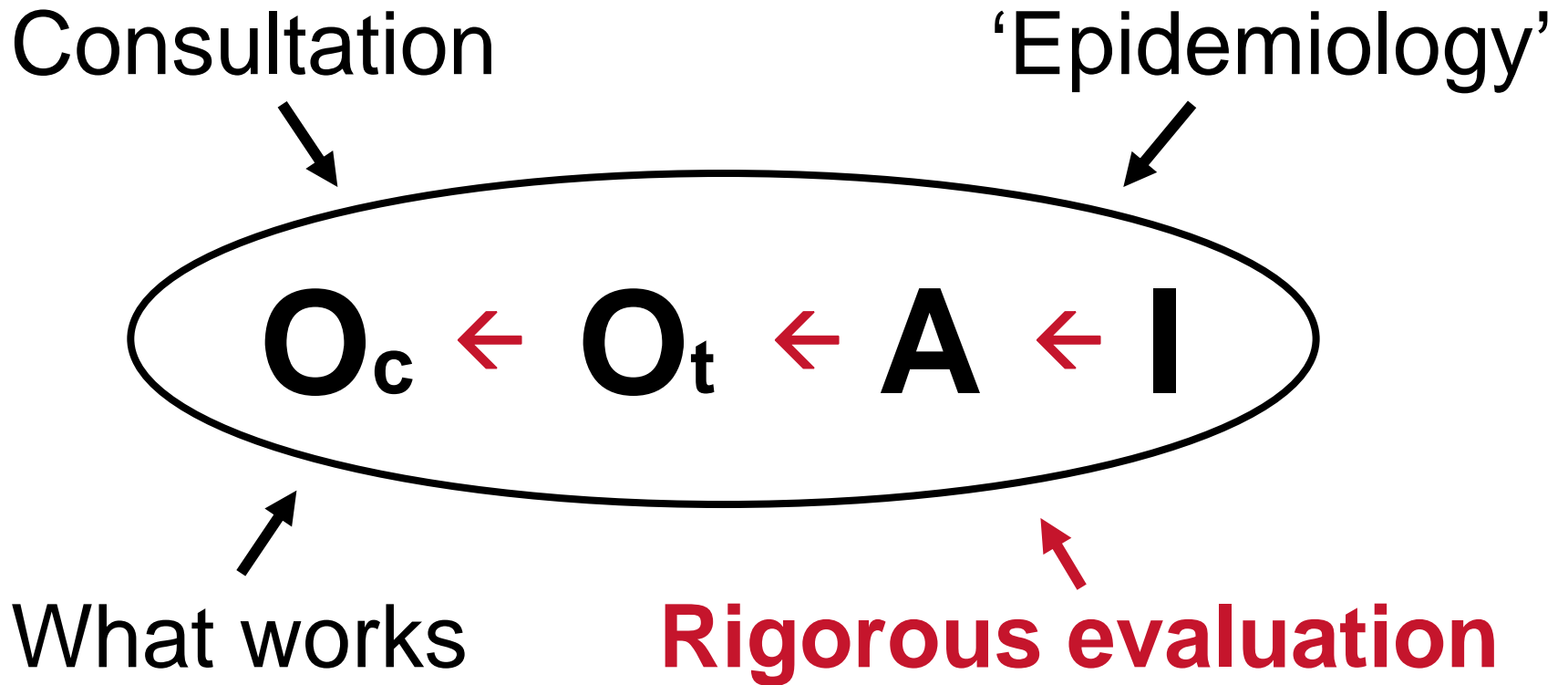
Epidemiology



b. Evidence-informed ...



b. Evidence-informed ...



3. An example – the Media Initiative for Children in Northern Ireland

Short media messages ...



... followed up with curricular resources

www.pii-mifc.org



early years
the organisation for young children



peace initiatives institute

a. 'Epidemiology'

By the age of three:

- children were developing awareness of and attitudes towards race and disability
- children were not aware of Catholic/Protestant divisions in Northern Ireland
- Protestant and Catholic children were demonstrating preferences for the cultural events and symbols associated with their own community.

Percentage of 3 Year Olds Who:	Catholics	Protestants
Do not like Orange Marchers	18%	3%
Do not like the Police	34%	15%
Prefer the British Union Flag	36%	60%
Prefer the Irish Tricolour Flag	64%	40%

b. Key outcomes identified:

Decided to develop a programme that could:

1. Increase children's ability to recognise instances of exclusion.
2. Increase children's understanding of how being excluded makes someone feel.
3. Increase children's willingness to be inclusive of those who are different to themselves.
4. Increase children's awareness of and positive attitudes towards their own and other people's cultures and traditions

