



The BELONG Programme

Final Evaluation Report

(Report 3 of 3 in the evaluation of the programme)

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About the Child and Family Research Centre

The Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) at the National University of Ireland, Galway was established in 2001 as a policy unit and expanded into a Centre, launched by President McAleese, in 2007. The CFRC is a partnership between the Health Service Executive (HSE) and NUI Galway. In 2008, it was awarded the first UNESCO Chair for the Republic of Ireland on the theme of 'Children, Youth and Civic Engagement'. It is widely recognised as being at the forefront of research, education and training in Family Support theory and practice. It engages in research, evaluation and service design relating to practice, policy and interventions in the lives of children. All research undertaken by the CFRC is strongly connected to applied work for children and families, and relevant to a broad range of stakeholders, including service users, policy-makers, politicians, service managers and front-line staff.

The CFRC is strongly concerned with best practice and engaged in the evaluation and delivery of interventions that are altering child welfare services and the market for research on children in Ireland. Through its partnership with the HSE, the CFRC is at the heart of policy, research and evaluation activities that inform the delivery system for child health and welfare, and is engaged in a range of assessments of new and internationally tested interventions and initiatives aimed at targeting social and economic disadvantage among children and families. The CFRC has expanded in response to need in the practice world and is closely aligned with the Atlantic Philanthropies' programme of investment in sites and services to improve outcomes for children in Ireland in the domains of physical and mental health, education and community connectedness.

Across all its teaching, research and education activities, the CFRC's strong links to practice and expertise in the training and support of professionals engaged in service delivery has considerable value for the project proposed. Much of the CFRC's current portfolio of contracted work involves assisting services in designing interventions that are needs-based, flexible, accessible and delivered in partnership. In particular, the CFRC has extensive research and evaluation experience with complex community initiatives involving a broad range of stakeholders and agencies.

For further information, please see www.childandfamilyresearch.ie

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The evaluation of the BELONG Programme would not have been possible without support and input from a range of individuals and organisations. The Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) team would like to acknowledge and to say thank you to:

- The children and parents involved with BELONG.
- The children, school principals and teachers who supported the implementation of the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT).
- Representatives from statutory, community and voluntary agencies.
- BELONG's Expert Advisory Group.
- BELONG's Board of Management (both current and former members).
- BELONG Staff Team (both current and former members).
- Team of International Experts who supported the CFRC in methodological and design issues.

Executive Summary

Background and development of BELONG Partnership

The Southern Area of Northern Ireland is home to a large proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children, with 2,477 children from ethnic minority groups currently enrolled in schools in the Southern Education and Library Board Area (Department of Education, 2013). There are also 1,301 members of the Traveller community living in Northern Ireland (Russell, 2013). In 2003, the Southern Area Children and Young People's Committee (SACYPC) established a Working Group with the remit of meeting the needs of BME children and young people in the then Health and Social Care Board, Southern Area of Northern Ireland. Comprising a partnership of statutory and voluntary organisations working in the BME and children's sectors, the aims of the Working Group were to empower BME children and young people to realise their potential and be socially included in Northern Ireland, and to ensure that services were fully accessible to them. Between 2007 and 2008, with grant support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, this Working Group undertook planning and service development work for a family support programme for BME children, which became known as BELONG.

The collective insights of the Working Group, along with the findings of a commissioned epidemiological study (Biggart *et al*, 2009), formed the basis for the development of BELONG's Service Development Plan Proposal, which relates to the first 3 years of the Working Group's strategy for 7-12 year-olds. This plan was submitted to The Atlantic Philanthropies in 2008, who committed funding for its implementation. The BELONG Programme became operational in April 2009 and is supported by a partnership made up of representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors, some of whom were existing members of the BME Working Group. The South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) is the anchor organisation, holding management and administrative responsibility for the BELONG Programme. Another key element of BELONG's governance is its Expert Advisory Group (EAG), which provides quality assurance for the programme and the evaluation (BELONG, 2009, p. 14).

The BELONG Programme

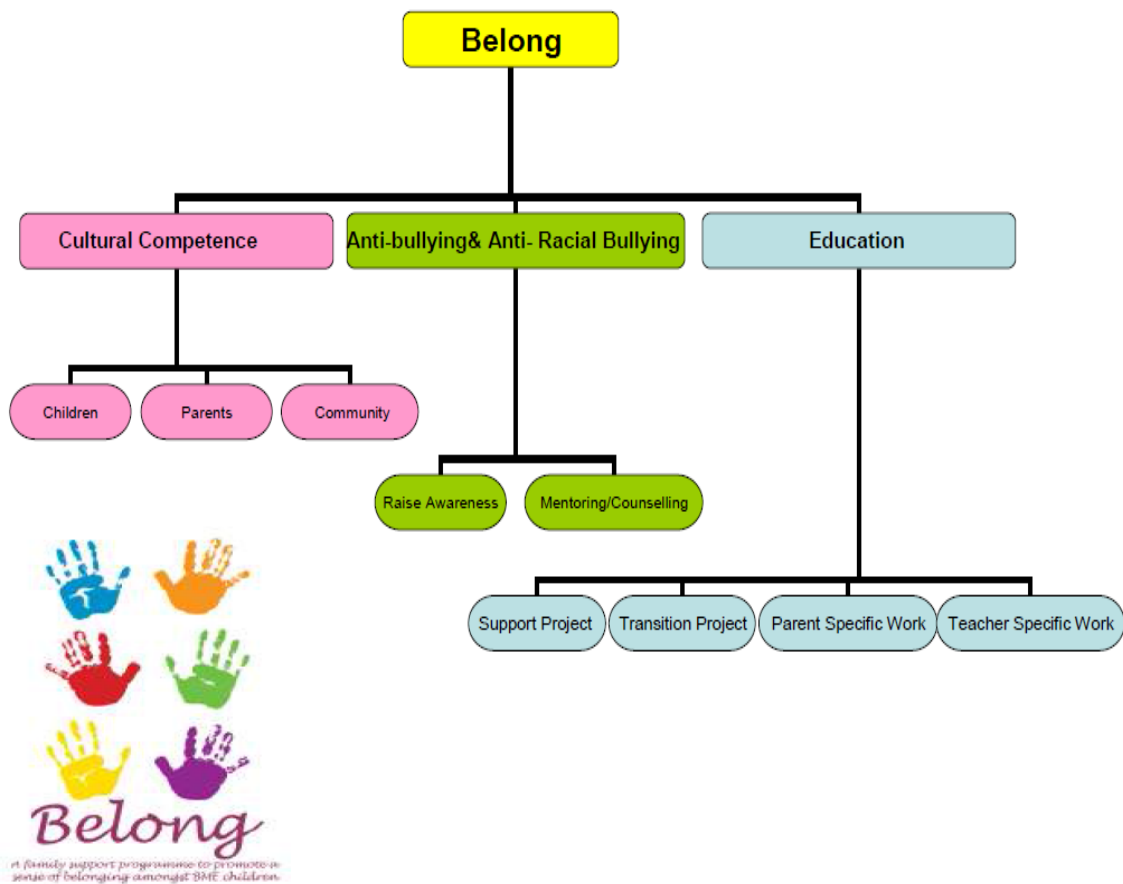
The overarching aim of BELONG is to promote a sense of belonging in the wider community among BME children, aged 7-12. In order to achieve this aim, BELONG has focused on the following outcomes, drawn from the Service Plan (BELONG, 2009, p. 10):

- **To increase cultural confidence and competence:** In order to have a sense of belonging to the wider community, it is important to be confident in one's own cultural identity and to be aware of the cultural identity of others. In order for children to have a sense of belonging in the wider community, their environment including local services (in particular schools and play/leisure activities through clubs and other social groups) must reflect the culture of all BME groups and address their needs appropriately.
- **To increase participation in clubs and schools:** As a means of increasing belonging, BME children and young people need to participate equally with peers from the wider community.
- **To increase educational attainment of the Traveller community:** Children cannot have a sense of belonging if they are not in school and achieving in school.
- **To reduce bullying and racial bullying:** Being bullied because of one's ethnic background will obviously reduce one's sense of belonging to the wider community.
- **To increase levels of resilience:** Being able to deal effectively and positively with the variety of exclusionary actions by individuals and institutions is critical to children having a sense of belonging.

The BELONG Programme model can be considered innovative in the sense that it is not based on any pre-existing intervention model. In its Service Plan, the programme was described as a 'tentative' model, seeking to generate valuable new evidence on effective provision for BME children in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The programme is underpinned by theory and evidence in a number of key areas, most notably in relation to belonging, resilience, social ecology and rights.

BELONG's programme of work consists of three interlinking sub-programmes: the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme, the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme, and the Education Sub-programme (*see Figure 1*).

Figure 1: BELONG’s interlinking programmes



Source: Adapted from BELONG (2009, p. 28)

The **Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme** aims to increase confidence and competence among BME children, their parents and families, service providers and the wider ecology, including community and society. As part of this sub-programme, BME children are provided with access to activities that aim to promote self-esteem and resilience and to reduce isolation, with an emphasis on strengthening their cultural identity. Their parents and families are supported through access to practical information and support. The sub-programme aims to raise awareness and promote understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions among service providers and the wider community and society.

The **Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme** aims to complement existing initiatives that address bullying and racial bullying, including advocating for tailored anti-racial bullying elements to be integrated into existing initiatives.

The third and final component of BELONG, the **Education Sub-programme**, aims to support those BME children who have been identified through baseline assessments as potentially benefiting from additional support to improve their educational achievement, enhance their enjoyment of learning and increase their participation in school activities.

Thus, the BELONG model involves direct engagement with BME children and communities in order to address their specific needs, while also working with existing service providers and the wider community to improve awareness of the needs of this group of children. Outside of these sub-programmes, at a strategic level, BELONG engages in advocacy work and seeks to influence the development of legislation and policies that prioritise the best interests of BME children and their families.

Theoretical and Policy Rationale

BELONG's service plan has a strong theoretical basis. A sense of 'belonging' is central to social development and to be associated with enhanced levels of resilience among children. The security associated with having a strong sense of social belonging is seen as vital in enabling children to 'bounce back', despite having endured adversity. Recent research on the social ecology of resilience highlights that the development of resilience is subject to factors affecting the child in a number of different environments, including the home, the school and society at large. Social support can play a vital role in facilitating a sense of belonging and the development of resilience through the reduction of risk factors. The concepts of empowerment and rights are also linked to belonging. Recent debates have highlighted participation as central to inclusion and a sense of empowerment for children. The work of BELONG is underpinned by the principle of rights and empowerment, and speaks directly to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The themes of cultural competence, education and bullying are shown to have a profound effect on the experiences of BME children.

BELONG operates within a policy and legislation-rich context, at both global and Northern Ireland state level. However, weaknesses in policy integration result in BME children and families experiencing challenges in gaining access to the level of support needed. A number of recent initiatives have been implemented to address this issue. Most notable are the establishment of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which brings together a wide range of agencies, including representatives from the voluntary and community sector, with the aim of enhancing joint decision-making and planning for

children's services, and the development of the Delivering Social Change Framework by the OFMDFM. The restructuring of the education sector and the proposed foundation of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) during 2015 are also seen as positive developments in facilitating a cohesive approach to serving children's needs.

Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

In 2010, an evaluation plan for the BELONG Programme, developed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway, in conjunction with the BELONG Team, was accepted by the Expert Advisory Group. The evaluation plan incorporated both a process and an outcomes focus. The 5 evaluation objectives are:

- to establish the extent to which the medium-term outcomes of the BELONG Programme have been achieved;
- to establish the extent to which the intended outcomes of the individual interventions within the overall programme have been achieved;
- to establish the relative contribution of individual interventions to the overall programme outcomes;
- to establish factors underpinning programme/intervention success or otherwise;
- to establish factors facilitating or constraining the implementation of the programme/intervention.

In order to provide a comprehensive account of the work of the BELONG Programme in effecting change across all levels; the evaluation strategy has been based on a dual approach, focusing on the work of BELONG at:

- **Intervention-level evaluation** – developing an in-depth understanding of BELONG's work as a service provider and assessing the value of individual interventions in increasing levels of belonging and resilience among BME children and parents.
- **Programme-level evaluation** – focusing on BELONG's overall work in creating systemic change in the area (BELONG's interaction with and contribution to policy and service change, the organisational underpinnings of its work and to make an overall assessment of the value of its service delivery activities). The programme-level evaluation also includes the Belonging Index, which was developed to serve as a prototype for future, more widely used tools aimed at measuring belonging and resilience and to allow for the objective assessment of these constructs for children participating in BELONG and the programme's value.

Methodologically, an extensive mixed-methods approach has been employed, entailing the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative research data, thus providing more effective insight into research problems than use of either approach alone (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p. 5).

This report is the third and final evaluation report on the BELONG Programme. In planning for the final report, a change in focus was agreed between BELONG and the Evaluation Team. At the intervention level, in the remaining time it was decided that the best opportunity to establish good practice and to generate learning from BELONG's work was to focus in-depth on a small number of what were titled 'exemplar' interventions. These exemplars were selected according to key criteria, including: (a) building on work already undertaken in which BELONG had become skilled; (b) being reflective on the range of BELONG's implementation activities; and (c) an adequate quantity of exemplars on which the Evaluation Team could undertake rigorous 'mini-evaluations'. Six exemplars were selected: 3 were part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme and 3 were part of the Education Sub-programme. The evaluation also draws on data generated by BELONG staff, both objective information on intervention design and implementation, and subjective reflections by staff and participants on their experience of individual interventions.

The components of the methodology for this final evaluation were:

1. Six mini-evaluations of exemplar interventions.
2. Design and implementation of an index on a pre- and post-test basis with the BELONG participants and with a comparison group of BME and non-BME children at a single point in time.
3. Individual, focus group and telephone interviews with a broad range of BELONG stakeholders.
4. Online questionnaire with key services, repeating a measure used for the Interim Report.
5. Documentary analysis of information on BELONG's organisational structures, processes and actions, and of key policy and legislative measures.
6. Further development of underpinning literature review for the programme.

Evaluation findings – BELONG interventions

The **Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme** has been widely implemented, involving children, parents and the wider community in a variety of interventions since 2010. Implementation has been characterised by strong programme planning, design and content, and adaptable and flexible staff. The available evidence indicates that BELONG has achieved some success towards the 3 medium-term outcomes of this sub-programme. While the data does not demonstrate an increase in the numbers of BME children accessing mainstream activities over the evaluation period, it does indicate that notable groundwork has been carried out towards enhancing the inclusivity of mainstream clubs and services. Data also indicate that the capacities and capabilities of BME children and communities have been positively affected, with levels of cultural

competence and confidence of BME children taking part in interventions increasing over the evaluation period. Evaluation data also evidenced increased levels of awareness and understanding of BME communities, their cultures and traditions among mainstream service providers.

KEY LEARNING

Three fundamental learning points emerge from an analysis of BELONG's implementation of its Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme:

- First, the importance of having **skilled staff capable of adapting programmes** in response to needs encountered. BELONG's work shows that this point applies both in the context of work with children and parents, but equally in working with professional staff in partner organisations. Because different approaches are necessary to create successful intercultural settings with different groups of children, staff need to be adaptable.
- Second, the importance for **high-quality programme design, with strong content**, reflective of the organisational vision. BELONG's experience strongly demonstrates the value of creativity-based content in working with children in this age group on sensitive issues like cultural confidence and competence.
- Third, the importance of realising that **change in understanding and accepting cultural difference takes time**, both at an individual and organisational level – something that needs to be reflected in the timeframe and intensity of interventions.

Implementation of the **Education Sub-programme** was delayed by a number of external issues. However, intervention delivery has been gaining momentum since 2011. Evaluation evidence highlights a number of strengths in BELONG's implementation, most prominently:

- Extensive delivery and consistent attendance by children at the Education and Learning Support intervention provide a positive indication of the implementation of this sub-programme.
- While communication with schools can be enhanced, the sub-programme is underpinned by positive working relationships with schools and the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS).
- Intervention delivery was shown to be enhanced by a high level of staff engagement with, and support for, participants.
- Intervention content and material development were also demonstrated to be of benefit to intervention delivery.

Engagement with parents was shown to be a challenging issue associated with this sub-programme. However, while work schedules and family commitments hinder parental attendance at interventions, it is clear that parents continue to support their children's participation in BELONG.

In terms of outcomes, the range of actions undertaken by BELONG – from innovative work in the form of the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention through to traditional after-school-type Education and Learning Support – represents the groundwork necessary to improve Traveller children’s educational achievement and to ensure their retention at post-primary level. In relation to outcomes for parents, a greater level of specific and nuanced interventions will be required to make progress in the future, notwithstanding the identified challenges of involving parents.

KEY LEARNING

- Fundamental to successful implementation of education-based interventions is the **capacity of staff to build relationships and support children** on a one-to-basis and the **provision of high quality intervention content and supporting materials**.
- While the idea of Assessment of External Learning Skills shows promise, **time is required** to work through the content and processes required to embed innovative programmes such as this in busy schools in a mainstream curriculum context.
- **Engaging parents of children from BME backgrounds** is extremely challenging and requires close attention to their specific needs and circumstances, and a diversity of responses.

The **Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme** was designed to increase awareness of issues of bullying and to improve support for BME children who have experienced bullying. As this sub-programme has received limited implementation in the form originally intended, it is not possible to assess outcomes in a rigorous way. However, attention to the issues of bullying and anti-racial bullying has been incorporated into the other sub-programmes, most significantly into the Cultural Confidence and Confidence Sub-programme.

Work implemented as part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme has resulted in an increase in levels of awareness of racial bullying among BME children and within the wider community. BELONG has also succeeded in engaging children in a process of awareness-raising, good examples of this being exposition of their artwork at the BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013 and through a film entitled ‘Bull Dance’. The appointment of an Anti-Bullying Programme Officer evidences BELONG’s commitment to developing this sub-programme as it moves into the next phase of its work.

KEY LEARNING

- While particular responses are likely to be required to meet the needs of children known to be bullied, **more general preventative and supportive work** in relation to bullying and anti-racial bullying can be incorporated into more widely focused cultural confidence and competence activities.

Evaluation findings – BELONGing Index Tool

The BELONGing Index Tool (BIT) was developed as part of the evaluation to address a gap in the combined measurement of belonging and resilience outcomes in children. The BIT serves two interrelated, but different purposes:

- As an amalgamation of 5 individual standardised measures, each of which assesses elements of either belonging, resilience, or both, the BIT aimed to provide quantitative data for the evaluation of BELONG on changes in belonging and resilience for children between two points in time.
- The BIT was also developed with the aim of being built into the standard official data collection procedures of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This would allow questions such as the following to be addressed: Is the sense of belonging and resilience improving or deteriorating for BME children in Northern Ireland over time and by how much? In which domain areas was there most improvement? How do the results differ by sex, age, location and ethnic background? What are the key policy, research and practice priorities (or implications) for Northern Ireland?

Testing of the BIT has generated enough evidence for BELONG to bring this process to the next level. This may well involve further additions and developments to the BIT and agreement on how it might be implemented across Northern Ireland. Real systemic change for the BME community across Northern Ireland can be greatly aided by the production of reliable evidence, which can then feed into appropriate and needs-led programme delivery.

At micro-level, it is impossible to account for all of the reasons that may have led to an increase or decrease in belonging or resilience for the participants in the non-experimental design utilised within this study. Nor can any causal relationship be claimed in respect of the BELONG interventions and improvements in BME children as reported from the results of the pilot study utilising the BIT and BIS. However, the BELONG Programme can be associated with these changes and these results provide a strong indication for BELONG on their most successful areas of programme delivery.

KEY LEARNING

- Evidence exists to support the fact that a programme such as BELONG can, in a relatively short timeframe, be associated with **gains in key areas for children**, such as perceived social competence (PSCS) and resilience (CYRM).
- Evidence generated by the BIT highlights the value for projects like BELONG in **tracking outcomes on an ongoing basis** for the children with whom they work. Using such information, intervention delivery can be re-examined and re-aligned in an evidence-based way. This can also incorporate a consideration of the intervention mix and intensity required to achieve change.
- A tool such as the BIS can contribute to **broader social change** through its potential both as a measure for intervention programmes and for monitoring overall levels of belonging and resilience in society.

Evaluation findings – BELONG’s services and policy work

BELONG has enjoyed success in its programme-level work. Through its joint work with existing service providers, the programme has succeeded in raising awareness of the needs of, and challenges faced by, BME children and communities. BELONG has also been successful in facilitating engagement with BME families and communities. The potential for BELONG to continue to increase the level of its influence in this area is evidenced by the positive attitudes of external stakeholders towards future engagement with the programme.

In spite of the challenging political environment in which it operates, BELONG has made a number of contributions to policy initiatives. External stakeholders indicated that BELONG is seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of policies concerning BME children and communities. While these initiatives have yet to see completion, BELONG’s input into consultative forums and advisory groups across a range of fields relating to BME children can be seen as a successful outcome.

KEY LEARNING

- Successful **policy-level advocacy requires a senior person**, most likely at programme manager level, to be allocated specific responsibility for its achievement and the time to devote to it.
- Creating a **partnership board** containing key members at the right level creates the context for advocacy to happen naturally.
- Involving children and parents in **meaningful participation in policy development activities** can strengthen policy and support self-advocacy.

Evaluation findings – Organisational structures and processes

The evidence broadly supports a view that the organisational structures underpinning BELONG's operation at strategic and delivery levels are functioning well. Notwithstanding some challenges arising from changes in the position of Programme Manager, current team management and support processes are seen to be effective, while at Board level any issues that existed were seen as being resolved. STEP's role as anchor organisation was viewed very positively among those interviewed.

KEY LEARNING

- In a context of intersectoral working across professional/disciplinary boundaries, a strong focus on **staff support and development** through using multiple formats (supervision, meetings) is key to good programme implementation.
- Achieving the balance between **direct work with children and families and advocacy** may be challenging for staff, particularly those whose core experience is in front-line practice. Management support is key to staff successfully achieving this balance.
- In a governance context like BELONG, the greatest value of a **partnership board** will be its contribution to **strategic** rather than operational issues.

BELONG's ecological model

Overall, BELONG has demonstrated the implementability of an ecological-based strategy towards belonging and resilience for children from BME backgrounds. It has intervened directly or influenced indirectly, from individualised interventions (child level) across the ecological spectrum (family, school, community levels) to societal policy contexts (State level).

While the need to work across ecological contexts (rather than at just a 'silo'd' child intervention or policy advocacy level) has been well documented (see, for example, Jack, 2000 and 2013), so also has the failure of implementation models been highlighted (Gill and Jack, 2007). This multilevel approach in working with, and for, children through culturally appropriate interventions has been particularly reinforced recently by Gowen *et al* (2012). BELONG is one of the very few organisations to develop and enable a systemised service plan that engages all levels of a child or young person's social ecologies. In this sense, the programme has been a success at an overall level.

The greatest level of activity and strongest progress towards outcomes is apparent at the *micro level*, i.e. in the children's day-to-day lives. However, clear focused activity with likely

long-term impacts on policy development has also taken place, indicating success at the *macro level*. At the *mesosystem* level, a strength has been the capacity to work with other organisations towards meeting the needs of BME children and the emergence of an approach to building organisational cultural competence. In terms of the integration of the various *microsystems* in which a child is involved, developing intercultural contexts of children has been tested by BELONG with some success.

At the *exosystem* level, two factors in particular impacted on BELONG's capacity for effecting change in children's lives. While there were some concrete examples of engagement, the involvement of parents in activities was challenging, whether because of the constraints of paid work or language difficulties. Similarly, the consistent involvement of Traveller parents was not achieved to the desired level. Both of these examples highlight the significance of creating the conditions at the *exosystem* level for success within the children's microsystems. It is clear that the most recent phase of BELONG's work reflects its most concerted effort at engaging the *macrosystem*, with the evidence in this report highlighting a solid capacity for influence. It is notable that BELONG effectively linked its *microsystem's* interventions with its *macrosystem's* activities in its celebration Showcase Event in April 2013.

Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

BELONG has made significant progress towards its overall outcomes. In doing so, it has developed robust knowledge for policy and practice in this area of work. Within the frame of an programme as broad and ambitious as BELONG, there remain areas in which progress has been less than anticipated, with work still to be done. Overall, however, BELONG can be characterised as a successful programme. The Evaluation Team recommends that the work of BELONG should continue to be supported by its partners and by key funders.

In addition, the Evaluation Team makes the following recommendations regarding the implementation of the BELONG Programme:

- The work of the **Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme should be codified and programatised** in order to facilitate future implementation and replication.
- The **Education Sub-programme warrants further development** by BELONG. In particular, additional effort is required in BELONG's work with schools. The Evaluation Team recommends that BELONG continues to work towards enhancing this engagement, with the SELB and IDS as lead partners.

- It is recommended that more work be undertaken to **increase the participation of BME children in mainstream clubs and extra-curricular activities**, and putting in place associated monitoring systems.
- Recognising the importance of engaging parents in addressing the needs faced by BME children, it is recommended that BELONG both **increase efforts to engage with parents, and particularly parents of Traveller children**, and continue to develop new strategies to enhance this engagement.
- The **inclusion of Travellers** in BELONG interventions is an area that warrants continued attention, building from learning in this report on flexible intervention design and implementation.
- BELONG has made significant progress in its strategic work in spite of the challenging environment in which it operates. It is recommended that greater focus be brought to **measuring BELONG's policy impact**.
- It is recommended that BELONG continues to **implement the BELONGing Index (BIT and BIS)** on an ongoing basis in order to achieve a measure of the impact of the programme in increasing the sense of belonging and resilience among the BME children with whom it works.
- In relation to policy and practice influence in this field, BELONG should **formalise its partnership-based, ecological model of operation for wider dissemination** in Northern Ireland and internationally.

1. Introduction

1.1 Structure of report

This is the third and final report of the evaluation of the BELONG Programme. It builds on the Early Implementation and Interim reports, which documented the programme's first phase. This chapter provides an overview of the background to and development of BELONG. It then provides an introduction to the programme, outlining its aims, strategic level goals and activities. In the final section of the chapter, the evaluation approach and methodologies are outlined.

1.2 Background and development of BELONG Partnership

Northern Ireland has seen a dramatic increase in levels of ethnic and cultural diversity over the past 15 years. The most recent census illustrates that the number of migrants resident in Northern Ireland has doubled since 2001, with the migrant population accounting for 1.8% of the total population (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2012). The Southern Area of Northern Ireland¹ is home to a large proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children², with 2,477 children from ethnic minority groups currently enrolled in schools in the Southern Education and Library Board Area (Department of Education, 2013). There are also 1,301 members of the Traveller community living in Northern Ireland (Russell, 2013, p. 12).

In 2003, the Southern Area Children and Young People's Committee (SACYPC) established a Working Group with the remit of meeting the needs of BME children and young people in the then Health and Social Care Board, Southern Area of Northern Ireland. Comprising a partnership of statutory and voluntary organisations working in the BME and children's sectors, the aims of the Working Group were to empower BME children and young people to realise their potential and be socially included in Northern Ireland, and to ensure that services were fully accessible to them. Between 2007 and 2008, with grant support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, this Working Group undertook planning and service development work for a family support programme for BME children, which became known as BELONG.

¹ Southern Health and Social Care Trust was created following the reform of the Health and Social Care Trusts into regional Trusts. The main centres of population are the Craigavon urban area, the cities of Newry and Armagh, and the towns of Banbridge and Dungannon.

² The term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (BME) refers to all members of ethnic minority groups (including members of the Traveller community).

The collective insights of the Working Group, along with the findings of a commissioned epidemiological study (Biggart *et al*, 2009), formed the basis for the development of BELONG's Service Development Plan Proposal, which relates to the first 3 years of the Working Group's strategy for 7-12 year-olds. This plan was submitted to The Atlantic Philanthropies in 2008, who committed funding for its implementation.

The BELONG Programme became operational in April 2009 and is supported by a partnership made up of representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors, some of whom were existing members of the BME Working Group. The make-up of the partnership is as follows:

- one representative from South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP);
- one representative from *Wah Hep*: The Chinese Community Association (also Board Director);
- two representatives from the Southern Education and Library Board;
- one representative from the Health and Social Care Board Children's Services Planning;
- one representative from the Health and Social Care Trust;
- four members from BME communities, to be recruited through public advertisement.

The South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) is the anchor organisation, holding management and administrative responsibility for the BELONG Programme. Another key element of BELONG's governance is its Expert Advisory Group (EAG), which provides quality assurance for the programme and the evaluation (BELONG, 2009, p. 14).

1.3 The BELONG Programme

The overarching aim of BELONG is to promote a sense of belonging in the wider community among BME children, aged 7-12. In order to achieve this aim, BELONG has focused on the following outcomes, drawn from the Service Plan (2009, p. 10):

- **To increase cultural confidence and competence:** In order to have a sense of belonging to the wider community, it is important to be confident in one's own cultural identity and to be aware of the cultural identity of others.³ In order for children to have a sense of belonging in the wider community, their environment including local services (in particular schools and play/leisure activities through clubs and other social groups) must reflect the culture of all BME groups and address their needs appropriately.

³ For a more comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Portes and Rumbaut (2006).

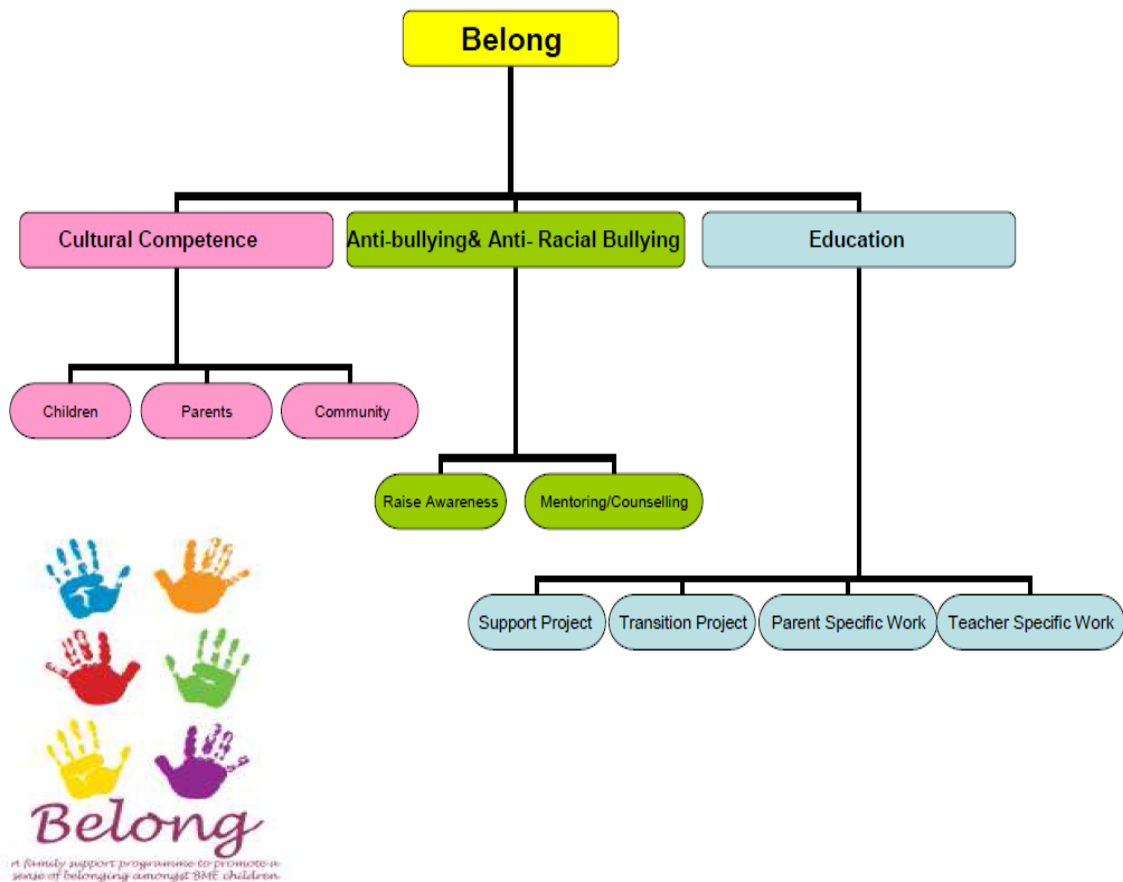
- **To increase participation in clubs and schools:** As a means of increasing belonging, BME children and young people need to participate equally with peers from the wider community.
- **To increase educational attainment of the Traveller community:** Children cannot have a sense of belonging if they are not in school and achieving in school.
- **To reduce bullying and racial bullying:** Being bullied because of one's ethnic background will obviously reduce one's sense of belonging to the wider community.
- **To increase levels of resilience:** Being able to deal effectively and positively with the variety of exclusionary actions by individuals and institutions is critical to children having a sense of belonging.

The BELONG Programme model can be considered innovative in the sense that it is not based on any pre-existing intervention model. In its Service Plan (2009, p. 21), the programme was described as a 'tentative' model, seeking to generate valuable new evidence on effective provision for BME children in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The programme is underpinned by theory and evidence in a number of key areas, including belonging, resilience, social ecology and rights, which will be elaborated on in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1.4 BELONG Programme activities

BELONG consists of three interlinking sub-programmes: the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme, the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme, and the Education Sub-programme (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: BELONG's interlinking programmes



Source: Adapted from BELONG (2009, p. 28)

The **Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme** aims to increase confidence and competence among BME children, their parents and families, service providers and the wider ecology, including community and society. As part of this sub-programme, BME children are provided with access to activities that aim to promote self-esteem and resilience and to reduce isolation, with an emphasis on strengthening their cultural identity. Their parents and families are supported through access to practical information and support. The sub-programme aims to raise awareness and promote understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions among service providers and the wider community and society.

The **Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme** aims to complement existing initiatives that address bullying and racial bullying, including advocating for tailored anti-racial bullying elements to be integrated into existing initiatives.

The third and final component of BELONG, the **Education sub-programme**, aims to support those BME children who have been identified through baseline assessments as potentially benefiting from additional support to improve their educational achievement, enhance their enjoyment of learning and increase their participation in school activities.

Thus, the BELONG model involves direct engagement with BME children and communities in order to address their specific needs, while also working with existing service providers and the wider community to improve awareness of the needs of this group of children. Outside of these sub-programmes, at a strategic level, BELONG engages in advocacy work and seeks to influence the development of legislation and policies that prioritise the best interests of BME children and their families.

1.5 Evaluation of the BELONG Programme

In 2010, an evaluation plan for the BELONG Programme, developed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway, in conjunction with the BELONG team, was accepted by the Expert Advisory Group. The evaluation plan incorporated both a process and an outcomes focus. This ensures that in addition to assessing the outcomes outlined in the Service Plan (2009, p. 32), the evaluation generates practical learning about the implementation of the programme. The 5 evaluation objectives are:

- to establish the extent to which the medium-term outcomes of the BELONG Programme have been achieved;
- to establish the extent to which the intended outcomes of the individual interventions within the overall programme have been achieved;
- to establish the relative contribution of individual interventions to the overall programme outcomes;
- to establish factors underpinning programme/intervention success or otherwise;
- to establish factors facilitating or constraining the implementation of the programme/intervention.

In order to provide a comprehensive account of the work of the BELONG Programme in effecting change across all levels; the evaluation strategy has been based on a dual approach, focusing on the work of BELONG at intervention level and at programme level. The **intervention-level evaluation** aims to develop an in-depth understanding of BELONG's work as a service provider and to assess the value of individual interventions in increasing levels of belonging and resilience among BME children and parents. The **programme-level evaluation** focuses on BELONG's overall work in creating systemic change in the area: it involves seeking to understand BELONG's interaction with and contribution to policy and

service change, the organisational underpinnings of its work and to make an overall assessment of the value of its service delivery activities. A key component of the programme-level evaluation is the Belonging Index, which was developed for two purposes: (1) to serve as a prototype for future, more widely used tools aimed at measuring belonging and resilience; and (2) it was hoped that it might allow for the objective assessment of these constructs for children participating in BELONG, and therefore to the assessment of the programme's value.

Methodologically, in order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the BELONG Programme, an extensive mixed-methods approach has been employed. This methodological approach, which entails the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative research data, provides more effective insight into research problems than use of either approach alone (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p. 5). Ethical approval for the evaluation strategy was granted by the NUI Galway Ethics Committee in October 2010.

The findings of the evaluation are presented in three evaluation reports. This report is the third and final evaluation report on the BELONG Programme; early implementation and interim evaluation reports were presented to the BELONG Board and The Atlantic Philanthropies in May 2011 and February 2012 respectively.

1.5.1 Evaluation reports to date

The **Early Implementation Report** documented the first phase of the BELONG Programme (Forkan *et al*, 2011). It assessed the success of the BELONG Programme in achieving its short-term goals as set out in the Service Plan. The report noted that implementation of delivery-level interventions had been delayed for a period of approximately 6 months due to the need to establish rapport and trust with BME communities. Over the early implementation period, however, BELONG succeeded in becoming a trusted agent in the BME community, as well as among service organisations in the catchment area. The report also recommended that BELONG work more closely with statutory organisations to bring about a more positive level of school attendance for Traveller children and that BELONG establish closer links with Northern Ireland's Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Department of Education, Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board.

The **Interim Report** (Forkan *et al*, 2012) built on the findings of the Early Implementation Report, focusing on the development of the BELONG Programme over the 2 years since its

foundation. In addition to re-capturing the views of internal stakeholders, the report incorporated the perspectives of key external stakeholders, including both BME children and families and the various community, voluntary and statutory agencies that link with BELONG. The report recorded the positive views of parents and children attending BELONG interventions. It was recommended that a child-centred approach to intervention design be adopted and that a forum for BME parents be established in order that they could actively contribute to the design and planning of interventions.

This **Final Evaluation Report** expands on the content of the previous two reports to provide a comprehensive independent account of the successes and challenges faced by the BELONG Programme in achieving its stated objectives.

1.5.2 Methodology for Final Evaluation Report

In planning for the final report, a change in focus was agreed between BELONG and the Evaluation Team. At the intervention level, in the remaining time it was decided that the best opportunity to establish good practice and to generate learning from BELONG's work was to focus in-depth on a small number of what were titled '**exemplar**' interventions. These exemplars were selected according to key criteria, including: (a) building on work already undertaken in which BELONG had become skilled; (b) being reflective on the range of BELONG's implementation activities; and (c) an adequate quantity of exemplars on which the Evaluation Team could undertake rigorous 'mini-evaluations'. Six exemplars were selected: 3 were part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme and 3 were part of the Education Sub-programme.

As part of this process, the Evaluation Team worked closely with BELONG in developing planning templates, so as to ensure evaluability of these interventions. A full account of the exemplar intervention and evaluation methodologies is provided in Appendices A-F (see *Table 2*). One consequence of adopting the exemplar approach was less evaluation attention to some of the ongoing work, for example, in education. However, as originally intended, the evaluation draws on data generated by BELONG staff, both objective information on intervention design and implementation, and subjective reflections by staff and participants on their experience of individual interventions. This is referred to as 'monitoring' data in the report.

In sum, the components of the methodology for this final evaluation were:

1. Six mini-evaluations of exemplar interventions.
2. Design and implementation of index on a pre- and post basis with the BELONG participants and with a comparison group of BME and non-BME children at a single point in time.
3. Individual, focus group and telephone interviews with a broad range of BELONG stakeholders.
4. Online questionnaire with key services, repeating a measure used for the Interim Report.
5. Documentary analysis of information on BELONG's organisational structures, processes and actions, and of key policy and legislative measures.
6. Further development of underpinning literature review for the programme.

Table 1 sets out in detail the data sources for the final evaluation.

Table 1: Data sources for final evaluation

Method	Participants/Content
Individual interviews	BELONG staff (n=16) Sessional workers (n=14) Children (BME and majority) (n=4) External stakeholders (n=2) BELONG Board (5) Total: 41
Telephone interviews	Teachers and school principals (n=10) Representatives of BELONG partner organisations (n=1) Total: 11
Focus group interviews	BME children (n=22) Classroom Assistants (n=45) Sessional workers (7) Total: 75
BELONGing Index Tool (BIT)	114 children participating in BELONG at Time 1 (T1) and 105 at Time 2 (T2) 303 non-BELONG children at T2
Online questionnaire	External stakeholders (n=21)
Documentary analysis of monitoring data	Reflection sheets (215) Intervention planning documents (67) Children's reflection sheets (102)
Observations	Interventions and consultations (16)
Literature and policy review	Review of literature relating to ethnic minority and migrant children in Northern Ireland and internationally. Review of existing policy and legislation relating to BME children.

Data analysis and triangulation

Across programme and intervention levels, quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were applied. Critically, within the exemplars, data sources were triangulated in arriving at conclusions. Similarly, the various sources underpinning this report were triangulated in arriving at evaluative positions on implementation and outcomes.

Evaluation limitations

Like any evaluation or social science study, this report has a number of limitations. First, as outlined, the emphasis of the intervention-level evaluation on 6 exemplars limits the capacity of the report to reflect the full range of BELONG's work. However, as indicated, a range of monitoring data generated by BELONG is used throughout the report alongside the exemplar-based data. Second, despite the best efforts of the Evaluation Team and BELONG management and staff, full response rates were not achieved in some elements of the evaluation, an issue when starting sample sizes were small. Third, there were delays in the development of the index by the Evaluation Team, with the result that this may have limited its potential in assessing BELONG's outcomes.

1.6 Structure of report

Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** provides an outline of the theoretical basis of BELONG and of the policies and legislative frameworks relating to BME children in Northern Ireland. An overview of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme is provided in **Chapter 3**, followed by evaluation findings regarding the implementation and outcomes of this sub-programme. **Chapter 4** examines the Education and the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programmes, highlighting key learning from the implementation of both sub-programmes. In **Chapter 5**, the findings and outcomes of the BELONGing Index (Tool and Score) are presented. BELONG's work at a strategic level is the focus of **Chapter 6**, including an assessment of its influence on the development of services benefiting BME children and communities, and its contribution to policies and legislation concerning BME children in Northern Ireland. In **Chapter 7**, the organisational processes underpinning the BELONG initiative are examined, with a focus on governance at implementation and strategic levels. Finally, **Chapter 8** summarises and discusses the findings of the evaluation of the BELONG Programme.

Because of the extensive and multifaceted nature of the programme, the approach taken to developing this final report was to first develop detailed accounts in key areas of the evaluation and then distil these into a main report. Thus, alongside this report are a set of accompanying appendices (13 in all, Appendices A – M), which contain information on underpinning data collection methodologies, analytical approaches and substantive findings. The content of each appendix is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Appendices to evaluations

Cultural Confidence and Competence sub-programme	Education sub-programme	Programme-level evaluation
Appendices A – C	Appendices D – F	Appendices G – L
Appendix A: Charter for Change Appendix B: Hear My Voice Appendix C: We R U	Appendix D: Assessment of External Learning Skills Appendix E: Transition intervention Appendix F: Diversity Awareness Training	Appendix G: BELONGing Index Appendix H: Literature Review Appendix I: Activity Overview Appendix J: Monitoring data Appendix K: Organisational Review Appendix L: Policy Review Appendix M: Services Review

This report is oriented towards extracting learning, with attention to lessons for BELONG, but also for other organisations and individuals working in this arena in Northern Ireland and internationally.

2. Theoretical and Policy Context of the BELONG Programme

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the BELONG Programme by providing a brief review of the academic and research literature underpinning its model of operation and an account of the legislative and policy context within which it operates. A more detailed treatment of the material addressed in this chapter is contained in Appendices H and L.

2.2 Theoretical underpinnings of BELONG

2.2.1 The concept of ‘belonging’

The concept of ‘belonging’ has been the subject of academic attention across a number of disciplines. The need to belong, to feel trust, acceptance and respect within larger groups such as the family unit and peer groups plays a vital role in psycho-social development throughout the life span (Erikson, 1968), while Jenkins (2008, p. 12) highlights that membership and acceptance are fundamental tenets of human identity.

Belonging can, however, be a problematic concept in interpreting the lives of ethnic minority youth. Theories of symbolic constructionism posit social membership, or belonging, as being inextricably linked to a sense of shared identity (Cohen, 1982 and 1985). For members of ethnic minority groups who have a discernibly different cultural identity, achieving a sense of belonging in the majority society can be problematic and for many Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and youth, adapting to the culture of the host society can be a challenging process (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Academic literature has highlighted a range of issues that undermine a sense of belonging for children from minority groups, including issues of cultural confidence and competence, education and bullying. These particular challenges, which the BELONG Programme aims to address, are now explored in greater detail.

2.2.2 Cultural confidence and competence

A number of definitions of ‘culture’ have developed over time and within a variety of academic specialties (Geertz, 1973; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1963; Swindler, 2001). D’Ardenne and Mahtani (1999) posit the following definition: ‘*Culture means the shared history, practices, beliefs and values of a racial, regional or religious group of people*’ (1999, p. 3). This definition has strength when considering BME children, in that it provides scope

for 'culture' to emerge in many ways, both locally, nationally and internationally. This definition is not based primarily on race, ethnicity or location; rather, it engages with the possibility of a pluralistic society where more than one definition of culture is viable. In a similar way, Dwivedi (2002, p. 10) states that, on the one hand, '*culture constructs us and our sense of who we are, and on the other hand, we construct it*'.

Feeling confident about their cultural identity has been shown to be an important factor affecting the experiences of BME children in adapting to life in the host country. Having a high level of cultural confidence has been shown to be linked to the process of selective acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996 and 2001; Stepick *et al*, 2001). Selective acculturation is seen as conducive to a strong sense of belonging within the majority society. In such cases, younger members of immigrant populations maintain aspects of the immigrant culture that are seen as fundamental to their identities, while adopting some elements of the host culture (such as language skills). Cultural competence, or the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, is a central tenet of a successful multicultural environment. Rather than being founded on presumptions or deployment of specific knowledge, cultural competence is founded on a comprehensive understanding of the broad nature of potential differences between people and diverse ethnic backgrounds (Laird, 2008, p. 40).

Cultural competence is especially important in environments and settings frequented by BME children. Lack of sensitivity to cultural differences and religious values has been shown to impact negatively on the confidence of BME children and can be detrimental to the creation of a sense of belonging and inclusion. Culturally competent service delivery necessitates a combination of knowledge, awareness and sensitivity. In order to ensure effective service delivery for BME children and community members, all aspects of the organisational structure should reflect a culturally competent approach (Husain, 2005, p. 8). Flexibility and openness, an ability to adapt according to the cultural specificities of clients is essential to culturally competence provision for BME children and families, (Husain, 2006, p. 171). This extends to policy frameworks, service administration and training, and indeed to all aspects of the organisation. Laird (2008, pp. 40-43) outlines that culturally competent service provision for BME children involves practitioners identifying, respecting and incorporating the values of service users into the design and delivery of their service.

While cultural competence at the individual level is beneficial to a child, in order to inculcate a wider sense of social inclusion and cultural confidence among BME children, it is necessary to adopt an ecological approach. Sue's (2001, p. 801) multidimensional model

provides a practical framework for optimising levels of cultural competence on a macro level as well as on an individual level. Sue outlines that in order to create an inclusive social model of cultural competence, it is necessary to remove barriers at four levels: individual; professional; organisational and societal.

2.2.3 Education and BME children

The educational challenges faced by young members of ethnic minorities have received considerable attention in the social sciences. While particular ethnic minority groups and communities are characterised by a high level of academic achievement, other groups have come to be seen as 'at risk' in terms of academic success and social acceptance in the school system of the majority society. The 'stereotype threat' is widely discussed in US-based literature on migrant youth education. Numerous studies have demonstrated that some BME groups largely fail to perform in traditional educational testing scenarios due to the low expectations into which they are socialised through traditional teaching patterns (Claus-Ehlers, 2004, pp. 28-36). Indeed, by undermining many of the positive practices associated with the culture of origin, traditional White dominant educational approaches have been shown to place BME youth at a significant disadvantage (Valenzuela, 1999). Specific research undertaken to support the development of BELONG highlighted significant challenges for Traveller children in their experience of education (Biggart *et al*, 2009).

2.2.4 Bullying and racial bullying

The substantial increase in immigration to Northern Ireland over the 10-year period 1996-2006 challenged the perception of identity and citizenship in Northern Ireland (Fanning, 2002; Gundara, 2011; Robins and Kinlen, 2011). As Northern Ireland has become more culturally diverse, racism and racially-based bullying toward BME children have occurred (Biggart *et al*, 2009 and 2013; Equality Commission, 2009; NCB NI and ARK YLT, 2010). Current literature suggests that the traditional sectarian divide that has characterised Northern Irish society has left a legacy of racism. This is manifested in a lack of cultural awareness, frequent racial discrimination, harassment and indeed violence toward BME children and families (Connolly, 2002; Danaher *et al*, 2009; Martiynowicz and Jarman, 2009; Knox, 2011; Mann-Klerr, 1997). The high levels of bullying experienced by BME children are linked to a sense of social exclusion (Biggart *et al*, 2009, p. 29).