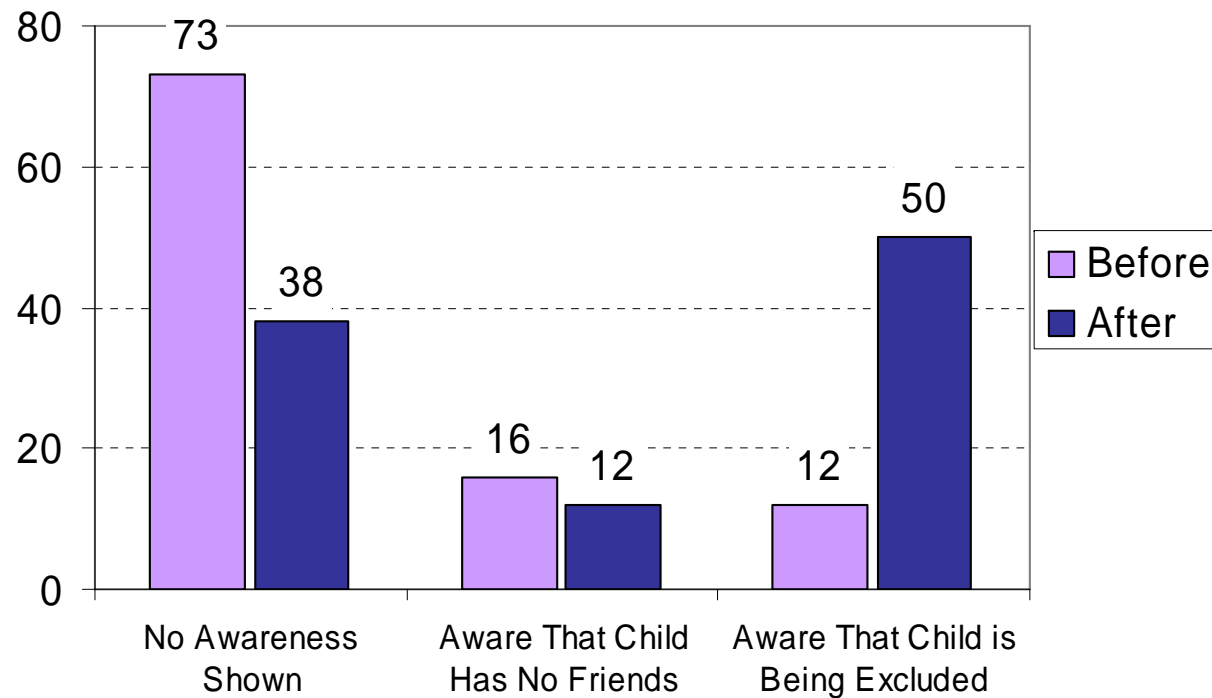
C. The Programme:

Key elements of the Media Initiative for Children:

1. Short animations for television.
2. Full curriculum and resource pack for playgroups and nurseries.
3. Events and activities for parents.
4. Training for playgroup and nursery leaders.
5. Ongoing support for playgroups and nurseries.

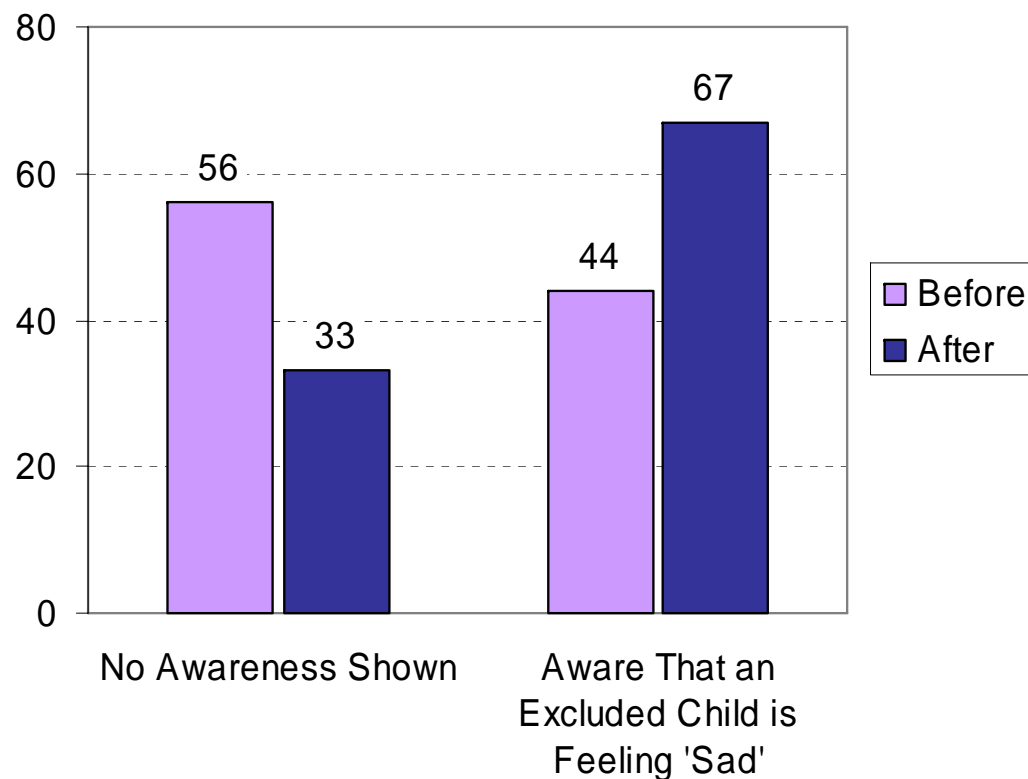
d. The Evaluation of the Pilot Programme