2.2.5 Resilience

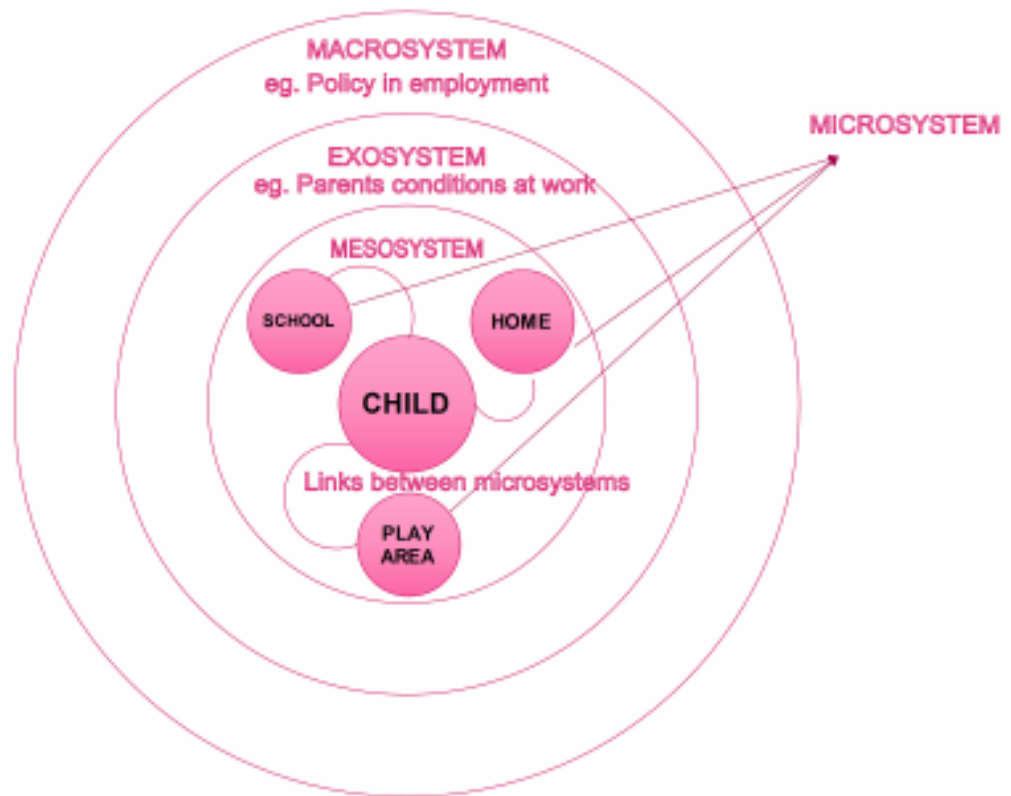
Social belonging is closely linked to the development of resilience during childhood (Rutter *et al*, 1998). Resilience can be defined as '*a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimise or overcome the damaging effects of adversity*' (Newman and Blackburn 2002, p. 1) and is believed to play a central role in enabling children to '*continue to develop normally under difficult circumstances*' (Fonagy *et al*, 1994, p. 233). The security associated with having a strong sense of social belonging is seen as vital in enabling children to 'bounce back', despite having endured adversity (Gilligan, 2000, p. 37).

Because the interaction between a child's development and their environment is in constant flux, resilience is essential in enabling children to adapt to and to cope with this flux. Resilience can be fostered in children through the development of protective factors at familial, school, community and societal levels, including civic action (Oliver *et al*, 2006).

While in the past, resilience was seen solely as an individual trait within a child (Rutter, 1995), recent work highlights the social-ecological context of resilience (Ungar, 2012), framing it as something which can be developed not just within a young person, but across the relationships and contexts which populate his or her social environment. Drawing on a range of in-depth empirical studies, Liebenberg and Ungar (2009) highlight the ecological-resilience link and suggest that professional social and human services for children should focus on influencing environmental actors and factors. This approach is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological perspective (adopted by BELONG), which holds that the individual and the environment are interrelated and affect each other on many levels. This theoretical prism posits these levels as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, as shown in Figure 2 (based on Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Gilligan (2000) suggests that resilience may be affected by both risk and protective factors. Risk factors represent personal and environmental variables that increase the likelihood of negative responses in adverse situations. Protective factors are the set of variables of the individual or the context that boost the ability to resist conflicts and manage stress.

Figure 2: BELONG ecological model



Source: Adapted from BELONG (2009, p. 19) based on Bronfenbrenner (1979) model

A key protective factor is social support, which can be defined as a '*multidimensional construct that encompasses a broad range of social interactions that have beneficial emotional or behavioural effects on the individual*' (Cox, 2005, p. 244). Types of social support include emotional, tangible, advice and esteem support (Dolan and Brady, 2012). Social support can be sourced from 'formal' relationships (e.g. services such as BELONG) and 'informal' relationships (e.g. friends, family) (Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005; Dwivedi, 2002). It is notable that in the emerging ecological framework for understanding resilience, Dolan (2008 and 2012) has highlighted the connection between social support for children, their civic engagement and resilience development. Research has also highlighted the utility of social support in attaining a sense of belonging for BME children and adults (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005).

2.2.6 Children's rights and participation

The principle of children's rights is central to the BELONG Programme. Although, human rights is now a core concept informing legal and policy frameworks in Northern Ireland, a number of commentators have highlighted the need to move towards concrete incorporation of human rights into practice (Knox, 2011). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) contains a number of Articles that are directly relevant to the BELONG Programme (see *Table 3*). The principle of rights is strongly linked to the concept of empowerment within the BELONG Programme.

Table 3: UNCRC Articles relevant to BELONG Programme

Article 2: Non Discrimination

All rights apply to all children without exception. The State is obliged to protect all children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.

Article 3: Best Interests of the Child

All actions concerning the child shall take account of his or her best interests. This includes research activities in which the interests of the child must be considered as paramount.

Article 3.3: Right to Services

The child's right to high quality services (including access to school, research and any treatment).

Article 8: Preservation of Identity

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognised by law without unlawful interference.
2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 12: The Child's Opinion

The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 13: Right to Express Views

The child's right to express their views in a way that is comfortable to them (this may not be in a form traditionally associated with gathering data, e.g. surveys).

Article 30: Children of Minorities or Indigenous Peoples

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

These rights underpin the BELONG Programme and are explicitly referenced in its programme design. A focus on children's rights has been particularly prominent in the most recent phase of BELONG's work, from 2012-2013.

Participation has been shown to be central to the process of empowerment among children and the achievement of their rights. This has led to the development of specific models of participation in service provision and in research (Cutler and Frost, 2002; Christensen, 2004; Sinclair, 2004; Tisdall and Davis, 2004). Hill *et al* (1999, p. 3) suggest that meaningful participation is central to the development of strategies to deal with social exclusion, by stating that '*participation can be thought of as the opposite to the process of social exclusion*'.

2.3 Legislative and policy landscape relating to BME children in Northern Ireland

2.3.1 International legislative context

Apart from the UNCRC considered above, there are a number key international instruments that set the context for BELONG's work. Since the 1960s there has been an international consensus on the importance of achieving social equality and it has been widely acknowledged that in order to address inequality, it is necessary for Governments to take positive action. The **UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**, adopted in 1969, is a key international instrument on racial discrimination. Article 1 of this Convention identifies that special measures are needed to secure adequate advancement of certain racial groups or ethnic groups. All States Parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the CERD on actions taken to address racial discrimination.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) establishes the rights of minority ethnic, religious groups to enjoy their own culture, to practise their own religion and to speak their own language. Article 20 of **A World Fit for Children 2002 – Special Session of the General Assembly of the UN** discusses the goal of eliminating discrimination against children, '*whether rooted in the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status*'. These international conventions and articles also extend to Northern Ireland. The fullest appreciation of these rights instruments is only achieved when they are considered against 'general comments' and 'concluding observations' provided by the relevant international and regional institutions (e.g. see CERD, 2003).

2.3.2 European Union context

At European Union (EU) level, the **Racial Equality Directive** (EU, 2000) implemented the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. This Directive established ‘*a binding framework for prohibiting racial discrimination throughout the EU. It defines direct and indirect discrimination and provides for redress for racial discrimination and shifts the burden of proof to respondents*’ (Watt and McGaughey, 2006, p. 31). This, for the first time, guaranteed a common legal framework of minimum protection across all EU Member States. The scope of the Racial Equality Directive includes the provision of, and access to, goods and services, including health and social care.

The rights of minority groups in Europe are also explicitly prioritised through the Council of Europe’s **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**. Its purpose is to ensure that the signatory States respect the rights of national minorities, undertaking to combat discrimination, promote equality, preserve and develop the culture and identity of national minorities, guarantee certain freedoms in relation to access to the media, minority languages and education, and encourage the participation of national minorities in public life.

The **European Convention on Human Rights** (formerly known as the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) is an international treaty to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. A number of Articles relate directly to the work of BELONG. In particular, **Article 2** provides for the right not to be denied an education and the right for parents to have their children educated in accordance with their religious and other views. **Article 14** prohibits discrimination based on ‘*sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status*’. The position of the European Convention on Human Rights in the UK is strengthened by the **Human Rights Act 1998**, which aims to ‘give further effect’ in UK law to the rights contained in the **European Convention on Human Rights**. In particular, it makes it unlawful for any public body to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention, unless the wording of any other primary legislation provides no other choice.

2.3.3 Northern Irish legislative context

In addition to these global and European measures, legislation and policy in Northern Ireland also explicitly acknowledges the need for equality between citizens. The **Good Friday Agreement (1998)**, followed by the **Northern Ireland Act 1998**, created a Northern Ireland

Assembly, which has the power to enact primary legislation. Because of the long history of segregation between the two dominant cultures, the principles of equality and rights equality are firmly enshrined in NI legislation. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 established the **Human Rights Commission**, whose duty is to review Northern Irish law and practice relating to the protection of human rights, to advise Government on new bills and legislation, and to assist people whose rights are denied to take action or to carry out investigation where necessary. **Section 75** of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on all public authorities *'to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity throughout nine equality strands and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people on the basis of race'*.

A number of legislative measures have been developed which underpin the position of BME youth in Northern Ireland. The **Race Relations (NI) Order 1997/2003** made it unlawful to discriminate on racial grounds in the areas of employment and training, education, provision of goods and services, disposal or management of premises, and in advertising. In addition, this Order established and outlined the duties of the Commission of Racial Equality (since 2000 incorporated into the **Equality Commission**). The **Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations NI 2009** identifies the specific needs of the Irish Traveller community as a group to be protected against unlawful racial discrimination and segregation on racial grounds and outlaws discrimination by employers and educational establishments.

The **Criminal Justice (No. 2 NI) Order 2004 – Hate Crime** is an important legislative change in Northern Ireland because it imposes penalties in relation to bullying and racial harassment crimes. **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act** outlines the statutory duty on public authorities to promote equality between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation. This Section specifies that, proceeding from the definition established in the **Race Relations Order**, members of the Traveller community are viewed as a distinct racial group.

In spite of these provisions, the past 10 years have seen an increase in reports of incidents of racial harassment (Jarman and Monaghan, 2003; Knox, 2011; McVeigh and Rolston, 2007). For many commentators, this is evidence of the inadequacy of existing legislation and policy relating to racial equality in Northern Ireland. Indeed, many critics of Northern Irish domestic policies argue that current policy provision exacerbates existing divisions and prevents many BME community members from accessing basic social amenities (Mann-Klerr, 1997). An overview of Northern Irish policies relating to the experiences of BME children is provided in the following section.

2.4 Policies relating to children in Northern Ireland

Policies relating specifically to the needs and experiences of BME children in Northern Ireland are in existence; however, a lack of cross-referencing between these policies results in the needs of many BME children remaining inadequately addressed. Recent initiatives have seen a move towards a higher level of integrated planning and development of policies relating to children (McTernan and Godfrey, 2006). However, further clarity and progress are needed to ensure that BME children and communities can adequately access social supports.

Within the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has responsibility for children. Prior to 1995, a wide range of legislation applied to children. The **Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995** aimed to reform and bring *'together most of the public and private law relating to children into a single coherent statutory framework along the lines of the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales'* (DHSSPS, 2006). The Order contains more than 200 Articles and introduced the central importance of parental responsibility and the significance of the child's welfare being the primary factors in issues regarding the child's care. Policy and practice relating to BME children cuts across diverse sectors, including, among others, human rights, childcare law, racial equality law, law in relation to asylum-seekers and separated children, and immigration law. Despite current and continued lobbying, no statutory duty to collaborate across Northern Ireland Departments exists, which has had the effect that activities to promote the realisation of BME children's rights can be fragmented. As suggested by one BELONG Board Member, this has the effect that disadvantaged BME children are *'just not at the party'* unless they are specifically targeted with purposefully designed interventions (Forkan *et al*, 2011, p. 5).

The **Children's Services Planning Order** was instituted in 1998. Following this Order, four Children's and Young Peoples Committees were established in the Health and Social Care Boards. The failure of these committees to become a driver of social change has been attributed to a lack of focus on interagency working (McTernan and Godfrey, 2006). Following on from this critical learning, the **Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)** was established in the interest of enhancing interagency planning across children's services. The CYPSP brings together a wide range of agencies, including representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The aim of the partnership is to plan and provide services for children and young people more efficiently by making joint

decisions about the services needed and by funding these services. The CYPSP published the *Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan* in 2011 with the aim of promoting integrated planning and commissioning to improve the lives of all children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CYPSP oversees a number of Northern Ireland subgroups established to progress integrated planning on a Northern Ireland-wide basis. Most importantly in the context of this evaluation report, one subgroup focuses on BME children and young people and BELONG plays an active role as an appointed member of this group.

The **Northern Irish Programme for Government, 2008-2011**, which underpins Government action across all departments, prioritised the principles of tolerance, inclusion, health and well-being (Northern Ireland Executive, 2008). The programme includes cross-departmental strategies that pertain to good relations, social inclusion, and poverty and neighbourhood renewal. Following on from this, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety published the ***Draft Disability Action Plan*** for 2012-2014 (DHSSPS, 2012). This document reasserts commitments to targeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in Northern Irish society and enhancing interagency working to achieve this. In addition, the recent development of the **Delivering Social Change Framework** (OFMDFM, 2012) is indicative of a growing determination to coordinate key actions across Government departments to progress work on priority social policy areas. The framework aims to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages, as well as seeking to secure an improvement in children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities, thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems.

The overriding strategy in Northern Ireland relating to children is ***Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge. A Ten-Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, 2006-2016***, published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2006 (OFMDFM, 2006).

The Northern Ireland **education sector** is currently being restructured. This re-organisation entailed a lengthy consultation process, which resulted in a more cohesive policy development approach and aimed to benefit the development of equality and good relations. The Equality Commission (2008, p. 24) identified this process as providing '*an enormous opportunity for consistent practice and direction in Northern Ireland's education sector*'. This process is to culminate in the creation of the **Education and Skills Authority** (ESA) during 2015. It is intended that the ESA will encompass a range of education bodies that include the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the Irish medium education sector), the five

Education and Library Boards, and the Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessments (CCEA).

In spite of these policy intentions, implementation remains a challenge in Northern Ireland. Connolly (2002) noted a number of difficulties experienced by BME communities in accessing a wide range of public services, including health and social services. These problems include language barriers, lack of awareness as to what services are available, low take-up of GP registration and the need for staff training and cultural awareness. It is notable that some tangible work has been carried out in order to address these matters. For example, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety devised the ***Racial Equality in Health and Social Care: Good Practice Guidelines*** (DHSSPS, 2003), in consultation with the Equality Commission. The guidelines include the employment of interpreters to work with link workers and health workers, the introduction of appropriate dietary plans in hospitals, the accommodating of appropriate cultural and religious beliefs, and consultation with ethnic minorities in planning processes. Again, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety commissioned a Traveller Community Health Care Programme and also worked in partnership with the Department of Health and Children in the Republic of Ireland in participating in the ***All Ireland Traveller Health Study*** (2010), leading to a comprehensive assessment of health status and health of Travellers across the island of Ireland, all with a view to innovative service development and delivery.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that a sense of belonging is central to social development and to be associated with enhanced levels of resilience among children. The security associated with having a strong sense of social belonging is seen as vital in enabling children to 'bounce back', despite having endured adversity. Recent works on the social ecology of resilience highlight that the development of resilience is subject to factors affecting the child in a number of different environments, including the home, the school and society at large. Social support can play a vital role in facilitating a sense of belonging and the development of resilience through the reduction of risk factors.

The concepts of empowerment and rights are also linked to belonging. Recent debates have highlighted participation as central to inclusion and a sense of empowerment for children. The work of BELONG is underpinned by the principle of rights and empowerment and speaks directly to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The themes of cultural

competence, education and bullying are shown to have a profound effect on the experiences of BME children.

The needs of BME children are addressed across a number of different areas of policy and legislation in Northern Ireland. However, the absence of integration results in BME children and families experiencing challenges in gaining access to the level of support needed. A number of recent initiatives have been implemented to address this issue. Most notable are the establishment of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which brings together a wide range of agencies, including representatives from the voluntary and community sector, with the aim of enhancing joint decision-making and planning for children's services, and the development of the Delivering Social Change Framework by the OFMDFM. The restructuring of the education sector and the proposed foundation of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) during 2015 are also seen as positive developments in facilitating a cohesive approach to serving children's needs.

3. Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme

This chapter provides a detailed description of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme. First, it outlines the main data sources used to evaluate the sub-programme and then presents the research findings in relation to its implementation and outcomes. This includes an assessment of the strengths and challenges encountered in implementation and an analysis of the extent to which BELONG has achieved the projected outcomes associated with the sub-programme. The final section summarises the key findings of the evaluation.

3.1 Description of Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme

The Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme aims to increase confidence and competence among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children, parents and families, as well as working to grow levels of cultural competence among the wider community and among existing service providers. Since 2010, BELONG has implemented 11 interventions for BME children as part of this sub-programme. Individual activity blocks within these interventions often ran for 6-8 weeks, with interventions sometimes running over a period of a year. Its work with BME children is divided into two categories: single cultural identity interventions (where BME children take part in interventions with members of their own ethnic group) and participation in youth clubs and after-school activities (which afford BME children an opportunity to engage with members of other ethnic groups and with ethnic majority children).⁴ By including children in **single cultural identity interventions**, BELONG's intention is to provide an opportunity for children to develop confidence in their cultural identity. **Participation in youth clubs and after-school activities** was designed with the intention of providing BME children with an opportunity to develop confidence and competence in engaging with children from other ethnic groups, including ethnic majority children. At the time of evaluation, 358 children had been included in single cultural identity interventions, while 335 children had taken part in interventions run as part of the participation in youth clubs and after-school activities. Interventions ranged from short 2-week programmes to ongoing weekly activity sessions over a period of 13 months.

⁴ For an overview of BELONG's interventions, see [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-55](#).

BELONG has provided information to a total of 165 parents regarding access to mainstream services, as well as catering for more specific information requests. A total of 115 parents have taken part in other initiatives implemented by BELONG, including attending and participating in training interventions and consultations (see *Section 3.4.2 below*). A media campaign has also been run in order to raise awareness of BME culture and challenges faced by BME communities in Northern Ireland. In addition, BELONG has engaged in collaborative and development work with a number of existing service providers in the area in the interest of enhancing the range of activities accessible to BME children and with a view to increasing their levels of cultural competence.

3.2 Data sources for evaluation

The evaluation of this sub-programme is primarily based on data generated from 3 exemplar evaluations: Hear My Voice; We R U; and the Charter for Change. The evaluation of the **Hear My Voice** intervention facilitated participants in engaging with the themes of Rights and Bullying through the medium of artwork.⁵ Drama-based approaches were used by the group in Craigavon, while clay modelling was used as the medium in the Newry intervention. Artwork produced as part of this intervention was displayed at the BELONG Showcase Event in Armagh in April 2013. The evaluation focused on the intervention at two sites – Craigavon and Newry.

The **We R U** intervention consisted of a 6-week programme of separate work with a group of Traveller children, aimed at increasing levels of cultural confidence and competence, and with ethnic majority children, aimed at increasing levels of cultural competence.⁶ Following this separate work, a joint activity was implemented over a period of 3 weeks in order to facilitate participants from the two groups in engaging and working together. This exemplar built on a previously implemented version of this intervention.

The **Charter for Change** intervention was implemented as a pilot with two organisations that provide activities for children in the Craigavon area. This intervention aimed to facilitate participating organisations in increasing their levels of cultural competence and to enhance their engagement with BME children and communities.⁷ Over the course of the evaluation, participants were supported, through regular meetings, in achieving 3 steps of a 10-step

⁵ A full discussion of this intervention is provided in [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-7](#).

⁶ A full discussion of this intervention is provided in [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-14](#).

⁷ A full discussion of this intervention is provided in [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-1](#).

process (the Charter for Change). They were also provided with resources in the form of a toolkit outlining the actions associated with these steps – a toolbox (containing theoretical readings as well as practical resources, such as activities) and a portfolio to document the process. BELONG’s work on this intervention has continued after the evaluation period.

Alongside the findings from these three exemplars, other sources for the evaluation of this sub-programme are data from the services survey and interviews, and monitoring data. As indicated in the ‘Methodology’ section in Chapter 1, these sources are triangulated in order to generate key learning and arrive at an evaluative position on the sub-programme.

3.3 Implementation findings

This section focuses on the strengths of and challenges facing the Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme.

3.3.1 Work with BME children

Intervention design was shown to be a fundamental strength of this sub-programme. Plans for individual interventions and associated session plans, analysed as part of the monitoring data, show that the core aims of the BELONG Programme were prioritised.⁸ Intervention templates explicitly state and match the relationship between the planned activities and the intended outcomes of the sub-programme. In addition to this, intervention plans highlight the links between the approach of individual interventions, theoretical models and research literature. This ensured that activities planned for inclusion in interventions reflected the key aims of BELONG and remained in focus at all stages of intervention.

The **use of artwork** as a core medium in many interventions was a key strength. Many of the interventions addressed issues relating to the participants’ lives through the use of art forms such as puppet making, clay modelling, music and drama. This approach was shown during observations to be a particularly effective means of engaging with participants. Observation of sessions of the Hear My Voice exemplar in Craigavon and in Newry (Bessbrook) demonstrated that children engaged enthusiastically with the art activities (drama and clay modelling respectively).⁹ The Hear My Voice intervention in Craigavon, in particular, demonstrated that the use of art techniques can facilitate children in engaging in

⁸ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-55](#).

⁹ See [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-8](#) and [p. A-12](#).

interventions in a thoughtful manner, while remaining physically active and developing new skills.¹⁰ Children also outlined their enjoyment of these art projects during focus groups, stating that they were proud of what they had produced and the new skills they had acquired.¹¹

The Hear My Voice Intervention in Craigavon provides an important example of the manner in which artistic means of expression and creative activities can be used to enable children to engage in a process of civic engagement around the theme of Rights. For example, a short play and film reflecting the children's opinions on the issues of rights and bullying was written and performed by them during the BELONG Showcase Event in Armagh (April 2013), which was attended by politicians and policy-makers. This provided a very real platform for the children to express their opinions on the issues of rights and bullying. This constituted a robust example of creative activities being used to promote and empower children to express their views on a subject, in this case Rights.

The perceived value of the use of artwork in interventions was also apparent in the monitoring data. As English is not the first language of many of the children taking part in the BELONG Programme, the use of non-linguistic means of expression was felt to be beneficial to, and engaging for, participants. Participants noted in post-intervention reflection sheets that these activities were enjoyable and engaging, and believed that artwork enabled them to express their views and opinions to adults.¹²

Evaluation data gathered from the We R U and Hear My Voice exemplars indicate that the creation of an **intercultural environment** is one of the strengths of the sub-programme. Such an environment affords participants an opportunity to socialise and to engage with children from diverse backgrounds. Comparison of data gathered from the Hear My Voice and the We R U interventions underlines the nuances involved in creating these intercultural environments.

The Hear My Voice intervention was designed to be implemented as a single cultural identity intervention, working with children from a single ethnic group to build cultural confidence (see BELONG, 2009, p. 32). However, as outlined by the respective Project Development Workers (PDWs) during interviews, for practical reasons, it was necessary to include

¹⁰ See [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-8.](#)

¹¹ See [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-12.](#)

¹² See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-55.](#)

children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.¹³ Monitoring data confirmed that the majority of single cultural activity interventions were implemented with groups of children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Interviews with staff, focus groups with children and observations indicate that these interventions were successful in creating the conditions for interaction between children from different cultural backgrounds.

The We R U intervention consisted of an initial 7 weeks of work with a group of ethnic majority children, aimed at increasing levels of understanding of Traveller culture. Alongside this, 6 weeks of activities were undertaken with children from the Traveller community, aimed at increasing levels of cultural confidence and competence. This separate group work was followed by 3 weeks of joint activities, where members of both groups worked together (although there was limited attendance by the BME children at two of these sessions). In particular, BELONG PDWs spent a considerable amount of time during intervention sessions with the ethnic majority group, challenging the high levels of prejudice towards members of the Traveller community. It is reasonable to infer that preliminary work on developing levels of cultural competence and addressing prejudices was an important factor in the successful creation of an intercultural environment in which participants from both groups engaged positively.¹⁴

The contrast between the Hear My Voice and We R U interventions highlights the complex range of issues to be taken into account in implementing interventions with BME children. Positive intercultural engagement may take place organically among some ethnic groups, eliminating the need for single cultural activities. However, in cases where there are high levels of prejudice towards a particular group, it will be necessary to address levels of cultural competence in single cultural identity groups. The We R U intervention provides a useful model for addressing this issue.

Evaluation evidence strongly indicates that the **skills and capacity of the intervention team** was a factor in ensuring high-quality delivery. Dealing with a diverse range of abilities and behavioural issues is a challenge regularly encountered in youth work and the BELONG Programme is no exception. Indeed, given the wide age range of participants in interventions (aged 7-12 years) and their differing levels of cultural and linguistic competence, this challenge can be seen as particularly pronounced in the BELONG Programme. Staff skills

¹³ A full discussion of this is provided in [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-7](#).

¹⁴ For a full discussion of this, see [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-16](#).

were manifested in their ability to respond to the presenting needs of children and to adapt programmes and materials as required.

In the Hear My Voice exemplar in Bessbrook in particular, staff were able to adapt and re-organise sessions to cater for participants as required. In this particular intervention, activities and content required significant revision and redesign to accommodate learning difficulties and behavioural issues in the group. Staff successfully designed revised activity schedules and incorporated materials that were suited to the capacities of participants, allowing for the delivery of an intervention that was stimulating and beneficial to the confidence of participants.¹⁵

The ability of staff to adapt interventions to suit the competencies of the participants was also exemplified by the We R U intervention in Craigavon. As outlined above, this intervention necessitated working closely with a group of ethnic majority children with whom there had been no previous contact. While the We R U intervention had been implemented with a pilot group from February to June 2012, interviews and analysis of monitoring data highlight the difference in levels of cultural competence and attitudes of ethnic majority groups. PDWs outlined that while the session plans for this intervention had been successful during the pilot implementation phase, they were not pitched at the correct level for the second group. However, PDWs adapted the sessions, engaging in more group discussion which enabled them to address and to challenge the prejudices of the group. These adaptations were successful as demonstrated by participants who outlined that they had enjoyed the programme and learnt a lot about Traveller culture during the intervention.¹⁶ As suggested by BELONG PDWs during interviews, flexibility in intervention delivery would be enhanced by the development of a portfolio of activities providing a range of possible sessions on a particular subject for PDWs. Such a portfolio would facilitate PDWs to be needs-led in their work.

The Interim Report evaluating the BELONG Programme (Forkan *et al*, 2012, pp. 20-23) highlighted the high levels of satisfaction among participants on the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme. Participant feedback sheets used in this evaluation were overwhelming positive, with most participants (9 out of 11) reporting that there were 'no bad things' about the sub-programme. Parents of participants echoed these positive views, highlighting that their children were extremely enthusiastic about attending interventions.

¹⁵ For a full discussion of this point, see [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-12](#).

¹⁶ For a full discussion of this issue, see [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-18](#).

The **short time duration of some activity blocks and interventions** within the Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme was a limitation. This issue was highlighted during the evaluation of exemplars and in the monitoring data. During interviews, staff said that they believed some interventions would be more effective if continued over a longer period of time in order to allow participants to ensure more in-depth learning and skills development.¹⁷ This issue was specifically raised by parents of participants from the We R U intervention. Parents of Traveller children reported that as a result of the nomadic traditions of some members of the Traveller community, children missed out on a number of sessions. In order to cater effectively for these children, parents believed that it would be necessary to run interventions for a much longer period of time.¹⁸ This was also raised in monitoring data relating to the interventions run as part of the Cultural Confidence and Competence sub-programme. Staff reflection sheets highlighted the importance of running activity blocks over a sufficient period of time to allow the participants to become comfortable with the topics under discussion. It is of note that following this feedback from parents, BELONG extended the We R U and Hear My Voice interventions to April 2013 and June 2013 respectively.

3.3.2 Work with the wider community

External stakeholders who work with BELONG in delivering interventions were invited to complete an online survey on a range of topics. A total of 16 of the 18 stakeholders responded to the survey. The majority of respondents outlined that they had a very positive working relationship with BELONG, expressing the view that it had played a proactive role in initiating joint work. Working arrangements were characterised as flexible and all respondents reported both formal and informal relationships to be largely positive.

Evaluation of the Charter for Change intervention provided for a more in-depth analysis of BELONG's implementation of joint working towards increasing levels of cultural competence among existing service providers. Participants in this intervention reported a positive experience of joint working with BELONG. The evidence highlights the importance of a flexible approach to the pace of intervention delivery, the use of materials and the timing of the work. This was seen as necessary to accommodate the varying needs of organisations and to facilitate the different levels of experience among participants.

¹⁷ Further discussion of this issue is provided in [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-16](#).

¹⁸ See [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-17](#).

The quality and extent of materials developed for the Charter for Change intervention were shown to be a strength of this initiative. Materials developed consisted of the Charter document, an audit document, a portfolio, a toolkit outlining the actions involved in each of the steps, and a toolbox providing links to key resources. However, the contrast between the extent to which the representatives of the two participating organisations engaged with these materials underlines the importance of flexibility: one organisation representative found the extent and breadth of the resources to be ‘overwhelming at times’, while the other engaged enthusiastically with the resources. This suggests greater guidance may be needed regarding the practical application of supporting materials. While a relatively small point, the flexible approach of the PDW to the timing of the work was appreciated by both organisation representatives.

3.4 Outcomes

This section analyses the success of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme in achieving its medium term-outcomes, as stated in the BELONG Service Plan (2009). These were:

- to enhance access to mainstream activities for BME children/young people;
- to enhance capacity and capabilities among BME communities;
- to increase awareness and understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions.

3.4.1 Outcome: To enhance access to mainstream activities for BME children and young people

As outlined above, the We R U intervention involved work with a group of Traveller children to increase levels of cultural confidence and competence, and with a group of ethnic majority children to enhance cultural competence (i.e. increasing their understanding of Traveller culture and traditions). During the evaluation phase, three sessions of the joint activity were run, but attendance by Traveller children was irregular and just one Traveller child had commenced attending regular youth club activities. On these indicators, there is little evidence of change. However, the fact that the intervention had a successful outcome for one participant from the BME group is positive. It indicates that the mainstream youth club environment became more inclusive, something observed between initial and follow-up observations, and was referred to in interviews with children and staff. Furthermore, the majority of BME parents indicated that continuation of joint activities over a longer period of time would be necessary in order to accommodate the nomadic traditions of some members of the Traveller community. Staff reflection sheets from a previous intervention also indicated that access of BME children to mainstream activities was similarly hampered in this instance

by the brevity of the intervention.¹⁹ In response to this learning, BELONG extended the implementation of the intervention beyond the duration of the evaluation.

The Charter for Change intervention also aimed to enhance access to mainstream clubs and activities for BME children. In order to evaluate the success of this element of the sub-programme, a pre-intervention and post-intervention audit was carried out with the two participating organisations. While changes in awareness and understanding of BME cultures and communities are outlined in detail below, it is worth noting that direct work towards increasing access arising as a result of the Charter work included incorporating information relevant to BME children and communities into monitoring processes and consulting with BME children and parents regarding their needs.²⁰ At the time of the evaluation, flyers advertising the activities of their clubs were under preparation by both organisations in the languages spoken by the BME communities in the area, for distribution in the local schools and in areas frequented by BME parents and children. Thus, while the Charter for Change intervention had not achieved its outcome of increasing access to mainstream activities during the evaluation period, this evidence indicates that the intervention was conducive to both organisations taking important and concrete steps towards this goal.

The broader contribution of BELONG to increasing access is indicated in the survey of external stakeholders. Respondents indicated that BELONG provided support to their organisation in the development of interventions for BME children (9 out of 16 who responded to this question). Most respondents agreed that BELONG had helped increase access to clubs (11 out of 12 who responded to this question). Board member interviewees were of the view that, while BELONG's work has contributed to fostering acceptance of BME children in clubs and activities generally, they noted that additional work and time was needed.

3.4.2 Outcome: To enhance capacity and capabilities among BME communities

Data generated in the evaluation of exemplars indicate that the capacities of BME children to be culturally competent and confident were enhanced as a result of their participation in the sub-programme. Many of the children, before commencing the Hear My Voice intervention, were described by staff as having been reticent to mix with children from other cultures, socialising exclusively within their own ethnic group. However, participants became

¹⁹ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-58](#).

²⁰ For a thorough discussion of these processes, see [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-3](#).

increasingly comfortable with each other as the intervention progressed. This increased cultural competence was described by a sessional worker as a significant outcome of the intervention, with the children increasingly gaining confidence in working as part of an ethnically diverse group.²¹

This increase in levels of competence was echoed in evaluation observations of Hear My Voice sessions. For example, in comparison with the initial session, participants mixed and conversed more freely with children from different ethnic groups during the second session observed.²² Data from the Interim Report also reflected this positive finding, with case studies of two participants indicating improved personal capacity in terms of communication skills and levels of cultural confidence over the course of participation (Forkan *et al*, 2012, pp. 20-23).

The We R U intervention also aimed to enhance levels of cultural competence and confidence among participants. However, as a result of low attendance at evaluation focus groups and interviews, it was not possible to determine conclusively the extent to which this took place. The sole participant from the Traveller group who completed this interview evidenced high levels of cultural competence, readily discussing how well she got along with the children in the youth club.²³ However, parents of other participants from the Traveller group outlined that their children had not acquired sufficient levels of confidence to attend the mainstream club without the presence of a BELONG PDW.²⁴

In relation to outcomes for parents, the Service Plan (BELONG, 2009) details its intention to provide signposting and advice for 150 BME parents during the first 3 years of the programme. Monitoring data indicate that a total of 165 parents have been provided with information from BELONG to date. BME parents have been facilitated in accessing information about mainstream provision, with 75 specific and targeted requests for mainstream information also being met. Needs assessments have been carried out by BELONG with 41 parents, while 28 parents have been involved in training on children's rights. While it was not possible to objectively gauge increases in levels of cultural competence and confidence among BME parents arising from this activity, provision of

²¹ See [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-11](#).

²² See [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-11](#).

²³ See [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-17](#).

²⁴ See [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-17](#).

information and training can be seen as a positive step by BELONG towards achieving this medium-term outcome.

3.4.3 Outcome: To increase awareness and understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions

The Services Review (see *Appendix M*) aims to generate an understanding of the impact of the BELONG Programme on the provision of services in the Southern Area and on the development of policy relating to BME children in Northern Ireland. It indicates that BELONG has been successful in increasing levels of awareness and understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions. Specifically, of 23 strategic and delivery-level respondents, 19 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that BELONG had been successful in increasing awareness of the needs of BME cultures and communities among existing service providers. Positive appraisals were also made in relation to BELONG's success in fostering a culture of acceptance among the majority society: 7 respondents 'strongly agreed' and 8 'agreed' with the statement.²⁵ 19 respondents held the view that BELONG had become an advocate organisation in this policy and practice area.

Data from interviews conducted with BELONG Board members (n=5) support findings regarding their perceptions of the effect of the BELONG Programme on service provision in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland. Board members indicated that BELONG had been successful in making service providers more culturally aware. Through creating a high profile for the work, and disseminating information and support to organisations directly, it was felt that BELONG had caused organisations to become more sensitive to the needs of the BME community and had resulted in more reflection by individuals before engaging in particular activities. Interviewees believed that it had, at a more general level, caused greater openness and encouraged conversations about cultural competence. However, interviewees, although positive, were more reticent regarding BELONG's success in engendering enhanced cultural competence at an organisational level. Such change, in their view, can take a long time.

The Charter for Change intervention also provides an example of BELONG's work towards increasing levels of awareness and understanding of BME communities and cultures among existing service providers. As outlined in the 'Implementation findings (see *Section 3.3*

²⁵ See [Appendix M: Services Review, Figure M-8 \(p. A-99\)](#) and [Figure M-18 \(p. A-107\)](#).

above), 3 steps of a 10-step programme were completed over the course of the evaluation²⁶ and an audit process indicates notable improvements in the levels of awareness of BME cultures and communities. Monitoring processes within the organisations were shown to have been adapted to include information on cultural and ethnic diversity. There were specific plans in place to incorporate the findings of consultations with BME parents and children into the planning of future activities. The follow-up audit also evidenced notable changes in the levels of knowledge/skill development in the participating organisations. For example, Diversity Awareness Training had been attended by employees of one organisation, while such training was planned by the other. An effort had also been made by both organisations since the completion of the baseline audit to communicate regularly with representatives from BME community groups in order to access the specific information needed to develop culturally sensitive interventions to address their needs.

While only drawing on evidence in relation to one exemplar (the We R U intervention), BELONG has demonstrated the potential for increasing levels of awareness by non-BME children of their BME peers. Non-BME participants displayed high levels of prejudice during the initial session of the intervention. However, at the end of this intervention, participants showed evidence of increased levels of understanding and diversity awareness.²⁷ For example, one participant explained that she understood much more about Traveller culture following the intervention. Similarly, positive outcomes were noted in monitoring data from a previous implementation of this intervention. Staff reflection sheets and project journeys record that attitudes towards BME cultures and levels of cultural competence improved notably over the course of the intervention.

3.5 Summary

The Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme has been widely implemented, involving children, parents and the wider community in a variety of interventions since 2010. Implementation has been characterised by strong programme planning, design and content, and adaptable and flexible staff. The available evidence indicates that BELONG has achieved some success towards the 3 medium-term outcomes of this sub-programme. While the data does not demonstrate an increase in the numbers of BME children accessing mainstream activities over the evaluation period, it does indicate that notable groundwork has been carried out towards enhancing the inclusivity of mainstream clubs and services.

²⁶ For a full discussion of the implementation of the Charter for Change intervention, see [Appendix A, p. A-2](#).

²⁷ A detailed discussion of this development is provided in [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-18](#).

Data also indicate that the capacities and capabilities of BME children and communities have been positively affected, with levels of cultural competence and confidence of BME children taking part in interventions increasing over the evaluation period. Evaluation data also evidenced increased levels of awareness and understanding of BME communities, their cultures and traditions among mainstream service providers.

KEY LEARNING

Three fundamental learning points emerge from an analysis of BELONG's implementation of its Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme:

- First, the importance of having **skilled staff capable of adapting programmes** in response to needs encountered. BELONG's work shows that this point applies both in the context of work with children and parents, but equally in working with professional staff in partner organisations. Because different approaches are necessary to create successful intercultural settings with different groups of children, staff need to be adaptable.
- Second, the importance for **high-quality programme design, with strong content**, reflective of the organisational vision. BELONG's experience strongly demonstrates the value of creativity-based content in working with children in this age group on sensitive issues like cultural confidence and competence.
- Third, the importance of realising that **change in understanding and accepting cultural difference takes time**, both at an individual and organisational level – something that needs to be reflected in the timeframe and intensity of interventions.

4. Education Sub-programme and Anti-Bullying/Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme

4.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a description of the Education Sub-programme before providing an overview of the evaluation data sources used to inform the analysis. It then provides a discussion of the strengths and challenges encountered in its implementation, before moving on to analyse the extent to which BELONG has achieved the projected outcomes associated with it. The second part of the chapter focuses on implementation and outcomes relating to the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme.

4.2 Description of Education Sub-programme

BELONG's Education Sub-programme is targeted at BME children who would benefit from additional support to promote enhanced enjoyment of learning and increased participation in school activities. In line with BELONG's social-ecological approach²⁸, it consists of interventions for children, for parents and for the wider community.²⁹

The implementation of this sub-programme was subject to delays during the early phase of the BELONG Programme because of a recruitment ban in the public sector (which led to delays in the recruitment of Educational Support Workers) and delays in the reform of the education sector. However, as outlined in the Interim Report (Forkan *et al*, 2012, p. 4), intervention delivery has been gaining momentum since early 2011 and 6 ongoing education and literacy support interventions have now been implemented across 4 locations (Coalisland, Craigavon, Newry and Armagh).³⁰ A total of 170 children have attended these interventions, on average twice a week. In addition to this, targeted Literacy and Numeracy Support has been provided for 78 children.

BELONG has also implemented transitional education interventions for 54 children moving from primary to post-primary school. A total of 32 parents have been involved in a parent-

²⁸ See [Appendix H: Literature Review, p. A-39](#).

²⁹ For full account of BELONG's Education Sub-programme activities, see [Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview, p. A-53](#).

³⁰ For full account of BELONG's Education Sub-programme activities, see [Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview, p. A-53](#) and [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-59](#).

specific literacy and numeracy project, as well as in a 'learning together after school' intervention. BELONG has assisted 64 parents in developing their knowledge and understanding of the education system, with additional specific work with 39 parents on improving their links with schools. Diversity Awareness Training has been provided for a total of 98 Classroom Assistants in the Dungannon area. As well as undertaking small number specific advocacy interventions, a focus on advocacy is a component of a range of its education activities.

4.3 Data sources for evaluation

The evaluation of the Education Sub-programme is informed by qualitative data collected from three exemplar interventions: the Transition intervention, Assessment of External Learning Skills and Diversity Awareness Training.³¹

The **Transition** intervention, which was run in Newry and Dungannon in August 2012, provided support for children and parents of children who were preparing to progress from primary to post-primary education the following school year. The intervention was run over the course of 5 days and provided a forum for children to express and discuss their fears and anxieties relating to post-primary school. Activities were also carried out which provided participants with practical information regarding the experience of post-primary education, including using timetables, dealing with increased workloads and introductions to new subjects. All participants were invited to visit the W5 Science Museum in Belfast on the final day of the intervention.³²

The **Assessment of External Learning Skills** intervention was run on a weekly basis between November 2012 and June 2013 in Craigavon. The goal of the intervention was to highlight the children's acquisition and demonstration of skills external to the formal education system, but which are assessed within the curriculum. In total, 15 children from two schools in the Craigavon area participated in the intervention, compiling a portfolio documenting their learning outside the school environment. Portfolios were intended to be shown to teachers on completion in order to heighten awareness in schools of the activities and the knowledge that participants had accumulated outside the school environment.³³

³¹ A full discussion of each of these interventions is provided in [Appendices E \(p. A-23\)](#), [D \(p. A-20\)](#) and [F \(p. A-27\)](#) respectively.

³² See [Appendix E: Transition intervention, p. A-23](#).

³³ A detailed account of this intervention is provided in [Appendix D: Assessment of external learning skills, p. A-20](#).

Through the **Diversity Awareness Training** intervention, BELONG engaged directly with 7 schools in the Dungannon area to design and implement a day-long training intervention for Classroom Assistants. The core aim of this intervention was to enhance diversity awareness among Classroom Assistants, to raise their expectations for BME children in participating schools and to build a positive view of, and approach to, working with BME children in the school environment. While many training programmes are provided for teachers in this area, this intervention is the first in Northern Ireland to directly address the diversity awareness training needs of Classroom Assistants. This intervention is in line with UNESCO's work on the importance of Classroom Assistants given their proximity to the child and their key one-to-one relationship with him or her (O'Connor *et al*, 2012). The Diversity Awareness Training intervention was attended by 98 Classroom Assistants from 7 schools in the Dungannon area in August 2012. The one-day intervention was implemented with 3 separate groups. Sessions were facilitated by BELONG staff, in conjunction with the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), a partner in the BELONG Programme.

In addition, monitoring data drawn upon in the evaluation of this sub-programme consisted of staff reflection sheets, staff project journeys, participant reflection sheets and journals.

4.4 Implementation findings

A number of strengths and constraints are apparent in the implementation of the Education Sub-programme as demonstrated by exemplar and monitoring data, allowing for the identification of key learning relating to provision of education and related services for BME children and youth.

4.4.1 Key learning from work with BME children

The high level of **personal engagement and supportive role** of BELONG Educational Support Workers (ESWs) and sessional staff with participants is a key strength of the Education Sub-programme, evidenced by the evaluation data from the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention and the Transition intervention. This was also echoed by staff reflection sheets and participant reflection sheets examined as part of the monitoring data from the sub-programme.

Data gained from observations by the Evaluation Team of the portfolio completion sessions of the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention evidenced the high levels of personal engagement of ESWs and sessional staff with participants. In particular, younger

participants who experienced difficulties in completing the written tasks in the portfolio were provided with assistance and encouragement. Personal engagement was similarly shown to be a strength in the Transition intervention. During focus groups relating to this intervention, participants outlined that they felt the staff had been extremely supportive of issues that they raised relating to their expectations of beginning post-primary school.³⁴ Monitoring data also underlined the supportive role of ESWs as being an important strength of the Education Sub-programme. Analysis was carried out on the staff reflection sheets from interventions in Coalisland (3), Newry (1), Warrenpoint (1), and Craigavon (1). ESWs and sessional workers evidenced a high level of interest in the progress of participants in Education and Learning Support interventions and in Literacy and Numeracy Support. Staff reflection sheets document progressions in the work of participating children and changes in behaviour.³⁵ This was echoed in participant reflection, where children further outlined the support of ESWs and sessional workers as being beneficial in enabling them to complete their homework and learning tasks. The beneficial effect of personal engagement in this sub-programme is seen a key learning point from the evaluation.

The **content of interventions** was also identified as being a key strength of the sub-programme. This was illustrated in the evaluation of the Transition intervention. The intervention included a balance between group discussions, autonomous work and interactive activities in order to ensure that participants were stimulated throughout the sessions. Sessions commenced with group discussions, where participants were facilitated in discussing their fears and expectations of post-primary school. Participants were then afforded an opportunity to complete an ICT project on their personal expectations relating to post-primary school, allowing for additional reflection on personal issues relating to the transition period. Sessions also incorporated activities based on practical and relevant information relating to post-primary education. For example, participants were afforded an opportunity to become familiar with school timetables and maps, as well as being provided with 'taster sessions' of new subjects to be covered in post-primary school, including French and Science. ESWs and sessional workers outlined during interviews that the content had been extremely successful in engaging participants. In particular, the variety of activities and discussion topics ensured that participants remained engaged throughout the intervention. This view was also expressed by intervention participants in both the focus groups conducted in Newry and in Dungannon.³⁶

³⁴ For a full discussion of this, see [Appendix E: Transition intervention, p. A-25](#).

³⁵ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-59](#).

³⁶ See [Appendix E: Transition intervention, p. A-24](#).

The Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention also demonstrated that the **stimulating and engaging materials used** in the Education Sub-programme were a strength of BELONG's implementation. This intervention entailed a portfolio completion process, whereby participants were provided with specially designed portfolios in which they documented their external learning, detailing skills they had developed, such as art, languages and music. While this intervention was attended by children from a wide age range (aged 7-12 years) and of different levels of educational attainment, portfolio design and content ensured that the intervention was stimulating and engaging for all participants. The portfolios were age-appropriate and sufficiently accessible in their content to allow younger participants to complete them, with some help from ESWs and sessional workers. They combined colouring, drawing and artistic exercises with related writing tasks. Participants were also encouraged to collect photographs relating to their personal experiences and skills. The lay-out of the portfolio afforded extra space for older and more advanced participants to elaborate on their experiences in more detail where they wished.³⁷ Evaluation data gathered through observations strongly suggests that this process was a positive experience for participants, with participants demonstrating a sense of pride in compiling their portfolios. This was also emphasized by participants during focus groups who described the process as 'satisfying' and 'fun'. This view was also echoed by staff during interviews.

Monitoring data is consistent with this finding, showing the use of innovative materials and content to be a strength across the Education Sub-programme. This is exemplified by the use of ICT in the additional Literacy and Numeracy Support intervention. Participants were provided with a personal account for ICT literacy and numeracy programmes. These programmes tracked the progress of each participant over the course of the intervention, providing self-assessment sheets that document progress in skill development. Participants were encouraged to keep track of their achievements by printing off their self-assessment sheets at the end of each session and to store this along with other work in personalised folders. Staff reflection sheets document that children engaged enthusiastically with this aspect of the intervention, deriving satisfaction from seeing their progress being documented.³⁸

³⁷ See [Appendix D: Assessment of external learning skills, p. A-21](#).

³⁸ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-59](#).

Furthermore, data collected as part of the earlier Interim Report also evidences a high level of satisfaction among BME children and parents regarding the Education Sub-programme (Forkan *et al*, 2012, p. 26). Participants and parents expressed the view that it was extremely beneficial to educational development. These high levels of satisfaction are confirmed by the continued high levels of attendance at this sub-programme since 2010.

4.4.2 Engagement with schools

A strength of BELONG's work in education is its **partnership working with the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS)**, which is also a member of the BELONG Partnership. At a general level, the IDS has facilitated BELONG's engagement with schools in the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB). In addition to this, it has worked with BELONG in the co-delivery of interventions. For example, the IDS has worked with BELONG ESWs in the development of the portfolio for use in the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention and in designing and co-delivering the Diversity Awareness Training intervention. IDS representatives attended cluster meetings and consultations with teachers from the schools involved in the Diversity Awareness Training intervention and played a leading role in the development of its content. Evaluation evidence in the form of interviews with BELONG and IDS staff, together with observations of school cluster meetings, suggest a positive working relationship.

Evaluation findings in respect of the **working relationships established with schools and teachers** is mixed. Data gathered for the Diversity Awareness Training exemplar illustrates both positive and negative dimensions. A cluster group consisting of teachers from 7 schools in the Dungannon area was formed in order to develop the Diversity Awareness Training programme. It provided a forum for teachers to discuss their experiences of working with BME children in schools and to reflect on culturally competent practices, as well as contributing to the development of the intervention. The enthusiastic engagement of teachers observed during meetings underlines the positive relationships developed by BELONG with schools in this area and highlights BELONG's potential to facilitate the forging of stronger links between schools.

In spite of these positive relationships with teachers, issues relating to communication with the Classroom Assistants impacted negatively on the first day of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention. Thus, while the curriculum and materials for the intervention were developed by BELONG ESWs and IDS representatives following consultation with members of the teacher's cluster group, feedback from the first day of the intervention revealed that

the content of the initial session did not reflect the self-assessed level of experience of Classroom Assistants. BELONG ESWs subsequently adapted the content and the design of the intervention, drawing in a greater number of materials and ensuring that the content was sufficiently advanced for the experience levels of participants. This approach was shown to be successful since feedback from participants on the second and third days of the intervention were largely positive.

However, the problems that arose were avoidable in that the ESWs and IDS representatives recommended to the teachers that Classroom Assistants would be involved in the final choice of intervention materials and content. While the limited availability of Classroom Assistants (as they are only paid for contact time) precluded their extensive involvement in the development phases of this intervention, there is a need for more direct communication with participants in the development of future interventions. In response to these challenges, BELONG and the IDS have taken measures to involve Classroom Assistants directly in the design of future Diversity Awareness Training interventions.³⁹

Data collected as part of the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention suggest that implementation of some aspects of this intervention were hampered by difficulties in establishing regular communication with the schools involved. As a result of the difficulties associated with involving teachers and school principals in interventions at the start of the school year, misunderstandings arose regarding the commencement of the intervention.