Outcome 1: Preschool Children's Ability to Recognise that a Child is Being Excluded (%)



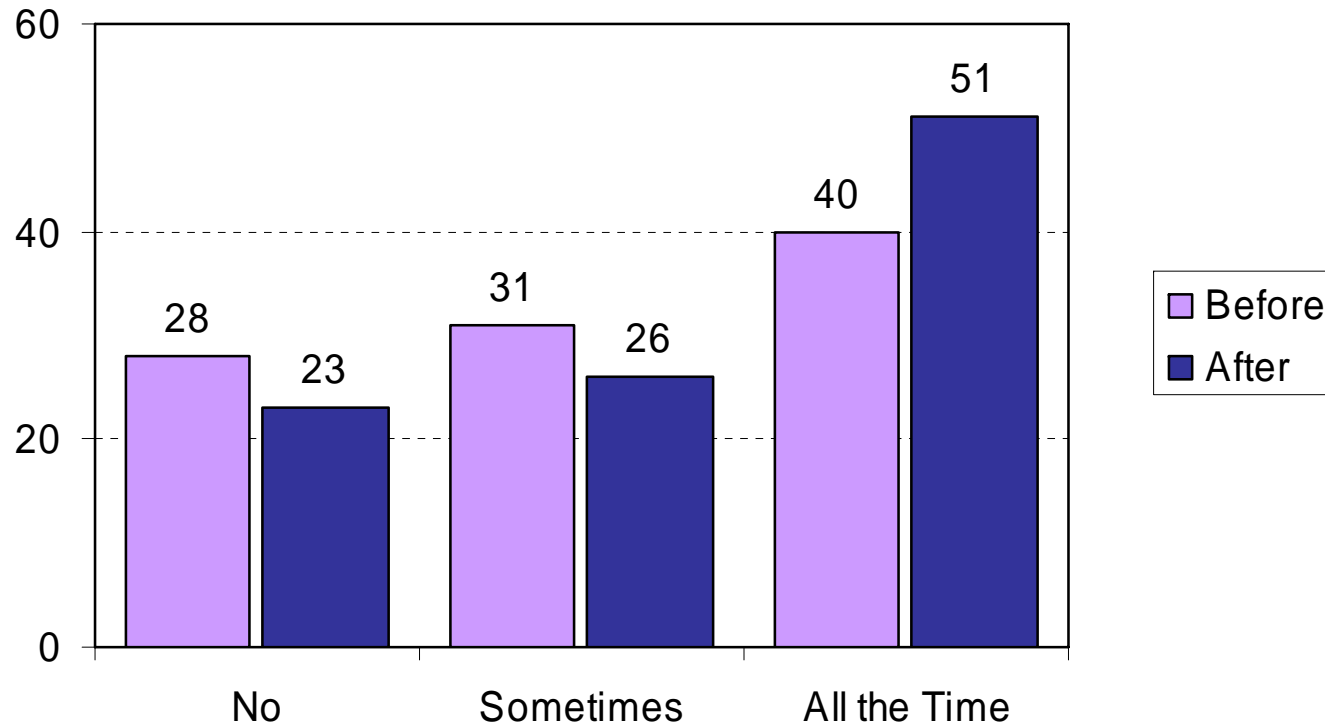
d. The Evaluation of the Pilot Programme

Outcome 2: Preschool Children's Ability to Recognise How a Child Who is Excluded Feels (%)



d. The Evaluation of the Pilot Programme

Outcome 3: Preschool Children's Willingness to Play with a Chinese Girl (%)



e. Next Stages in the Evaluation

1. Just commencing a full randomised controlled trial (RCT) with 80 playgroups/nurseries and over 1,500 3-4 year olds
2. Including measures on the fourth outcome and also on outcomes for parents and playgroup/nursery leaders
3. Four indepth qualitative case studies to run alongside the RCT

4. Issues and Challenges

1. Requires sea-change in approach to the design and delivery of children's services
2. Cost and commitment
3. Ethical considerations
4. Children's rights and participation
5. Need to remain grounded methodologically:
 - Maintaining a commitment to multiple methods
 - Being very careful about the claims that can be made

5. Next Steps ...

1. The 'Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Diversity' (supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation)
2. A major new inter-disciplinary programme of research being established at Queen's University Belfast: 'Improving Children's Lives' (funded by Atlantic Philanthropies)

For more information see: www.paulconnolly.net