Evaluation evidence also suggests that engagement with the schools attended by participants in the Transition intervention presented a challenge to BELONG. While relevant teachers had been sent a letter in the post outlining the details of the intervention (and in some cases e-mailed by BELONG ESWs), all teachers interviewed as part of the evaluation process said that they had been unaware of the intervention until they had been approached to contribute to the evaluation.⁴⁰ Content analysis of monitoring data also highlights that establishing clear lines of communication with schools at times presents a challenge to BELONG. Data collected as part of the Education and Learning Support interventions suggest confusion occasionally arose around homework to be completed and support received by children within the school system.⁴¹

³⁹ For a thorough discussion of this issue, see [Appendix F: Diversity Awareness Training, p. A-28](#).

⁴⁰ Teachers outlined that they had discussed the intervention with students in preparation for the evaluation interview.

⁴¹ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-60](#).

Notwithstanding these issues, there was strong goodwill expressed in all interviews with teachers and principals towards BELONG's work. They expressed their support for BELONG's Education Sub-programme and that they would welcome the opportunity to work more closely with BELONG in future. Based on this evidence, BELONG has established a capacity to engage with schools.

4.4.3 Engaging parents

Ensuring the **attendance of parents** has been shown to be one of the most challenging aspects of the Education Sub-programme. Monitoring data from the Parental Support Programme suggests that language issues also pose a challenge to BELONG's work with parents. These data also illustrate that many parents required the presence of an interpreter during interventions. Inclusion of multiple interpreters was shown in some interventions to cause some disruption and delays to the delivery of the programme.⁴² However, staff reflection sheets from later interventions suggest that adapting sessions allows for this issue to be resolved. It was also noted in reflection sheets that the provision of additional supporting materials in the languages of the parents is beneficial.

Since 2010, 8 interventions have been implemented by BELONG that have aimed to enhance literacy and numeracy levels among parents. Of these 8, participation by parents was achieved in 6, with 32 parents participating across these interventions. The challenge of engaging with parents in interventions is exemplified by monitoring data relating to the DELTA intervention, a 4-week intervention planned for Traveller parents from Craigavon. Parents had been consulted in advance on the timing and location of this intervention. In spite of this pre-consultation about arrangements, the DELTA programme was cancelled as a result of the non-attendance of parents. Monitoring data from education and literacy support interventions and the evaluation of exemplars also documents the difficulties experienced by ESWs in engaging with parents of children attending these support interventions. However, staff reflection sheets suggest that provision of 'meet and greet' facilities and consistent engagement with parents during these interventions have helped in overcoming the reticence of parents to become involved in the BELONG Programme.⁴³

⁴² See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-59](#).

⁴³ See [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-60](#).

Evaluation of the Transition intervention affords some insight into the challenge of engaging with parents. Of the parents who were invited to accompany their children to this intervention, 2 attended all 5 days, with 4 parents not attending at all and 2 parents only attending for 2 days. Follow-up questionnaires, completed by 8 parents, investigated the reasons for parental non-attendance, with the main reason cited being 'work commitments' (5), with one parent stating that she did not think it was necessary to attend. Feedback in parental questionnaires highlighted that parents believed they would have attended the intervention if separate training had been provided during the evenings and that they would have found it useful to have attended a Transition intervention earlier during the year.

4.5 Outcomes

In reviewing progress towards outcomes in its educational work, it is important to acknowledge the delayed implementation of the Education Sub-programme, for reasons outside of BELONG's control, and thus the feasibility of achieving projected medium-term outcomes was compromised. This section considers the sub-programme's outcomes, first focusing on those directly related to exemplar interventions and then assessing progress towards medium-term outcomes based on available monitoring data.

Outcomes from exemplars

Positive outcomes were reported by participants from the **Transition** intervention. Focus groups were conducted with participants from the Dungannon and Newry interventions. Participants described that they felt they belonged in their secondary schools and described that the practical supports provided in the intervention, such as practice timetables and maps of the relevant schools, had been useful in settling into their schools. Teachers from the respective schools similarly outlined that the majority of participants were well adjusted in their schools, achieving academically and appeared to have made new friends. All teachers interviewed emphasized that they believed, based on their discussions with participants in preparation for data collection (not on knowledge of the programme per se), that this was an effective intervention and expressed their belief that it should be replicated in the future.

The main aims of the **Assessment of External Learning Skills** exemplar were to enhance schools' awareness of external learning by BME children and to increase recognition of the value of this learning and skills. BME children were facilitated in completing a portfolio that documented their external learning and skills. It was intended that this portfolio would be shown to teachers in order to increase the value placed on, and the level of understanding

of, external skills possessed by BME children. For a number of reasons (including the timing of the intervention and a reluctance among participating children to share their portfolios), BELONG did not succeed in involving teachers in the intervention to the intended extent within the timeframe of the evaluation. As a result, teachers were not facilitated in adopting a more culturally responsive approach to achievement and assessment. Yet, in spite of the absence of discernible outcomes regarding the breadth of assessment and achievement in schools emanating from this intervention, the school principal interviewed as part of the evaluation expressed enthusiasm for the concept. In particular, she articulated her belief that this intervention had the potential to impact positively on participants' experience of school and expressed a commitment to working with BELONG on future implementations of this intervention.

The main aims of the **Diversity Awareness Training** intervention were to increase levels of diversity awareness among Classroom Assistants, to raise their expectations of BME children and to create a positive view of and approach to working with them. Findings from this exemplar show a slight increase in diversity awareness. In addition, the majority of participants involved in the Diversity Awareness Training indicated that it had 'some' or 'significant' impact on their practice. Those participating in the first session were less likely to indicate this than those in subsequent sessions (*see details above*). While the implication of the improved fit of the second two training sessions was apparent in interviews with teachers, the majority were positive about the value of the training to Classroom Assistants. Among the areas cited by teachers as being of value were confidence, independence, proactivity and patience among Classroom Assistants in engaging with the children.

Medium-term outcomes

Medium-term outcomes of the Education Sub-programme, as listed in BELONG's Service Plan (2009, p. 65), were:

- to increase the number of Traveller children remaining in post-primary education in the Health and Social Care Board's Southern Area;
- to increase educational achievement levels for Traveller children in the Health and Social Care Board's Southern Area;
- to increase levels of literacy and numeracy among BME parents;
- to increase the number of BME parents engaged in schools.

Action towards the retention of Traveller children in post-primary education and increasing educational attainment mainly took the form of Education and Learning Support, and the provision of more targeted additional Literacy and Numeracy Support for those children identified as requiring it. Both of these sets of interventions took place after school hours. In

all, at primary level, 99 Traveller children took part in Education and Learning Support, with 60 Traveller children receiving additional targeted additional Literacy and Numeracy Support activities. At post-primary level, in 2012-13, 10 Traveller children participated in Education and Learning Support activities. One further intervention involved specific support for 10 Traveller children in settling into post-primary school.

In order to assess the impact of these interventions on the levels of educational attainment, monitoring data have been analysed, consisting of staff reflection sheets (n=67) and participant reflection sheets (n=82). While the subjective nature of these data preclude the formation of definitive conclusions regarding the levels of achievement of children attending these interventions, the vast majority of staff reflection sheets from all the clubs monitored report children advancing in their ability to complete homework tasks. Importantly, this finding is echoed by participant reflection sheets. Children recorded that attending interventions was a positive experience and ensured that they were able to complete their homework and improve their levels of educational achievement.

As outlined above, 32 parents participated in 6 interventions aimed at improving levels of literacy among BME parents, while 64 parents participated in interventions aimed at increasing their knowledge of the education system. Monitoring data from one intervention (the Parental Information evening hosted by BELONG in Coalisland in September 2012) are indicative of the creation of a positive link between parents and statutory bodies. This intervention was delivered by BELONG in conjunction with the IDS and with SELB. Staff reflection sheets highlight that parents engaged well with the session and asked a number of relevant questions.

4.6 Summary of Education Sub-programme

Implementation of the Education Sub-programme was delayed by a number of external issues. However, intervention delivery has been gaining momentum since 2011. Evaluation evidence highlights a number of strengths in BELONG's implementation, most prominently:

- Extensive delivery and consistent attendance by children at the Education and Learning Support intervention provide a positive indication of the implementation of this sub-programme.
- While communication with schools can be enhanced, the sub-programme is underpinned by positive working relationships with schools and the IDS.
- Intervention delivery was shown to be enhanced by a high level of staff engagement with, and support for, participants.
- Intervention content and material development were also demonstrated to be of benefit to intervention delivery.

Engagement with parents was shown to be a challenging issue associated with this sub-programme. However, while work schedules and family commitments hinder parental attendance at interventions, it is clear that parents continue to support their children's participation in BELONG.

In terms of outcomes, it is reasonable to suggest that the range of actions undertaken by BELONG – from innovative work in the form of the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention through to traditional after-school-type Education and Learning Support – represents the groundwork necessary to improve Traveller children's educational achievement and to ensure their retention at post-primary level. In relation to outcomes for parents, a greater level of specific and nuanced interventions will be required to make progress in the future, notwithstanding the identified challenges of involving parents.

KEY LEARNING

- Fundamental to successful implementation of education-based interventions is the **capacity of staff to build relationships and support children** on a one-to-basis and the **provision of high quality intervention content and supporting materials**.
- While the idea of Assessment of External Learning Skills shows promise, **time is required** to work through the content and processes required to embed innovative programmes such as this in busy schools in a mainstream curriculum context.
- **Engaging parents of children from BME backgrounds** is extremely challenging and requires close attention to their specific needs and circumstances, and a diversity of responses.

4.7 Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme

The Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme was designed to increase awareness of issues of bullying and to improve support for BME children who have experienced bullying. The outline of the sub-programme entails the referral of children who have experienced bullying and/or racial bullying for mentoring, as well as involving children in advocacy work aimed at raising awareness of bullying and racial bullying (BELONG, 2009, p. 51). As this sub-programme has received limited implementation in the form originally intended, it is not possible to assess outcomes in a rigorous way. However, attention to the issues of bullying and anti-racial bullying has been incorporated into the other sub-programmes, most significantly into the Cultural Confidence and Confidence Sub-programme. For example, evaluation of the Hear My Voice and We R U exemplars examined as part of Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-

programme (see *Chapter 3*) has also afforded some insight into the implementation of this Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme.⁴⁴

4.8 Implementation

One of the original objectives of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme was the provision of mentoring for children who have been affected by bullying or by racial bullying. The Service Plan (BELONG, 2009) outlined that one-to-one mentoring would be provided for approximately 55 children who had experienced racial bullying. However, for budgetary and practical reasons, it was decided instead to provide group mentoring for children who have experienced bullying and racial bullying. Following a tendering process, a consultancy company was contacted towards the end of 2010 with a view to providing this mentoring. Final discussions on the service-level agreement were held in early 2011. The mentoring programme was piloted with a group of 25 Traveller children in Armagh, while 9 children received one-to-one mentoring.

Since the 3 sub-programmes of BELONG are interlinked and interdependent, the themes of bullying and racial bullying have been incorporated into interventions run as part of the Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme (see *Chapter 3*). For example, 134 children participated in interventions incorporating anti-bullying sessions and materials. Evaluation evidence indicates that this has been effective in developing understanding of issues such as bullying and racial bullying among participants. The issues of bullying and racial bullying were addressed through integrated elements of the We R U and the Hear My Voice interventions. In particular, evaluation data from the Hear My Voice intervention suggest that the use of artistic techniques (such as image theatre and drama) was effective in addressing issues of bullying and racial bullying with children. These techniques offered children a non-linguistic means of expressing their opinions on, and experiences of, potentially sensitive issues. The use of image theatre techniques enabled participants to physically engage with the subject of bullying, while allowing time and space for thoughtful reflection on the issue. The benefits of this approach were evidenced during focus groups, where participants displayed strong understandings of issues of bullying and racial-bullying.⁴⁵ Similar findings were apparent from evaluation data relating to the We R U intervention.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For a full discussion of these interventions, see [Appendix B: Hear my Voice, p. A-7](#) and [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-14](#).

⁴⁵ For a more extensive discussion of this intervention, see [Appendix B: Hear My Voice, p. A-7](#).

⁴⁶ For a discussion of this exemplar, see [Appendix C: We R U, p. A-14](#).

Children were directly involved in a process of advocacy and awareness-raising around the issues of bullying and anti-racial bullying. The BELONG Showcase Event (April 2013) provided an example of the effective inclusion of children in advocacy work on this issue. During the event, children's video testimonials about their experiences of bullying were included among those presented to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and to other strategic stakeholders. The dramatic work completed by children during the Hear My Voice intervention in Craigavon was also presented at this event. This provided children with a unique opportunity to make their opinions heard and to raise awareness and increase understandings of the issues of bullying and racial bullying in Northern Ireland.

An additional significant activity relevant to this sub-programme was the production of a short-film called 'Bull Dance', produced in conjunction with Wheel Works as part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme. In this film, participants from Lithuania and East Timor explored the issue of bullying. Following its launch, the 'Bull Dance' DVD has been used as an educational tool to tackle bullying, isolation and exclusion throughout the community. It has been shown at three festivals and will continue to be submitted to festivals and exhibitions where it is hoped to have a wide-reaching influence on perceptions and awareness of bullying.

In addition to working directly with children, BELONG has provided information to parents on the issue of bullying and racial bullying. BELONG's Service Plan (2009) outlined that in order to raise awareness of bullying and racial bullying as challenges affecting BME children, advice would be provided for 150 BME parents on issues relating to bullying. Monitoring data from this programme suggest that, to date, information has been provided to 39 parents on this issue. BELONG has also worked to increase levels of awareness of bullying and racial bullying at a strategic level. BELONG has been a member of the Northern Irish Anti-Bullying Forum since 2012 and plays a leading role in raising awareness of racial bullying

The appointment of an Anti-Bullying Programme Officer to its team is indicative of BELONG's commitment to developing this sub-programme in the future.

4.9 Summary of Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme

This sub-programme is less developed than the Education Sub-programme and the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme. Work implemented as part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme has resulted in an increase in levels of awareness of racial bullying among BME children and within the wider community. BELONG has also succeeded in engaging children in a process of awareness-raising, good examples of this being exposition of their artwork at the BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013 and through the film 'Bull Dance'. The appointment of an Anti-Bullying Programme Officer evidences BELONG's commitment to developing this sub-programme as it moves into the next phase of its work.

KEY LEARNING

- While particular responses are likely to be required to meet the needs of children known to be bullied, **more general preventative and supportive work** in relation to bullying and anti-racial bullying can be incorporated into more widely focused cultural confidence and competence activities.

4.10 Chapter Summary

Two sub-programmes of BELONG have been evaluated in this chapter. The Education Sub-programme has been less fully implemented than initially planned, but exemplar and monitoring data strongly indicate that much necessary groundwork has been undertaken that will contribute to the achievement of BELONG's medium-term outcomes for this sub-programme. There has been limited implementation of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme, although the implementation experience demonstrates that the issues of bullying and anti-racial bullying can be usefully addressed within broad interventions focused on cultural confidence and competence.

5. The BELONGing Index

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from a strand of the evaluation that measured the belonging and resilience levels of children involved with the BELONG Programme and compared them to non-BELONG children. The data were collected using a newly developed instrument called the **BELONGing Index Tool (BIT)**⁴⁷, which consists of 5 standardised tools, using a single-group pre-test post-test design. The scores from these 5 tools were later combined and 'indexed', resulting in the **BELONGing Index Score (BIS)**. The remainder of this chapter consists of the following: Section 2 presents the rationale for the development of the BIT, while Section 3 provides an overview of study methodology, focusing on how the BIT was developed, administered and analysed. The findings are presented in Section 4, while Section 5 summarises the key findings emanating from the BELONGing Index Tool.

5.2 Rationale for developing the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT)

As indicated in Chapter 2, social belonging is increasingly accepted as having an important impact on childhood experience and development. The need to belong, to experience trust, acceptance and respect within the family unit and peer group, plays a vital role in psychosocial development throughout the life span (Erikson, 1968). A sense of belonging is especially vital during the formative years of childhood and is closely linked to the development of resilience. Despite this, a search of the literature revealed no combined system for the measurement of belonging and resilience outcomes in children. Therefore, a BELONGing Index Tool (BIT) was developed to address this gap. It is important to point out that the development of the BIT serves two interrelated, but different purposes:

- In its simplest form, the **BIT is an amalgamation of 5 individual standardised measures**, each of which assesses elements of either belonging, resilience, or both. These 5 tools were administered to children on the BELONG Programme, using a single-group pre-test post-test design, as well to children in a comparison group on a once-off basis. As well as the generation of scores from each of the individual measures, the scores were then combined and 'indexed' to reach the overall score, called the BELONGing Index Score (BIS), to provide a baseline from which to compare belonging and resilience for children over time. Therefore,

⁴⁷ For the purposes of this report, it is important to draw a distinction between two terms: (1) the 'BELONGing Index Tool' (BIT) refers to the tool consisting of 5 separate standardised measures, as described above; and (2) the 'BELONGing Index Score' (BIS) describes the score resulting from the combination and standardisation of the overall scores from each of the 5 tools.

the first purpose of the BIT is at the micro level, i.e. the provision of quantitative data for the evaluation of BELONG on changes in belonging and resilience for children between two points in time.

- The second purpose of the BIT is at the macro level. From the outset, the aspiration of the Evaluation Team was to develop a BIT for BELONG that could later be **built into the standard official data collection procedures** of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Therefore, while the production of results specific to the evaluation of the BELONG Programme are important, it is the view of the Evaluation Team that for real systemic change to occur for the BME community across Northern Ireland, serious consideration needs to be given by the relevant agencies to the further development and subsequent longitudinal use of the BIT and BIS at a Northern Ireland-wide level. This will allow questions such as the following to be addressed: Is the sense of belonging and resilience improving or deteriorating for BME children in Northern Ireland over time and by how much? In which domain areas was there most improvement? How do the results differ by sex, age, location and ethnic background? What are the key policy, research and practice priorities (or implications) for Northern Ireland?

5.3 Methodology

A detailed description of how the standardised tools contained in the BIT were sourced is contained in Appendix G. Section 1. The draft BIT was sent to two international experts for comment: Dr. Linda Liebenberg of the International Resilience Project and Professor John Davis of Edinburgh University. Both parties were satisfied with the robustness of the BIT, while also making some useful suggestions that subsequently were taken on board in producing the final version of the BIT.

5.3.1 Administering the BELONGing Index Tool and sample characteristics

Data were collected from two samples of children, comparable in terms of sex and age, using the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT) – those attending BELONG and its sub-programmes and those unattached to or not attending BELONG. For those attending BELONG, a single-group pre-test post-test design was used. The first data collection occurred in May 2012 (Time 1 (T1), n=114), with the second occurring in January 2013 (T2, n=105). In terms of the non-BELONG children, it was decided to conduct one data collection wave with them in January and February 2013 (n=303). These children were sourced through a number of primary schools in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland and, as will be described in more detail below, were a mix of BME (n=210) and non-BME (76) children.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ A total of 17 of the participants failed to provide the details of their ethnicity.

For a host of operational and contextual factors, the methodological approach chosen for the administration of the BIT is not a strict quasi-experimental pre-test post-test design with comparison group. Nevertheless, the data from the non-BELONG BME children provide an indication of the local norms of the population with which to compare the post-test scores of the BELONG group. For example, as will be presented in the 'Findings' Section 5.4 below, this approach shows that even though the BELONG children worsened over time for scores on one of the tools (BYDP), the scores of the BELONG children at T2 for that instrument were still higher than the scores of a comparison group of BME children.

As shown in Table 4, a total of 114 children attending BELONG activities participated in the data collection at T1, with 61% of these being girls and the remaining 39% being boys. Of the 303 in the comparison group, 59% were females and 41% were males.

Table 4: Sex of participants across two samples*

Gender	BELONG (n)	Comparison (n)
Male	44 (39%)	125 (41%)
Female	70 (61%)	178 (59%)
Total	114	303

* There was no statistically significant difference in the gender profile of children in the BELONG and comparison samples ($\phi = .024$, $p = .622$).

Details of where the children were drawn from across the two samples are shown in Table 5. Some 30% of BELONG children came from Coalisland, with Newry being the largest source of children for the comparison group (34%).

Table 5: Origin of participants across two samples*

Location	BELONG (n)	Comparison (n)
Armagh	9 (7%)	33 (11%)
Newry	24 (21%)	103 (34%)
Craigavon	27 (24%)	0
Coalisland	34 (30%)	0
Dungannon	20 (18%)	33 (11%)
Portadown	0	134 (44%)
Total	114	303

* There was a statistically significant difference in the location of children in the BELONG and comparison samples ($\phi = .728$, $p = .000$).

Of the 303 children in the comparison group, 76 were categorised as non-BME children, while the vast majority (n=210) were BME children (see Table 6). A full breakdown of the ethnicities of the participating children from the two samples is presented in Table 7. As can be seen, the largest ethnic group in the BELONG children was 'Travellers', accounting for 39% of the sample, while Lithuanian children were the second most common group (23%). For the comparison group, the single largest ethnic descriptor used was 'Northern Irish' (48%), with 'Irish' being the second most common (19%).

Table 6: Ethnicity of participants

Group: Ethnicity	n
Comparison: Non-BME	76
Comparison: BME	210
BELONG	114
Total	390*

* No data are available for 17 of the comparison group children.

Table 7: Ethnicity of participants*

Ethnicity	BELONG (n)	Comparison (n)
Irish	5 (6%)	54 (19%)
Lithuanian	20 (23%)	12 (4%)
Chinese	9 (10%)	0
Polish	7 (8%)	19 (7%)
Latvian	0	5 (2%)
Pakistani	2 (2%)	0
Traveller	35 (39%)	1 (.5%)
Mixed ethnicity	3 (3%)	6 (2%)
English	2 (2%)	20 (7%)
Portuguese	4 (5%)	24 (8%)
Northern Irish	0	139 (48%)
Brazilian	0	2 (1%)
Swiss	0	1 (.5%)
East Timorese	0	3 (1%)
Muslim	2 (2%)	0
Total	89 (100%)	286 (100%)

* No data are available for 25 of the BELONG children and 17 of the comparison group children.

Within the BELONG Programme, three types of interventions were available to children: cultural, anti-bullying and educational. In addition, mentoring was available for those

perceived to be in need of this type of support. Table 8 presents a breakdown of the number of boys and girls who received these interventions. There were no statistically significant differences in programme participation by boys and girls. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of programme types accessed by boys and girls (see Table 9).

Table 8: Participation, by gender of participants

Programme participation	Boys	Girls	Test of Significance
Cultural intervention	36 (82%)	58 (83%)	
No Cultural intervention	8 (18%)	12 (17%)	phi = .013, p = .887
Bullying intervention	12 (27%)	14 (20%)	
No Bullying intervention	32 (73%)	56 (80%)	phi = .084, p = .368
Educational intervention	35 (79%)	50 (71%)	
No Educational intervention	9 (21%)	20 (29%)	phi = .091, p = .333
Mentoring intervention	21 (48%)	25 (36%)	
No Mentoring	23 (53%)	45 (64%)	phi = .161, p = .398

Table 9: Number of BELONG Programme types, by gender of participants

Number of Programme types	Boys	Girls	Test of Significance
1	9 (21%)	23 (33%)	phi = .161, p = .398
2	15 (34%)	25 (36%)	
3	14 (32%)	15 (21%)	
4	6 (13%)	7 (10%)	

5.3.2 Methods of analysis

One of the initial data analysis tasks undertaken was to assess how consistently participants answered questions on each item contained in the 5 standardised tools in the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT). In this study, an alpha value of 0.60 or higher was considered acceptable for a set of items to be considered a reliable scale. Each of the 5 standardised tools achieved a score greater than 0.60. Full details of the reliability tests are contained in Appendix G, Section 2. A note on statistical significance and effect sizes as they relate to the results are contained in Appendix G, Section 3.

As the study design is a single-group pre-test post-test design, it is not possible to infer causality from the study findings. Statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test will be presented as gains or losses made by children attending the BELONG Programme. The study also includes a between-groups post-test component. Analysis of data from BELONG and non-BELONG children at post-programme will be used to provide an indication of levels of belonging and resilience among children who have attended the BELONG Programme with reference to both a comparable group (BME comparison) and a non-comparable group (non-BME comparison) in terms of ethnicity of participants.

Calculation of BELONGing Index Scores (BIS)

As described in Section 5.2 above, this chapter presents findings from an outcomes study based on data collected using a newly developed instrument called the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT). The BIT consists of 5 standardised tools. The scores from these 5 tools were combined and 'indexed', resulting in the BELONGing Index Score (BIS). The use of Index scores allows us to represent change from baseline as a percentage change (see *Table 11*). Full details of how the BIS was calculated are contained in Appendix G, Section 4.

Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was run on all Time 2 data. This included data from the BELONG children and the comparison children. The factor analysis suggested 5 latent variables. The 5-factor solution explained 39% of variance in scores. The factor loadings are presented in Appendix G, Section 5. The 5 factors overlapped considerably with the standardised tools used and for that reason it was decided to carry out all subsequent data analysis using the data from the standardised tools. Findings are given below.

5.4 Findings

This section presents findings from the evaluation of programme outcomes. The presentation is structured by three research questions. Appendix G, Section 6 details the nature of statistical tests employed to address each of the questions.

Research Question 1: What gains were made by children in the BELONG Programme?

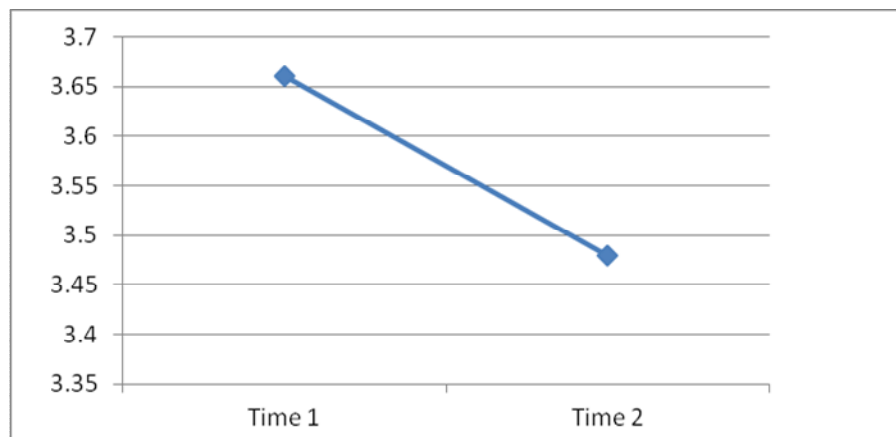
Results from each of the 5 standardised tools contained in the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT) are presented first, followed by the scores from these 5 tools combined and 'indexed' to give the BELONGing Index Score (BIS).

A. Results from the 5 standardised measures in the BIT

1. Measure of belonging in youth development programmes (BYDP)

To investigate if there was a statistically significant change in the sense of belonging for BELONG children between T1 and T2, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. As seen in Figure 3, the results showed there was a statistically significant worsening in belonging scores from T1 ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .343$) to T2 ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .480$), $t(104) = 3.653$, $p < 0.05$. The mean decrease in belonging scores was 0.187 with a 95% confidence interval. The Cohen's d value (0.455) represents a medium effect size.

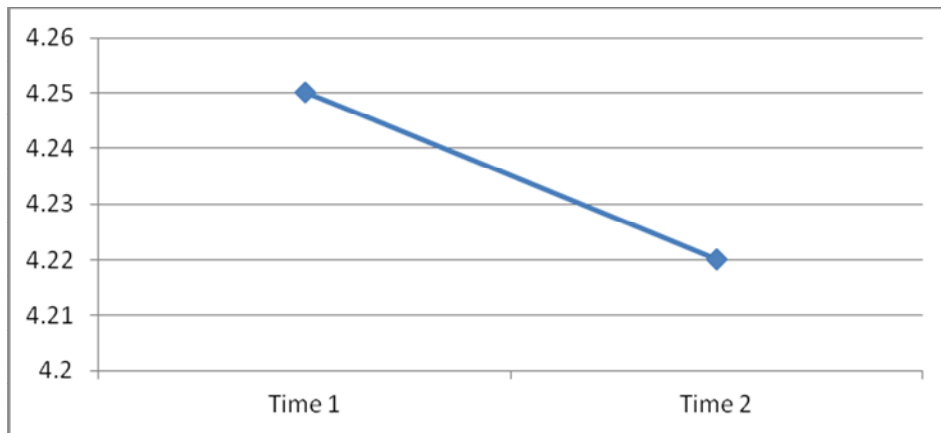
Figure 3: Measure of belonging in youth development programmes (BYDP) over time for BELONG children



2. Measure of child belonging in school (CBS)

To investigate if there was a statistically significant change in the sense of belonging felt by the BELONG children towards school between T1 and T2, a paired-samples t-test was conducted (see Figure 4). The decrease in belonging scores from T1 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .622$) to T2 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .769$) was not statistically significant ($p = .963$; Cohen's $d = 0.00$).

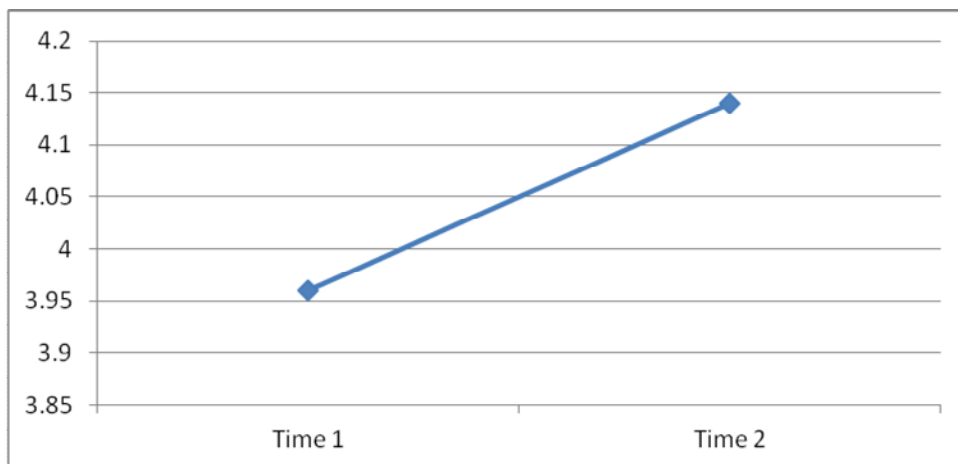
Figure 4: Measure of child belonging in school (CBS) over time for BELONG children



3. Perceived social competence scale (PSCS)

To investigate if there was a statistically significant change in levels of perceived social competence for BELONG children between T1 and T2, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. As seen in Figure 5, the results showed there was a significant increase in perceived social competence scores from T1 (M = 3.93, SD = .825) to T2 (M = 4.14, SD = .671), $t(104) = -2.605$, $p < .05$, representing a small to medium effect size ($d = 0.279$).

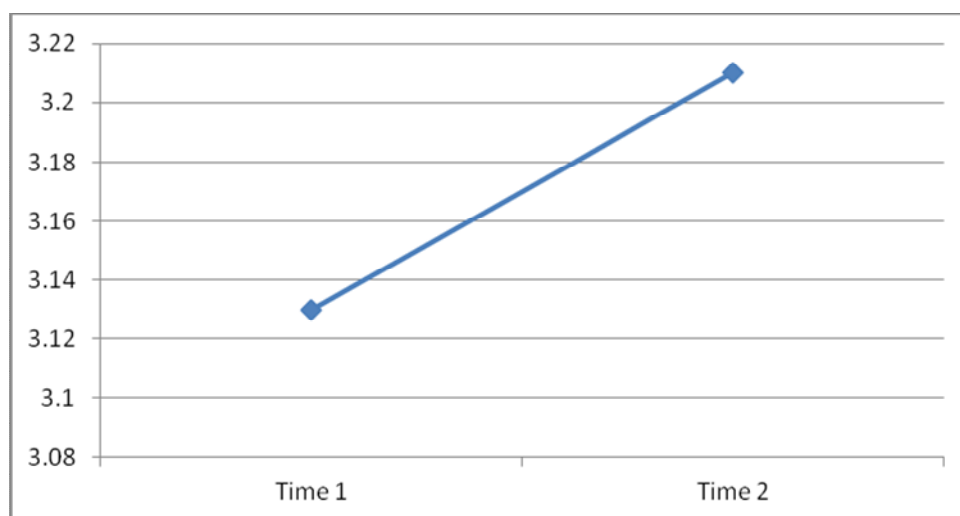
Figure 5: The perceived social competence scale (PSCS) over time for BELONG children



4. Social distance scale (SD)

To investigate if there was a statistically significant change in the extent of social distance felt by the BELONG children between T1 and T2, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. As seen in Figure 6, the results indicated an increase in acceptance of social difference from T1 (M = 3.14, SD = 1.02) to T2 (M = 3.20, SD = 1.17), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p = .528$, $d = 0.00$).

Figure 6: The social distance scale (SD) over time for BELONG children



5. Child and youth resilience measure (CYRM-28)

The findings from the analysis of data from this instrument are divided into two main sections. The first section examines overall changes for BELONG children on the CYRM tool between T1 and T2, while the second section presents changes in scores across the 3 sub-scales for the same time period (see Table 10).

The results showed there was a significant increase in belonging scores from T1 ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .484$) to T2 ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .417$), $t(104) = -2.545$, $p < 0.05$. The mean increase in resilience scores was 0.12 with a 95% confidence interval, as shown in Figure 7. The Cohen's d value ($d = 0.458$) represents a small to medium effect size.

The results also revealed an increase in mean scores across all 3 sub-scales for the BELONG children between T1 and T2. However, of the 8 question groupings which constitute the sub-scales, observed gains on only 4 were statistically significant, namely, the 'educational' (0.195 mean increase), 'spiritual' (0.239 mean increase) and 'personal skills' (0.240 mean increase), with 'peer support' showing the largest mean increase (0.328). The benefit of this detailed knowledge is that it provides a review of the resilience components young people are drawing from, as well as illustrating areas that may be lacking in their lives (Liebenberg *et al*, 2012).

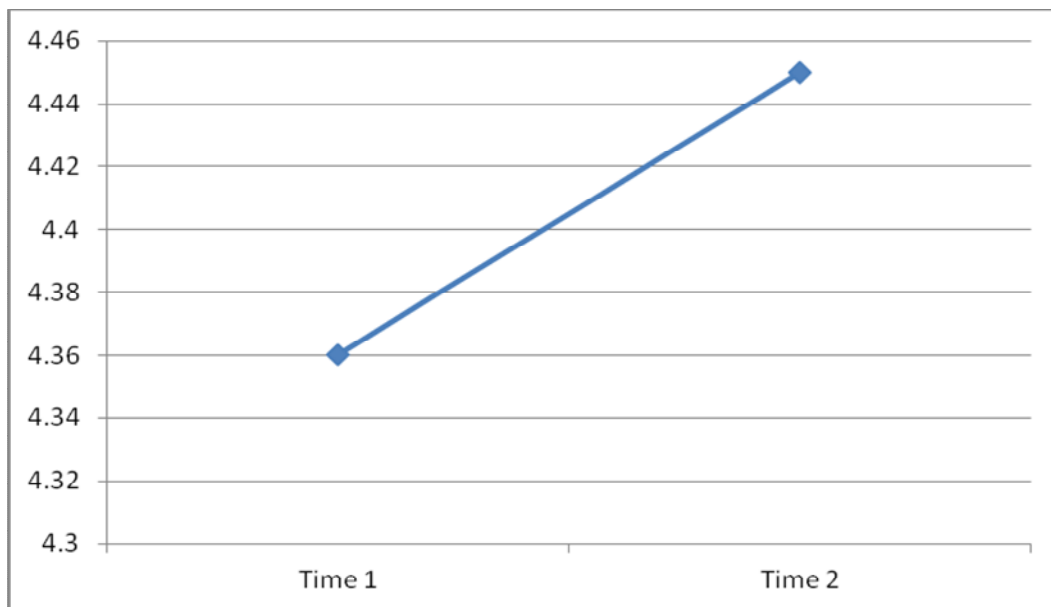
Table 10: Changes for BELONG children across the 3 sub-scales in the CYRM between Time 1 and Time 2

Sub-scale	Question grouping	Scores		Change in Mean between T1 and T2	t	Cohen's <i>d</i>
		T1	T2			
Individual	Personal skills	M = 4.18, SD = .711	M = 4.42, SD = .544	+0.240	t (104) = -3.049, p < 0.05, p = 0.003	0.379
	Peer support	M = 4.17, SD = .925	M = 4.50, SD = .655	+0.328	t (104) = -3.030, p < 0.05, p = 0.003	0.411
	Social skills	M = 4.44, SD = .600	M = 4.56, SD = .479	+0.123	t (104) = -1.771, p > 0.05	0.221
Caregiver	Physical caregiving	M = 4.71, SD = .571	M = 4.75, SD = .524	+0.038	t (104) = -0.510, p > 0.05	0.072
	Psychological caregiving	M = 4.63, SD = .421	M = 4.66, SD = .448	+0.024	t (104) = -0.486, p > 0.05	0.069
Context	Spiritual	M = 4.00, SD = 1.04	M = 4.24, SD = .841	+0.239	t (104) = -2.534, p < 0.05, p = 0.013	0.253
	Educational	M = 4.38, SD = .824	M = 4.58, SD = .669	+0.195	t (104) = -2.130, p < 0.05, p = 0.036	0.266
	Cultural	M = 4.48, SD = .503	M = 4.49, SD = .481	+0.010	t (104) = -0.193, p > 0.05	0.020

Note:

Figures in **bold** in the 'Changes in Mean between T1 & T2' column indicate the top areas of change at T2. Figures in **bold** in the 't' column represent statistically significant results.

Figure 7: The CYRM over time for BELONG children



B. Results of BELONGing Index Score (BIS)

The use of the BELONGing Index Score (BIS) allows us to represent change from baseline as a percentage gain or loss. There was an increase of 1.02% on the BIS for the BELONG children between T1 and T2 (see Table 11 and Figure 8). The BELONG children also experienced gains on some of the BIS domain scores, for example, 2.207% (perceived social competence scale), 0.78% (social distance scale) and 1.92% (child and youth resilience measure). The BIS scores of the BELONG children also decreased on some domains, for example, by 4.96% (belonging in youth development programmes) and 0.34% (child belonging in school).

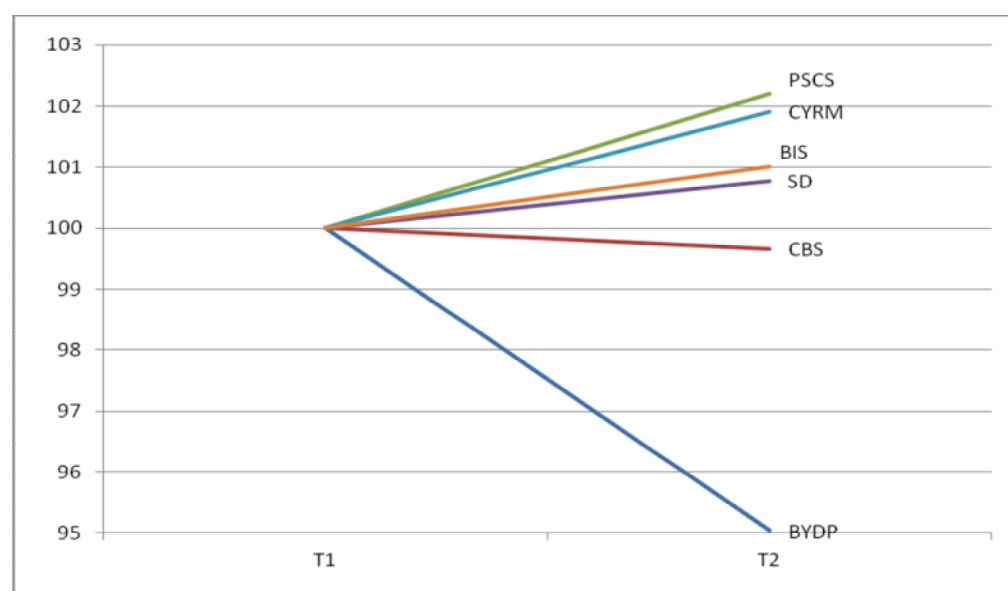
Table 11: Index scores

	BELONGing Index Score (BIS)	Domain scores				
		BYDP Domain score	CBS Domain score	PSCS Domain score	SD Domain score	CYRM Domain score
BELONG Children T1	100	100	100	100	100	100
BELONG Children T2	101.017	95.038	99.6595	102.2065	100.7768	101.9161

Key:

BYDP = Belonging in Youth Development Programmes; CBS = Child Belonging in School; PSCS = Perceived Social Competence Scale; SD = Social Distance Scale; CYRM = Child and Youth Resilience Measure.

Figure 8: BELONGing Index Scores and Domain scores T1-T2 (BELONG)



Key:

BYDP = Belonging in Youth Development Programmes; CBS = Child Belonging in School; PSCS = Perceived Social Competence Scale; SD = Social Distance Scale; CYRM = Child and Youth Resilience Measure; BIS = BELONGing Index Score.

Research Question 2: Was there an association between programme exposure and gains made by children in the BELONG Programme?

To assess programme exposure, participants were categorised into groups on the basis of their exposure, as follows:

- Cultural intervention (n=94) *versus* No cultural intervention (n=20)
- Bullying intervention (n=26) *versus* No bullying intervention (n=88)
- Educational intervention (n=85) *versus* No educational intervention (n=29)
- Mentoring intervention (n=46) *versus* No mentoring intervention (n=68)

In addition, participants were categorised by the number of different programme types they received, as follows: 1-2 (n=72) *versus* 3-4 (n=42). The majority of participants received the Cultural and Educational interventions, and the majority received either 1 or 2 interventions. A sizeable minority also received the Mentoring intervention.

Change over time (T1 to T2) for groups with different programme exposure

To compare the gains made by BELONG children with different programme exposures, a repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted.

Children who received the **Cultural intervention** made statistically significant greater gains than those who did not on the child belonging in school (CBS) scale ($F(1, 104) = 3.35, p = .07, d = 0.358$) and on the social distance (SD) scale ($F(1, 104) = 2.714, p = .10, d = 0.327$).

Children who received the **Educational intervention** made statistically significant greater gains than children who did not on the child and youth resilience measure (CYRM) ($F(1, 104) = 6.57, p = .012, d = 0.505$) and on the BELONGing Index Score ($F(1, 104) = 3.725, p = .056, d = .381$).

The receipt of the **Mentoring intervention** also led to statistically significant differences. Children who received this intervention experienced statistically significant smaller decreases in scores on the belonging in youth development programmes (BYDP) scale ($F(1, 104) = 3.436, p = .067, d = .364$).

No statistically significant differences in outcomes were observed between those who did and did not receive the **Anti-Bullying intervention**.

The **number of interventions** received also led to statistically significant differences. Children who received 3-4 interventions (including Mentoring) experienced statistically significant smaller decreases in scores on the Belonging in Youth Development Programmes (BYDP) scale ($F(1, 104) = 3.288, p = .073, d = .358$) than children who received 1-2 interventions.

Research Question 3: What differences were observed between children in the BELONG Programme and both BME children and non-BME children not in the BELONG Programme?

The BELONGing Index Scores were utilised in comparing (1) BELONG children with (2) BME comparison children and (3) non-BME comparison children. The figures in Table 12 represent the baseline score for the BELONG group (100) and T2 scores for all 3 groups, which can be interpreted as percentage differences from the baseline BELONG score.

For the purposes of this study, it is of particular interest to compare the two samples of BME children: those who received the BELONG Programme and those who did not. At T2, the scores of the BELONG group were greater than the scores of the BME comparison group on the BYDP measure (3.23%), the PSCS measure (0.39%), the CYRM measure (2.62%) and the Belonging and Resilience measure (0.87%). In contrast, the scores of the BME comparison group were greater on the CBS measure (2.71%) and the SD measure (2.67%).

Table 12: BELONGing Index Scores (BIS) and Domain scores for BELONG children and BME and Non-BME comparison group children

	BELONGing Index Score (BIS)	Domain scores				
		BYDP Domain score	CBS Domain score	PSCS Domain score	SD Domain score	CYRM Domain score
BELONG Children T1 (n=114)	100	100	100	100	100	100
BELONG Children T2 (n=105)	101.02	95.04	99.66	102.21	100.78	101.92
BME Comparison T2 (n=210)	100.15	91.81	102.37	101.82	103.45	99.29
Non-BME Comparison T2 (n=76)	100.79	92.41	102.96	101.58	103.07	100.25

Key:

BYDP = Belonging in Youth Development Programmes; CBS = Child Belonging in School; PSCS = Perceived Social Competence Scale; SD = Social Distance Scale; CYRM = Child and Youth Resilience Measure.

In addition, the scores of non-BME comparison children are presented in Table 12. These figures provide an indication of belonging and resilience among a population of non-BME children with a similar gender and age profile as the BELONG children.

5.4.1 Summary of findings

Summarised below are the overall findings emanating from the BIT and the BIS, categorised under the three research questions:

1. What gains were made by children in the BELONG Programme?

Changes experienced by BELONG children after programme participation included:

- A significant increase in perceived social competence scores (PSCS) ($d = 0.279$).
- A significant increase ($d = 0.458$) in the children's level of resilience (CYRM).
- No increase in the children's level of belonging in school (CBS) or acceptance of social difference (SD).
- A significant decrease in scores for belonging in youth development programmes (BYPD) ($d = 0.455$).

The use of index scores allowed change to be represented from baseline as a percentage change:

- On the BIS, there was an increase of 1.01% for the BELONG children between T1 and T2.
- The BELONG children also experienced gains on the BIS domain scores of 2.207% (PSCS), 0.78% (SD), and 1.92% (CYRM).
- The scores of the BELONG children also decreased on other BIS domain scores by 4.96% (BYDP) and 0.34% (CBS).

2. Was there an association between programme exposure and gains made by children in the BELONG Programme?

The association between programme exposure and gains made by BELONG children included:

- Children who received the Cultural intervention made statistically significant greater gains than those who did not on the child belonging in school (CBS) scale and Social Distance scale (SD).
- Children who received the Educational intervention made statistically significant greater gains on the child and youth resilience measure (CYRM) and on the overall Index.
- Children who received the Mentoring intervention experienced statistically significant smaller decreases in scores on the belonging in youth development programmes (BYDP) scale.
- Children who received 3-4 interventions (including Mentoring) experienced statistically significant smaller decreases in scores on the belonging in youth development programmes (BYDP) than children who received 1-2 interventions.

3. What differences were observed between children in the BELONG Programme and both BME children and non-BME children not in the BELONG Programme?

Differences between BELONG children (after programme participation) and the BME comparison group included:

- BELONG children at T2 reported higher levels of belonging and resilience (BIS, 0.87%).
- BELONG children at T2 reported higher levels of perceived social competence (PSCS index) (0.29%), belonging in youth development programmes (BYPD index) (3.23%) and the children's level of resilience (CYRM index) (2.62%).
- The comparison group had higher scores for level of belonging in school (CBS index) (2.71%) and acceptance of social difference (SD index) (2.67%).

5.5 Summary

This chapter has presented findings from the strand of the research that measured the belonging and resilience levels of children involved with the BELONG Programme and compared them to non-BELONG BME children. One of the central reasons for developing the BIT and subsequently the BIS was to pilot the possibility of developing a process that could later be built into the official standard data collection procedures of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Enough evidence exists for BELONG to bring this process to the next level. This may well involve further additions and developments to the BIT and agreement on how it might be implemented across Northern Ireland. Real systemic change for the BME community across Northern Ireland can be greatly aided by the production of reliable evidence, which can then feed into appropriate and needs-led programme delivery.

Given the non-experimental design utilised with the administration of the BIT, it is impossible to account for all of the reasons that may have led to an increase or decrease in belonging or resilience for the participants. Nor can any causal relationship be claimed in respect of the BELONG interventions and improvements in BME children as reported from the results of the pilot study utilising the BIT and BIS. However, the BELONG Programme can be associated with these changes and these results provide a strong indication for BELONG on their most successful areas of programme delivery.

KEY LEARNING

- Evidence exists to support the fact that a programme such as BELONG can, in a relatively short timeframe, be associated with **gains in key areas for children**, such as perceived social competence (PSCS) and resilience (CYRM).
- Evidence generated by the BIT highlights the value for projects like BELONG in **tracking outcomes on an ongoing basis** for the children with whom they work. Using such information, intervention delivery can be re-examined and re-aligned in an evidence-based way. This can also incorporate a consideration of the intervention mix and intensity required to achieve change.
- A tool such as the BIS can contribute to **broader social change** through its potential both as a measure for intervention programmes and for monitoring overall levels of belonging and resilience in society.

6. Contribution to Policy and Service Provision

6.1 Description

This brief chapter explores BELONG's contribution to systemic development, affecting changes in the wider community beyond the children and families with whom it directly engages. It begins by briefly restating key findings on BELONG's service-level work before describing its activities towards influencing development of policy and legislation for BME children and communities. The main data sources for this chapter are staff and BELONG Board interviews, the Services Review survey and a range of documentary information provided by BELONG.

6.2 Building cultural competence at service level

BELONG has engaged in joint work with a range of service providers in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland since 2010 with a view to increasing the level of service provision for BME children and to enhancing the levels of cultural competence among service providers. As outlined in Chapter 3, as part of the evaluation strategy for this report, 16 external stakeholders who had engaged in joint work with BELONG at a delivery-level completed an online survey.⁴⁹ Findings from this survey, as well as evaluation evidence from the Charter for Change exemplar, indicate a notable level of success in this aspect of BELONG's work. In particular, it was seen as facilitating greater engagement with BME communities and as having enhanced levels of cultural competence and awareness within existing service providers, facilitating reviews of inclusion policies and practices.⁵⁰ In addition, the online survey demonstrated that BELONG has had a positive effect on intervention development and implementation, something BELONG Board members also highlighted. The enthusiasm of survey respondents to engage in future joint work provides an indication of the success of this aspect of BELONG's work. The evaluation of the Charter for Change intervention further evidences BELONG's capacity in this area.⁵¹ This high level of satisfaction is echoed by the contributions of service providers to the Interim evaluation of the programme (Forkan *et al*, 2012). In particular, BELONG was seen as having had a considerable impact on the planning and development of interventions for BME children.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the Services Review survey, see [Appendix M: Services Review, p. A-90](#).

⁵⁰ See [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-5](#) and [Appendix M: Services Review, p. A-99](#) and [p. A-107](#).

⁵¹ A thorough discussion of this intervention is provided in [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-1](#).

6.3 Policy development

BELONG's contribution to the development of policies relating to BME children has been subject to a number of challenges since the foundation of the programme. In particular, political disagreements at different levels have consistently delayed restructuring in politics and public administration. In interviews, Board members highlighted how the project's work had been potentially hindered by the different timing of reforms, and related changes in expected provision, within the sectors of education, local government, and health and social care. They also pointed to the particularities of the political system as constraining BELONG's work in policy development. In particular, delays in decision-making resulted in a dearth of policies emanating from the Northern Ireland Executive. Within BELONG, the fact that there have been 3 Programme Managers since 2009 has affected the consistency with which the work has been pursued. However, with the arrival of the current Programme Manager in late 2011, the extent of activity in this aspect of BELONG's work has increased significantly.

According to the Programme Manager, in recent months BELONG has been gaining more acknowledgement for its unique position in being able to combine policy-level expertise and a strong practice base. BELONG's position within the new Children's Services Structures of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) has been a positive factor in enabling it to 'get their name out there' and to establish their relationship as a strategic stakeholder in the development of policy. In 2012, the current Programme Manager was invited to make a presentation to a training intervention run as part of a series of events aimed at high-level CYPSP members (e.g. CEOs, expert practitioners) through the Improving Children's Lives Initiative at Queen's University Belfast. Following this presentation, BELONG was invited to engage in a consultation on the Racial Equality Strategy and to contribute to the Children's Rights Implementation Group advising the Government on enhancing the implementation of children's rights.

The BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013 provides a further example of BELONG's advocacy work. This event provided a platform for young people to have their concerns heard by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). It also provided a platform for a range of organisations working with, and for, children and families to address each other and to state their intentions to act in the interests of children.

A notable aspect of BELONG's policy development strategy is the involvement of BME communities, children and their parents in consultative forums on relevant legislation,

strategy and policy that impact on them. These forums occur on a locality basis, but also have the opportunity of engaging further at regional level. BELONG has most recently engaged members of BME communities in consultations on the *Draft Action Plan for Traveller Education* and on the CYPSP's *BME Children and Young People's Draft Action Plan*. Previous consultations with BME children and parents include the *Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland* and the *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy*. BELONG has also supported the development of the regional BME Parents Reference Group for CYPSP. This work was contracted by Parenting NI who have engaged BELONG to facilitate meetings with parents across the Southern Area and to attend regional meetings.

BELONG's involvement of children in consultations was noted by strategic stakeholders as a notable strength of the programme:⁵²

'This is an area of particular strength – many organisations pay lip-service to user involvement. BELONG delivers this as a key principle and methodology – to great effect.' (External stakeholder 1)

6.4 Key policy contributions

In spite of the challenging political environment in which it operates, external stakeholders invited to comment on BELONG's strategic work through the Services Review survey in the development of policy indicated that BELONG is seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of policies concerning BME children and communities. While these initiatives have yet to see completion, BELONG's input into consultative forums and advisory groups across a range of fields relating to BME children (*see above*) can be seen as a successful outcome. Below is a list of some of the most prominent contributions:

- **Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP):** The BELONG Programme has been positioned within new Children's Services Structures of the CYPSP since its foundation. BELONG Partnership Board members are also represented across the various structures of CYPSP and Locality Workers sit on CYPSP Locality Planning Groups. BELONG has played a key role in the consultative process for the CYPSP's *BME Children and Young People's Draft Action Plan*. The prevalence of the concept of belonging in this plan is an indication of the important role played by BELONG in this process.

⁵² For a thorough discussion of this issue, see [Appendix M: Services Review, p. A-105](#).

- **Action Framework for Traveller Education:** BELONG has fed into the Report compiled by the Taskforce on Education, presented to the Minister for Education in December 2011. More recently, BELONG has spearheaded the consultative process with Traveller families on the Action Framework for Traveller Education (Department of Education, 2011). This framework outlines a flexible, consistent and effective approach towards inclusion of Travellers across all areas of education. As part of this approach, the Traveller Support Services (TESS), which will be located within the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB), will be established in 2013. As well as playing an active role in the consultative process leading to the publication of this Draft Action Framework, BELONG has been involved in the design and implementation of this new delivery mechanism. BELONG's involvement in the creation of TESS is underpinned by the SELB's membership of the BELONG Board as the education partner.
- **Special Educational Needs among children in Northern Ireland:** A public consultative process was held regarding children in Northern Ireland with special educational needs in February 2013. BELONG is represented in this process and has been invited into wider resultant discussions and fora by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).
- **Community relations, equality and diversity in education:** BELONG contributed to consultations on the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy. One issue identified by BELONG is that there should be mandatory reporting by schools of bullying and racial harassment incidents. The CRED policy entails a new racial equality strategy for educating children and young people to develop self-respect, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination. It also entails the development of an enhanced anti-bullying strategy. BELONG's work in providing guidance and tools to mainstream providers through interventions such as the Charter for Change⁵³ and the Diversity Awareness Training interventions⁵⁴ support the implementation of the CRED.
- **Cohesion, sharing and integration:** The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) carried out a consultation process in 2010, to which BELONG contributed. In a response to the consultation, the CSI re-asserted an interagency approach that would work in conjunction with the *Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM, 2005).and the 10-year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland, *Our Children and Young People* (OFMDFM, 2006).
- **Child Poverty Strategy:** BELONG also contributed to the consultation process on the draft Child Poverty Strategy in 2010. A delivery plan, incorporating the key initiatives and priorities as outlined in the Action Plan being developed at the time of this evaluation, is currently under development (OFMDFM, 2011, pp. 12-14).

⁵³ See [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-1.](#)

⁵⁴ See [Appendix F: Diversity Awareness Training, p. A-27.](#)

- **Report to the UNCRC:** BELONG is currently involved in the development of a framework of indicators for the forthcoming Northern Ireland and UK Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child through its representation in the Special Protections Measures cluster. As a member of this cluster, BELONG contributes to:
 - stakeholder engagement via workshops and one-one discussions;
 - Development of a policy briefing summarising emergent issues.
- **Children’s Rights Implementation Group:** In line with developments elsewhere in the UK, the Children’s Rights Implementation Group (CRIG), of which BELONG is a member, has been established in order to inform the work of the NICCY on enhancing the implementation of children’s rights in Northern Ireland. The CRIG acts as an advisory board to the NICCY to promote the implementation of children’s rights through the use of domestic legislative powers.

6.5 Summary

BELONG has enjoyed success in its programme-level work. Through its joint work with existing service providers, the programme has succeeded in raising awareness of the needs of, and challenges faced by, BME children and communities. BELONG has also been successful in facilitating engagement with BME families and communities. The potential for BELONG to continue to increase the level of its influence in this area is evidenced by the positive attitudes of external stakeholders towards future engagement with the programme.

In spite of the challenging political environment in which it operates, BELONG has made a number of contributions to policy initiatives. External stakeholders invited to comment on BELONG’s strategic work through the Services Review survey in the development of policy indicated that BELONG is seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of policies concerning BME children and communities. While these initiatives have yet to see completion, BELONG’s input into consultative forums and advisory groups across a range of fields relating to BME children can be seen as a successful outcome.

KEY LEARNING

- Successful **policy-level advocacy requires a senior person**, most likely at programme manager level, to be allocated specific responsibility for its achievement and the time to devote to it.
- Creating a **partnership board** containing key members at the right level creates the context for advocacy to happen naturally.
- Involving children and parents in **meaningful participation in policy development activities** can strengthen policy and support self-advocacy.

7. Organisational Structures and Processes in BELONG

7.1 Organisational implementation

The organisational structures of the BELONG Programme are key to the implementation of the programme at both a delivery level and at a strategic level. This chapter examines the organisational structures of BELONG at both levels. First, it considers the delivery level, providing an understanding of both the structure and role of the BELONG team. Section 7.3 discusses BELONG's strategic-level organisational structures, highlighting the structural arrangements and the developmental role played by the BELONG Partnership Board.⁵⁵ The data sources for this chapter are interviews with Board members and BELONG staff, focus groups with sessional workers and various organisational documents.

7.2 Delivery-level organisational structures

7.2.1 Background

The Early Implementation (2011) and Interim (2012) evaluation processes revealed that BELONG's foundation as an organic model of service provision for children and young people had a number of implications for the early development of the programme. BELONG began providing services for BME children and communities in February 2010 in response to requests for service provision from BME organisations and communities. Due to the fact that the staff necessary to implement these services had not been hired in this phase of the work, the Programme Manager and Administrator became directly involved in the provision of activities for BME children, diverting them from their prescribed roles. This phase was described by stakeholders in the Early Implementation Report (Forkan *et al*, 2011). as a 'sharp learning curve'. Learning how to deal with this situation was central to the success of BELONG in its early stages.

During the late summer of 2010, three full-time Project Development Workers (PDWs) were appointed. Due to their relatively later-than-planned recruitment, the new staff were faced with the challenge of getting new groups up and running while continuing to work with existing groups and activities. The implementation progressed more slowly than expected. Team members attributed this to the need to build up initial trust and rapport with the

⁵⁵ A comprehensive discussion of the organisational arrangements of BELONG is provided in [Appendix K: Organisational Review, p. A-62](#).

communities in which they were based. When this point was discussed during a focus group in 2011, the majority of staff members expressed the opinion that BELONG's Service Plan had not allowed the time for this pre-development work. As suggested by one interviewee, *'We became Project Development Workers first, building trust with our communities, and then slowly moving back to BELONG's interventions'*. As a result, the activities provided were very responsive to community needs and were short term, often only running for 6-8 sessions (e.g. one session over 6-8 weeks). The Education Sub-programme was also subject to delayed implementation. Educational support workers were not engaged until the summer of 2011 as a result of the delays outlined in Section 4.2 of Chapter 4.

In addition to the challenges encountered in building the capacities of existing staff working on the programme, BELONG has also been subject to a number of changes in staffing. In particular, there have been 3 Programme Managers since the foundation of the programme in 2009. This has had implications for the implementation of the programme.

7.2.2 Functioning of the BELONG team

Interviews conducted with members of the BELONG team in May 2013 revealed a number of strengths and challenges underpinning the implementation process. Staff spoke particularly strongly about staff supervision as a supportive process and noticeably so since the current Programme Manager introduced a new format. Often characterised as a 'two-way process' or 'dialogue', one-to-one supervision sessions occurred every 6 weeks and provided staff with the opportunity to discuss particular programme issues with the Programme Manager. Staff spoke about supervision as a focused process that brought clarity not only to their work but also to the work of the manager, linked strongly to the programme's goals, yet still created space for reflection, personal input and raising of other (personal) issues if and when required. Staff spoke of how this process sought to link practice with the strategic aims of the programme, to *'take what is happening on the ground and explore with [Programme Manager] how it fits or challenges the aims of BELONG'*. In this regard, supervision is viewed as being *'crucial'*, *'very focused on what needs to get done'*, but also viewed as *'directional, not directive'*. Staff commented that it was empowering in that it was *'more in tune with you as a worker, your strengths'* and offered the space to reflect, influence and put forward solutions to issues raised. Many staff commented that, in addition to structured supervision, they often received more informal support from the Programme Manager by way of e-mail and telephone, particularly if pressing matters arose.

Members of the BELONG team evidenced a strong commitment to the ethos of the programme, which can be viewed as a strength. As outlined in interviews, staff felt a personal commitment to the concepts of belonging and cultural diversity in Northern Ireland. BME children and parents were identified as important in propelling the project since, ultimately, it was *'about and for them'*.

Strong working relationships within the team were identified as being central to the successful implementation of the intervention-level work. These relationships were facilitated by the team meetings and staff sharing meetings. Staff identified team meetings as an essential element of their work. Although described as *'intensive'*, they are viewed as having improved as other organisational processes were established. These meetings were characterised as very organised, helpful and as an opportunity for staff *'to feed in, to raise issues, to contribute to ideas and plans, to share work'* (Respondent 2).

More prominent among staff responses was the usefulness of (Staff) Sharing Practice Forums. Established formally in January 2012, staff viewed these meetings as very constructive and supportive of their work. They were characterised as *'space for staff'*, and as *'an opportunity to learn'*, to *'share practice'*, to *'facilitate training'* and, more generally, to exchange ideas, approaches and learning, as well as facilitating the piloting of new ideas, resources, solutions and methods. For some, these meetings brought the team closer together and permitted the adoption of a more *'standard approach to the work, in as much as it could be'* (Respondent 2).

In conjunction with the importance of Staff Meetings and Sharing Practice Forums, staff reported that positive relationships with colleagues were an essential support to their work at intervention level. Many staff spoke about the central role played by the Administrator in supporting their work in specific terms (e.g. IT, offices, budgets, planning), in linking them with the evaluation, and in more general terms around supporting BELONG. Some staff members mentioned in particular the important and significant support the Administrator provided at times of transition in the programme. Among the staff complement, the Programme Manager was identified as an especially important driver. In particular, leadership, the supportive environment created to explore, try out particular approaches and learn, as well as the overall clarity and focus brought to the project were identified as elements of this factor, as were providing connections and *'creating a sense of ownership'* among staff (Respondent 3).

Challenges identified

Staff were asked to identify what challenges they encountered in the implementation of the programme at intervention level. Many staff identified challenges in engaging some parents, particularly due to their working arrangements. Staff recounted experiences of parents working numerous jobs and the difficulties this posed in involving them in the programme. Related to this, others recounted initial difficulties in building trust with parents or some families leaving the area mid-delivery of programme activities. Others spoke about feuds or disputes in the community as an additional challenge.

Staff also spoke about the changes in the position of Programme Manager as being challenging at times, creating uncertainty and requiring adaptation to different managerial styles. Many identified the current phase as '*exciting, but challenging*' (Respondent 1). Shifting roles, getting up to speed, learning to influence and connecting more explicitly with the strategic level were all deemed challenges. For some, the decreased focus on the 'on the ground' or direct work with families was difficult, which was as a result of the changing roles within the BELONG team and the parallel advocacy focus. For others, the time-bound nature of some of the work was the most challenging issue – '*When you know it needed more*' (Respondent 2) – as well as the gap between needs and the capacity of the organisation to meet those needs.

7.3 Strategic-level organisational structures

Board membership was viewed as a central driver of the BELONG Programme. Board members interviewed highlighted the Board as supporting implementation of BELONG in a number of ways, including creating space for reflection and discussion on particular aspects of the work, particularly through the sub-committees. The Board also ensures that BELONG is familiar with particular aspects of, and individuals in, relevant Government departments and statutory organisations. The Board also engages closely with the BELONG Programme Manager and team, contributing to problem-solving and working to establish and maintain connections with individuals in the teams and organisations of Board members.

7.3.1 Background

Members of the BELONG Board discussed the background to its development during interviews conducted for the final evaluation. The BELONG Board, consistent with the organic model the programme has developed, has redefined its role as the programme has progressed. The Board, '*rather than mimic the roles of other Boards*', has assumed a more

participatory and advisory role, supporting implementation through the provision of advice on various aspects of how the project can fit with and challenge the wider administrative and policy context. Participants differed on the extent to which there was clarity at the start about other aspects of its role. While some viewed the role as being very clear, others reckoned there was a particular ambiguity about it and the relationship it had with the anchor organisation, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP). However, all participants commented that the main accountability and risk functions of a typical Board were taken on by STEP as per their contracted position, which released members from occupying these particular perceived roles. All participants outlined that the monitoring and related roles occupied by STEP, and the provision of information to the Board when needed on these issues, were undertaken with professionalism and clarity.

There was also a perception among Board members that for a period the Board became too involved in operational aspects of the programme – ‘*strayed into the minutiae*’ – involving itself in aspects of the project for which it either had no remit or was not necessary to the project’s day-to-day workings. Although not currently a feature, all members also commented that this was an experience of the past workings of the Board. In particular, planning days over the past year (in one case facilitated by an external expert) served to broaden the discussion about the role and responsibility of the Board into the future and introduced the possibility of altering the structure to fit the purpose of the second phase of the BELONG Programme.

7.3.2 Board membership

The majority of Board members interviewed identified familiarity with each other as an important aspect of their Board work. Many, if not all, had previously engaged in partnership-type arrangements with some of the other members at various stages over their careers. Such familiarity was perceived as permitting a quicker generation and maintenance of trust and comfort among members, and overall relationships were assessed as positive, constructive, professional and open. These characteristics were deemed to have resulted in an environment where there was an ability to question robustly, challenge and work out particular issues, approaches or perceptions in Board meetings. It also brought a sense of realism to the project and what could be achieved within the timeframe set out. In this light, members described decision-making as consensual and, for the most part, effective. Creating an understanding of each other’s organisations, and often the limits of such organisations, was also viewed as an important part of the exchange, as was honesty and transparency in engagement.

In addition to this, the majority of individuals spoke of '*having the right people, not necessarily the most senior people*' around the table as being significant to progressing the work of the programme. Many commented that, while important organisations were represented, the Board constituted an equal partnership of committed individuals working from a base of respect and trust. Frustration with the education element of the work was cited by many; however, it was clear that this was down to the structural and administrative impediments of the strategic context. The mix of hard work, dynamism, experience and knowledge was viewed by interviewees as invaluable to the achievement, ultimately, of the first phase of work and re-invigorating the strategic process of locating it within the wider health and education sectors. Notwithstanding the issues concerning reforms in the education sector, individual members used their skills and strategic connections to see where particular elements of BELONG could fit with sectors of statutory organisations as the project moved into its second phase. Interviewees noted that BELONG was featuring in policy documents and operational plans of two important education organisations, the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) and the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), as well as in the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).

7.3.3 Functioning of the BELONG Board

Board members interviewed were asked to reflect on their experience and provide their perspectives on Board processes. Particular processes were identified as positive, for example, the regular attendance by a core group of people around the table was indicative of a positive atmosphere and commitment to the work and value base of the programme, especially in the face of ever-increasing workloads and more challenging organisational contexts. Aligned to this was the perceived commitment to and belief in the partnership way of working among members and the championing of this approach outside of the Board, both in the context of BELONG and more generally.

Interviewees commented on the importance of good supporting processes in facilitating the Board to undertake its work positively. In this regard, leadership was identified as an important factor in participants' experience. First among these was the leadership and role of a good Chair, who could achieve a balance between creating space for dialogue and debate while moving meetings along and getting decisions taken as and when appropriate and needed. While documentary evidence indicated that meetings were to have a section dedicated to informing members of relevant information from partner organisations, this did not always happen. The renewed focus on such a mechanism brought by the current Chair

was viewed as particularly valuable. The emphasis of such a mechanism as a two-way process, '*bringing information to and from the table*', was viewed as especially important to the strategic role of the Board. More generally, the rotating of the Board Chair in more recent times was seen as a positive step. Communication outside of Board meetings was also viewed as good overall, contributing to the meeting experience when the Board met formally.

Interviewees highlighted the significant role played and leadership exercised by the current Programme Manager in supporting the work of the Board and, at times, its individual members. They emphasized the constructive role played by the Programme Manager in preparing Board documentation in a timely manner, working closely with the Chair to carefully plan the Board meeting in advance and giving clear expectations about what was desirable from each Board meeting, as well as in strategic planning exercises (e.g. planning days). The role played by the Programme Manager in facilitating the Board to re-evaluate its position (along with external facilitation) was cited by all as very important to the overall role of the Board into the future. Similarly, the Programme Manager's emphasis on connecting the Board with the BELONG team through strategic planning days and contact on particular programmatic issues was deemed to be helpful. More generally, there was deemed to be clear communication from the team to the Board, which facilitating positive Board working and served to propel the project forward.

Challenges identified

Notwithstanding these perceived organisational successes, many participants identified impediments to good Board processes. The absence of leadership at particular times was cited as a difficulty, as was the gap in supporting members with training needs when they may have been required. Stemming from these factors were related issues pertaining to poor preparation for Board meetings, such as late submission of Board reports for consideration (or their absence at times), indecision in Board discussions and an absence of a clear process towards taking a decision on particular issues. Many participants identified the latter as a factor contributing towards the tendency for the Board to become concerned with 'minutiae', as referred to above. Poor communication, both inside and outside Board meetings, was viewed as problematic at certain times. Some participants commented that it was not always clear what information was being brought to and taken from Board meetings. However, this challenge was viewed as being resolved at the time of evaluation. Given increasing workloads, participants also commented on the challenge of preparing fully for meetings from time to time. While Board documentation may have been read, the time and

opportunity to prepare in a more rounded way (e.g. engaging with other information, research, literature and similar experiences) did not always exist.

The establishment of a consultative forum was a topic of some debate among Board members during interviews. Interview data reveal that while a formal consultative forum, as envisaged in the Service Plan, was not established, a process of consultation was integrated into BELONG activity throughout implementation. Documentary evidence highlights that while the establishment of this forum was an intention of the programme, and was a focus for a period over the initial stage, it appears less frequently in Board minutes as the project progressed. The absence of such a forum was cited by Board members as a deviation from the original plan and something that possibly should have been worked on more aggressively. However, the ethos of the programme, and STEP more generally, was viewed as compensating for this. In addition, documentary evidence from Board meetings highlights the potential development of a 'user board' in 2012.

7.3.4 The role of STEP

The anchor organisation, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP), was identified by Board members and team members as playing a crucial role in driving the implementation of BELONG. All participants recognised the value base and experience that STEP brought to the project overall and to the Board processes and engagement in particular. STEP's leadership and experience in working with BME groups, and socially excluded groups more generally, was perceived as important since it allowed buy-in by organisations on the ground, across all sectors, as well as at the strategic level. STEP's role also permitted a greater understanding by some participants of community development and community sector issues more generally. Many cited the flexibility of STEP to undertake strategic and operational tasks and overcome challenges in a manner which other sectors could not. At an organisational level, STEP's own processes and structures aided the programme to begin work more quickly than it would have otherwise, with administrative and financial processes already in place. STEP staff were cited as important in this regard.

7.4 Summary

This chapter explored the organisational structures underpinning BELONG's operation at strategic and delivery levels. The evidence broadly supports a view that the programme is functioning well at both levels. Notwithstanding some challenges arising from changes in the position of Programme Manager, current team management and support processes are seen to be effective, while at Board level any issues that existed were seen as being resolved. STEP's role as anchor organisation was viewed very positively among those interviewed.

KEY LEARNING

- In a context of intersectoral working across professional/disciplinary boundaries, a strong focus on **staff support and development** through using multiple formats (supervision, meetings) is key to good programme implementation.
- Achieving the balance between **direct work with children and families and advocacy** may be challenging for staff, particularly those whose core experience is in front-line practice. Management support is key to staff successfully achieving this balance.
- In a governance context like BELONG, the greatest value of a **partnership board** will be its contribution to **strategic** rather than operational issues.

8. Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion on the core findings of this Final Evaluation Report. It aims to draw out the main learning from the evaluation process and to situate the outcomes of the BELONG Programme in the wider context of BELONG's contribution to the development of services and support for BME children in Northern Ireland. In doing so, it speaks directly to the evaluation objective to 'establish factors underpinning programme/intervention success or otherwise' (see *Section 1.5 in Chapter 1*). It also revisits the evaluation objectives reflecting on the outcomes of the initiative and on the contribution of individual interventions to the overarching outcomes of the programme.

The following discussion focuses, firstly, on the complexity and ambition of the BELONG Programme and the challenge of ensuring that the rights of BME children are upheld. Subsequently, a brief consideration of the methodology of the evaluation process is presented. Key conclusions on BELONG's implementation and progress towards its outcomes are then outlined. The discussion turns to a consideration of BELONG from a social-ecological perspective, before a consideration of the BELONGing Index Score (BIS). The chapter ends with a brief overarching conclusion and a number of recommendations.

8.1 An ambitious and complex model

BELONG set out to build belonging, resilience, cultural competence and confidence, and to address bullying and anti-racial bullying, and educational underachievement as these affect children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, including Travellers. It aimed to intervene directly with children, with parents, with service providers and with policy-makers through a range of detailed planned activities. Its intended activities spanned a breadth of social policy and service realms, including education, health, child welfare and youth work, and at an overarching level, rights and equality. Spanning these areas required attention to the intricacies of multi- and interagency working, across Government departments, within its own Board and in its service-level implementation.

Thus, the evaluation conclusions reached on implementation and progress towards intended outcomes must be read in relation to the complexity of the needs faced, the response developed and BELONG's ambitious initial plans.

8.2 Evaluation methodology

This report provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the work of BELONG, particularly over its life in 2012 and early 2013, building on previous Early Implementation (2011) and Interim (2012) reports. The emphasis placed on examining specific aspects of the work in the form of 'exemplars' strongly demonstrated the detail of practice and generated learning in areas in which BELONG has developed expertise. Despite its success, this focused strategy limited the capacity of the evaluation to generate detailed data on all aspects of BELONG's work. The initial plan to develop and implement a single quantitative measure to capture the core concerns of BELONG has been achieved with important data generated on outcomes. Similarly, initial plans to generate an understanding of BELONG's work at a service and policy level were successful.

8.3 Implementation successes and challenges

It is clear that the most established intervention efforts over the life of the project period to early 2013 were in the area of cultural competence and confidence. This is the arena in which most effective implementation has been seen and the strongest areas of expertise developed by BELONG. Notwithstanding the implementation challenges highlighted, the continuous and consistent work in this sub-programme area has left BELONG with accumulated practice knowledge within its team and across the various curricular processes and materials that have been developed. At an organisational level, the emerging capacity of BELONG to assist organisations in building their cultural competence is apparent in the 'Charter for Change' work. Critically, BELONG is credible among the organisational constituency it seeks to work with and influence. The more recent significant engagement in the wider policy arena demonstrates BELONG's capacity to reach the 'policy table', outside of what happens organically through the work of the BELONG Board.

As demonstrated, BELONG has faced greater challenges in other areas of its work. Although radically improved in the more recent past, the slow pace of the development and implementation of the education work (outside of the ongoing Education and Learning Support activities) has resulted in a more limited range of activity that was evaluable. What the exemplars indicate is the potential of the strategies employed (work on transition, external learning and skilling of learning support staff), and the need for careful, long-term building of relationships with schools and teachers in order to achieve the outcomes BELONG intends. That said, BELONG has worked well with the relevant education agencies in building capacity for work in this area.

The other areas in which implementation was less than successful relate to parenting and anti-bullying/anti-racial bullying. Thus, while this current report and previous reports indicate a certain level of activity, the work with parents overall, either directly or in joint activities with children, has not operated to the planned and strategic level evident in other areas of BELONG's work. Similarly, while embedded across the range of activities, as a standalone area of intervention the bullying and anti-racial bullying aspect of BELONG has been underdeveloped. This reflects choices made in prioritising certain activities in the most recent phase of the project's life and, increasingly, an emphasis on the policy and practice influence role.

Underpinning BELONG's implementation has been the Board, STEP and the BELONG Programme team. Thus, the key implementation strengths reflect the quality and professionalism of the team and Programme Manager, and the strong partnership working apparent within the Board. The consistency provided by STEP to BELONG has also been key in supporting implementation and managing the challenges encountered. The implementation challenges also reflect the structure and team issues – the slow pace of recruitment and team development, the constraints on developing the education arm of the programme and the challenges in keeping focus at Board level – in the wider context of flux facing most of the Board members and within governance in Northern Ireland generally. Undoubtedly, the fact that BELONG has had three Programme Managers over its lifetime has not helped in ensuring consistent delivery across all sub-programmes. However, the consistency of the current leadership role has notably improved the focus and direction apparent in BELONG.

8.4 Progress toward key outcomes

In examining BELONG's progress towards its intended outcomes, this evaluation shows that there has been some change, evidenced qualitatively and quantitatively, in all areas of intervention focus. Within this overall story, there is a mix in levels of progress towards outcomes. The strongest evidence of change is in areas where there was focused activity over an extended period – cultural confidence, competence and awareness. In education, based on the data generated by the exemplar evaluations and available monitoring data, it is evident that BELONG has, through its interventions and developing relationships, put in place the conditions for the achievement of better outcomes for children from BME backgrounds, particularly Travellers. A more tentative start has been made in relation to outcomes for parents. In this regard, the issue of the long-term nature of enabling change is

particular apposite. While difficult to measure BELONG's direct influence, its work and success at policy level can be interpreted as having the potential to lead to positive change at macro level.

Resilience levels – one of two overarching BELONG concerns – were seen to improve for BELONG children, as measured on a pre-post basis in the Index study, and were shown to be higher than a comparison group of children at the second data collection time point. Because this part of the research was not experimentally designed, the Evaluation Team cannot fully assert that these changes were caused by BELONG. However, there is no obvious alternative explanation to the role of BELONG that might explain either the improvement in the children's score on this measure or the difference with the comparison group. It is therefore reasonable to draw attention to the association between participation in BELONG's activities and changes in resilience.

8.5 Validating BELONG's ecological model and underpinning approach

Overall, BELONG has demonstrated the implementability of an ecological-based strategy towards belonging and resilience for children from BME backgrounds. It has intervened directly or influenced indirectly, from individualised interventions (child level) across the ecological spectrum (family, school, community levels) to societal policy contexts (State level). BELONG's strategy was initially informed by a decision to develop a programme with a broad remit, targeting a range of areas relevant to belonging and resilience, including the full range of ethnic backgrounds, rather than focusing on a single area (e.g. educational participation) with a single group, such as Travellers. As stated, the theoretical underpinning of the commitment to a broader programme was the idea of 'belonging' and resilience being dependent on the social ecology of individuals (Ungar, 2012). This reflected the belief that while positive change could be achieved at the level of children and/or their parents, only in service, policy and societal contexts that are inclusive, supportive and orientated towards their rights can long-term change occur.

While the need to work across ecological contexts (rather than at just a 'silo'd' child intervention or policy advocacy level) has been well documented (see, for example, Jack, 2000 and 2013), so also has the failure of implementation models been highlighted (Gill and Jack, 2007). This multilevel approach in working with, and for, children through culturally appropriate interventions has been particularly reinforced recently by Gowen *et al* (2012). BELONG is one of the very few organisations to develop and enable a systemised service

plan that engages all levels of a child or young person's social ecologies. In this sense, the programme has been a success at an overall level.

The greatest level of activity and strongest progress towards outcomes is apparent at the *micro level*, i.e. in the children's day-to-day lives. However, clear focused activity with likely long-term impacts on policy development has also taken place, indicating success at the *macro level*. At the *mesosystem* level, a strength has been the capacity to work with other organisations towards meeting the needs of BME children and the emergence of an approach to building organisational cultural competence. In terms of the integration of the various *microsystems* in which a child is involved, developing intercultural contexts of children has been tested by BELONG with some success.

At the *exosystem* level, two factors in particular impacted on BELONG's capacity for effecting change in children's lives. While there were some concrete examples of engagement, the involvement of parents in activities was challenging, whether because of the constraints of paid work or language difficulties. Similarly, the consistent involvement of Traveller parents was not achieved to the desired level. Both of these examples highlight the significance of creating the conditions at the *exosystem* level for success within the children's *microsystems*. It is clear that the most recent phase of BELONG's work reflects its most concerted effort at engaging the *macrosystem*, with the evidence in this report highlighting a solid capacity for influence. It is notable that BELONG effectively linked its *microsystem's* interventions with its *macrosystem's* activities in its celebration Showcase Event in April 2013.

8.6 Utilising BELONG Index

At its broadest level, by introducing a mechanism for measuring belonging and resilience among BME children – the BELONGing Index Score (BIS) – BELONG has achieved two important milestones. First, it has created a tangible way of keeping the needs and rights of BME children on the agenda of multi-agency service providers across Northern Ireland. Continuing to measure belonging and resilience can function as an ongoing reminder to stakeholders of the importance of these issues. At this point, the Evaluation Team's view is that existing interest in the BIS at policy level in Northern Ireland should be pursued.

Secondly, the importance for BME children of being respected as equals requires attention to their human rights that goes beyond good policy and intent. Just like the lack of interventions that span the social ecology, a similar gap applies in relation to enhancing

children's rights through actions rather words. The BIS and its continued sharing and implementation has the potential to be part of an agenda of 'rights-based monitoring' for children in Ireland and in Northern Ireland (Kennan *et al*, 2011).

8.7 Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Evaluation Team is of the view that BELONG has made significant progress towards its overall outcomes. In doing so, it has developed robust knowledge for policy and practice in this area of work. Within the frame of an programme as broad and ambitious as BELONG, there remain areas in which progress has been less than anticipated, with work still to be done. Overall, however, BELONG can be characterised as a successful programme.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the work of BELONG should continue to be supported by its partners and by key funders.

In addition, the Evaluation Team makes the following recommendations regarding the implementation of the BELONG Programme:

- The work of the **Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme should be codified and programatised** in order to facilitate future implementation and replication.
- The **Education Sub-programme warrants further development** by BELONG. In particular, additional effort is required in BELONG's work with schools. The Evaluation Team recommends that BELONG continues to work towards enhancing this engagement, with the SELB and IDS as lead partners.
- It is recommended that more work be undertaken to increase the **participation of BME children in mainstream clubs and extra-curricular activities**, and putting in place associated monitoring systems.
- Recognising the importance of engaging parents in addressing the needs faced by BME children, it is recommended that BELONG both **increase efforts to engage with parents, and particularly parents of Traveller children**, and continue to develop new strategies to enhance this engagement.
- The **inclusion of Travellers** in BELONG interventions is an area that warrants continued attention, building from learning in this report on flexible intervention design and implementation.
- BELONG has made significant progress in its strategic work in spite of the challenging environment in which it operates. It is recommended that greater focus be brought to **measuring BELONG's policy impact**.

- It is recommended that BELONG continues to **implement the BELONGing Index (BIT and BIS)** on an ongoing basis in order to achieve a measure of the impact of the programme in increasing the sense of belonging and resilience among the BME children with whom it works.
- In relation to policy and practice influence in this field, BELONG should **formalise its partnership-based, ecological model of operation for wider dissemination** in Northern Ireland and internationally.

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Appendix A: Charter for Change

1. Overview and intervention description

The goal of the Charter for Change intervention was to increase the level of cultural competency of organisations working with children and youth in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland. In particular, this intervention aimed to encourage and support more inclusive policy and practice by facilitating community organisations in making conscious efforts to include and provide for BME children and their families. BELONG worked with two organisations to assess areas in need of particular focus and to implement changes that would make their practices and policies more inclusive. Table A-1 provides an overview of the intervention.

Table A-1: Overview of Charter for Change intervention

Duration (Evaluation period)	12 weeks November 2012 – March 2013
Participating organisations	Clubs providing activities for children in the Craigavon area (n=2)
Staff	BELONG Programme Development Worker (PDW)
Intervention objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the level of cultural competency of community organisations. • To encourage and support more inclusive policy and practice. • To engage participating organisations in conscious efforts for change to include and provide for BME children and their families.
Modes of facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline audit • Consultancy sessions (n=6) • Intercultural training (n=1) • Provision of supporting materials
Supporting materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BELONG Charter for Change • Audit document • Toolbox • Toolkit • Portfolio

Both participating organisations were clubs based in Craigavon that offer after-school services for children. They were represented by personnel at different levels of the organisations. **Organisation 1** was represented at managerial level. It was intended that a leader within this organisation would also participate in the intervention. Organisation 1 was attended by some BME children at the time of the intervention, therefore the primary objectives from participating in this intervention were to enhance access to the club for recently arrived BME children and to ensure that activities were suitable for BME children currently attending activities (Meeting notes, 14 November 2012). **Organisation 2** was represented by a youth leader who worked at delivery level within the club. This organisation is part of a wider network of youth clubs operated by the SELB, but was not attended by any BME children at the time of the baseline audit. The representative participating wished to ensure that the organisation engaged in a process of recruitment of BME children and to ensure that activities were suitable for an intercultural environment (Meeting notes, 26 November 2012).

In order to facilitate a systematic process of change within these organisations, the Charter for Change provides a 10-step guide to developing and implementing more inclusive practices and policies (see Table A-2).

Table A-2: BELONG Charter for Change

STEP 1:	We want to do this!
STEP 2:	We are prepared to make changes to make it happen.
STEP 3:	We are involving BME children and young people to identify what needs to change.
STEP 4:	We have identified and agreed what needs to change.
STEP 5:	We are making changes! (We are HALF WAY THERE!)
STEP 6:	We are monitoring the changes to see how they work.
STEP 7:	We have reviewed the changes with BME children and young people.
STEP 8:	We are happy that the new way of working meets the needs of BME children and young people.
STEP 9:	We have communicated these changes to others so they know about our new way of working.
STEP 10:	We are committed to continuing to promote a sense of belonging among BME children and young people! (WE DID IT! Now we go back to Step1!)

Each of these 10 steps consisted of particular actions to be completed towards implementing more inclusive practices and policies. A BELONG PDW provided guidance to the participants on the completion of these actions. This guidance consisted of a baseline audit identifying the level of engagement of BME children and areas in need of change, regular meetings and the provision of diversity training for staff members of the organisations. Materials in the form of a toolbox of online and practical resources and a toolkit with step-by-step guidelines on the Charter process were provided. Participants were also requested to document their actions and experiences in a portfolio, which also provided an overview of the Charter for Change process.

The initial design of the Charter for Change intervention was that participating organisations would be offered support in achieving the 10 steps over a 6-month period. As a result of a number of practical issues and challenges, this intervention commenced later than intended in November 2012. The accomplishment of Steps 1-3 was therefore the focus of the intervention during the evaluation period.

2. Evaluation outline

The evaluation of this intervention aimed to develop an understanding of the challenges and strengths associated with its implementation, as well as to assess the outcomes for the participating organisations. To this end, the following research questions were developed:

- Is the charter perceived as meaningful/useful by participating organisations?
- Has the toolbox to support implementation been useful to participating organisations?
- Has the charter impacted on the cultural competency of participating organisations?
- What has been the wider impact of the intervention?
- What has been the value of training/support in bringing about organisational change?

The research methods used in this evaluation are outlined in Table A-3.

Table A-3: Overview of evaluation

Evaluation methods	Date:
Baseline audit with organisation representatives (undertaken by BELONG PDW as part of the process of engagement)	21 November 2012
Follow-up audit/interviews with participating organisations	8 March 2013
Interview with Project Worker	8 March 2013
Observation of development work and training	5 February 2013
Documentary analysis of materials	March 2013

3. Implementation and evaluation evidence

3.1 Materials

Participants were provided with a toolkit, a toolbox (containing links to a number of online and practical resources to support their work) and a portfolio for the documentation of their experiences and learning from the intervention.

The experience of the two participants in working with these materials differed considerably. There was confusion within Organisation 1 on the contents and role of the toolkit and toolbox. The representative of this organisation explained that she had assigned this aspect of the intervention to a different staff member so that she could focus on the practical implementation of the actions outlined in the action plan. As a result, the complementarity of these materials to the processes of recruitment and programme design was not realised. This was discussed during the meeting observed; however, as a copy of the toolkit and toolbox were not to hand during this meeting, it was not possible to effectively illustrate how these resources would complement and facilitate the actions involved in the charter process (Observation notes, 5 February 2013). While considerable time during previous meetings had been spent in focusing on these materials and their role within the intervention, this participant outlined that she would have found the Charter materials more helpful if they had been broken down into smaller elements and their correspondence with the respective steps of the Charter more explicitly explained. Furthermore, this participant also regarded the portfolio completion process as too time-consuming and preferred to spend her time working on the development of changes rather than documenting these actions.

The experience of the representative from Organisation 2 contrasted notably with this. This participant emphasized his appreciation of the materials in the toolbox and toolkit, and highlighted that they enabled him to achieve the steps agreed in his action plan effectively. He was aware of the links between the toolkit, toolbox and action plan, and highlighted the complementarity of these materials. In particular, he expressed satisfaction with both the quality of the theoretical content of these materials and with the practicality of the guidance they provided. He also underlined that the steps outlined in the toolbox allowed him to follow a systematic process, achieving the goals agreed at the start of the intervention. The portfolio was described as being an extremely useful resource. While he observed that space for reflexive feedback had been omitted from the reflection sheets, he highlighted that it was helpful to take the time to fill in the required data and highlighted that this document represented a means of passing on learning to other organisations and youth workers (Interview, 8 March 2013).

The quality and extent of materials developed for the Charter for Change were shown to be a strength in BELONG's joint working. However, the contrast between the extent to which the representatives of the two participating organisations engaged with these materials underlines the challenges associated with the facilitation process. The experience of the representative from Organisation 1, who found working with these materials to be confusing, contrasts considerably with that of the representative from Organisation 2. This suggests the need for a flexible approach in the facilitation of this aspect of the intervention. While some participants may engage readily with such materials, others may need greater levels of guidance and support in the facilitation process.

3.2 Facilitation

Both participants described the level of guidance they received during meetings as satisfactory. While it was agreed that meetings would take place on a fortnightly basis, there was some flexibility within this arrangement. A total of 4 meetings were held with Organisation 1 and 6 with Organisation 2 during the evaluation period. Participants also expressed satisfaction with the positive feedback and engagement provided during meetings (Interview notes, 8 March 2013). This was confirmed by observation of a meeting with Organisation 1, which took place on the 5 February 2013. Overall, this meeting was characterised by a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. The PDW provided positive and constructive feedback regarding work that had been completed since the previous meeting. The efficiency and clarity of the facilitation process would have been strengthened by stricter adherence to the itinerary and schedule prepared to support this process.

4. Implementation of the Charter for Change within participating organisations

A number of concrete actions were developed towards achieving Steps 1-3 of the Charter. Table A-4 provides an overview of these actions.

Table A-4: Charter for Change action plan

Step 1	
Action	Sign-up sheet Arrange audit
Portfolio requirements	Sign-up sheet copy Audit – copy Evidence for audit Reading, Research and Reflection Feedback Sheet
Step 2	
Action	Areas of Change for Inclusive Practice – complete Arrange Diversity Awareness training
Portfolio requirements	Areas of Change sheet Evidence of commitment
Step 3	
Action	Organise consultation with BME children Consult parents Contact PDW for help
Portfolio requirements	Consultation materials – children and parents Feedback from consultations Evidence of consultation work Reading, Research and Reflection Feedback Sheet

Step 1 of the Charter for Change consisted of the signing of the Charter agreement and the completion of the baseline audit. The audit document was developed with support from the UNESCO Children and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway, as a tool for use in both the implementation and evaluation of the intervention. The audit was presented as a questionnaire to be administered by BELONG staff during the baseline audit in November 2012. In order to achieve a thorough investigation of the practices and policies pertaining to the organisations, the audit specifically examined the areas of *Values, policies and procedures; Knowledge and skill development; Communication and engagement; Delivery and planning; and Monitoring and evaluation*. The specificity of the questions within the audit allowed for the generation of in-depth insight into existing practices and policies concerning BME children. The success of the audit process in identifying the strengths and weakness of the participating organisations was illustrated by the clarity with which participants recognised the issues that were in need of change within their organisations in the *Areas of Change for Inclusive Practice* document (see below).

Participants were asked to complete the *Areas of Change for Inclusive Practice* document as part of Step 2. Taking into account the results of the baseline audit, participants identified strengths, weaknesses and prospective changes that could be made to make their organisations more inclusive of BME children and communities. This exercise was extremely beneficial for the organisations and resulted in a number of practical measures being identified as potentially useful in the implementation of change within the organisation, as evidenced in the portfolio documentation. A further element of Step 2 was the organisation of Diversity Awareness training for the staff of the participating organisations. Staff members from both organisations were invited to take part in the *Creating a welcoming and inclusive space* training event, which was facilitated by Youthnet in February 2013. While staff members from Organisation 2 were not available to attend this training, 10 staff members from Organisation 1 participated. The representative from this organisation outlined (during an interview on 8 March 2013) that this training event had been extremely worthwhile for participating staff members, providing practical advice on creating an inclusive environment within the club. This positive feedback was also reflected in participant evaluations of the training event.

Through the measures outlined in Steps 1 and 2, both organisation representatives identified a need to improve their mechanisms of communicating with BME children and their parents through the audit process and the completion of the *Areas of Change for Inclusive Practice* sheet. This became the focus of Step 3 of the Charter process. A consultation was conducted with 24 parents of BME children attending activities run by Organisation 1. These consultations took the form of questionnaires addressing their experiences of attending the club, the extent to which they found the club to be

accessible and further activities that would be helpful in making the club more accessible to BME children. These questionnaires were translated into the relevant languages in order to accommodate parents with limited proficiency in English. Preliminary analysis of the results of these consultations highlighted the need for language support and homework support within the club. Planning of consultations with children was in progress during the meeting observed on 5 February 2013. Steps had also been taken to encourage more BME children to participate in the club. Leaflets advertising the club and outlining the types of activities provided had been translated into Polish, Chinese, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Albanian, Romanian, Russian and Vietnamese (Interview, 8 March 2013).

Steps had also been taken by the representative from Organisation 2 to consult with BME children on their experience of the service. Contact had been initiated with a local primary school. It was intended to carry out a consultation with the children attending this school around the services that they would like to have provided within the club. At the time of the interview, questionnaires were in preparation, having been developed through the toolbox resources, and had been sent for translation. It was also intended to consult with parents of these children about the services in the club. Leaflets had been prepared for distribution through local BME community organisations, advertising the youth club, and were being translated at the time of the final interview. It was hoped that they would be available by late March 2013 (Interview, 8 March 2013).

5. Outcomes

The follow-up audit highlighted the positive impact of these measures on the inclusiveness and cultural competence of both organisations. In particular, there was a significant improvement in the extent to which BME children and parents were involved in the planning/monitoring and evaluation of the services run by Organisation 1. Monitoring processes had been adapted to include information on cultural and ethnic diversity. There were specific plans in place to incorporate the findings of the consultation with BME parents and children into consideration as part of the planning process. The participant also outlined that issues relating to the inclusion of BME children would play an important role in staff meetings. The follow-up audit also evidenced notable changes in the levels of knowledge/skill development. An active effort had been made since the completion of the baseline audit to communicate regularly with representatives from BME community groups in order to access specific information relevant to the accommodation of the needs of Traveller children within the club. Contact had also been initiated with the local Polish school to the same effect.

The follow-up audit conducted with Organisation 2 also evidenced progression in the extent to which the needs of BME children are considered. Given the short length of time over which the intervention had been running, few of the measures implemented had achieved outcomes. There was, nonetheless, evidence of increased awareness and of a process of more inclusive practice being developed. In particular, there were improvements in the area of delivery, with the participant outlining his intentions to instate changes to the content and delivery of programmes in accordance with the findings of the consultation with children in the local primary school. There was also a greater awareness of resources that could be accessed in order to develop a more inclusive system. In particular, delivery partnerships had been formed with a nearby Traveller Resource Centre and with the local Polish school, from whom relevant knowledge could be accessed. He had also become more aware of the funding available through the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Inclusion Unit, which could be used in facilitating communication with BME communities. Knowledge and skill development also saw some improvements: this participant recorded that he is actively building his knowledge of BME communities through reading, attending meetings with representatives of BME groups and by reflecting on areas of practice. These measures are also incorporated into the fortnightly staff meeting in order for this knowledge to be passed on to other workers within the club. Diversity Awareness training was also planned as a regular element of staff training. The participant outlined his intention that the Charter for Change process would be implemented in 3 partner clubs in the area over the coming year.

6. Summary

The Charter for Change intervention provides an innovative model for the promotion of cultural competence. While a number of issues and challenges resulted in the implementation of the intervention being delayed, evidence suggests that the work completed by the participating organisations was conducive to accomplishing important groundwork towards enhancing access for BME children to activities. In particular, the Charter for Change process resulted in the development of higher levels of cultural competence within the organisations. This was observable in both organisational and structural processes, and in the increased levels of diversity awareness among participants. Both organisations were also in the process of actively engaging with BME children and communities at the time of the evaluation.

Examination of data relating to the implementation of this intervention exemplifies the importance of flexibility in providing support to organisations. An ability to adapt the timing of the intervention to suit the schedules of the organisations was cited as a positive feature of the delivery. Similarly, the different experiences of the two participating organisations in engaging with the Charter materials evidences the need to adopt a flexible approach to the provision of support and delivery of this intervention.

Appendix B: Hear My Voice

1. Overview

The Hear My Voice intervention has been designed with the goal of consulting children on the themes of children's rights, respect, cultural identity and diversity awareness. The objectives of this intervention are:

- to consult with participants on their understanding of children's rights, respect, cultural identity and diversity awareness, bullying/racial bullying;
- to increase awareness of bullying and racial bullying;
- to increase levels of cultural confidence and competence among participants;
- to give participants an opportunity to represent their culture in wider society;
- to inform and influence policy based on the contributions of the participants and to model good practice in working cross-culturally.

The Hear My Voice intervention has been implemented with a total of 35 BME children in Dungannon, Armagh and Craigavon since April 2012. These interventions have consisted of a number of activity blocks that have explored the themes of cultural identity, diversity awareness, rights and bullying through creative arts.

The Hear My Voice intervention was designed as a single cultural identity intervention, to be attended by children from a single ethnic group in order to afford an opportunity to increase capacities and cultural confidence (BELONG, 2009, p. 32). However, as outlined by staff during interviews, for practical reasons (such as the need to ensure attendance and to avoid excluding children), children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds were included in these interventions. As outlined below, this approach was a positive aspect of implementation and was conducive to the creation of a positive intercultural environment.⁵⁶

The use of artwork in this intervention provides children with a means of expressing their opinions and views to the wider community. Children have been facilitated in displaying their creative work, most notably at the Belfast *Mela* festival, through participation in the Festival Parade in August 2012 and at the BELONG Showcase Event in Armagh in April 2013. This exemplar evaluation focuses on Hear My Voice interventions run in Craigavon and in Newry between November 2012 and February 2013, which engaged children on the themes of 'rights and bullying' and on the theme of 'rights' respectively. As there were significant differences in the implementation and outcomes of these interventions, they will be discussed separately in the Sections 3 and 4 below.

2. Evaluation outline

In order to gain an understanding of the implementation of this intervention, as well as to assess the outcomes, the following research questions were developed to guide the evaluation:

- What insights were generated on issues of cultural identity and rights?
- How can these insights be used in informing or influencing policy?
- Did the intervention impact on the cultural confidence and competence of the participating young people?
- How do the children's experiences of the intervention relate to their participation in previous single cultural identity interventions?
- What were the experiences of the children in representing their culture at the festival?
- What does the implementation of this intervention illustrate about good practice in working cross-culturally?

⁵⁶ For a further discussion of this issue, see [Appendix J: Monitoring data, p. A-58](#).

It was initially intended to conduct the evaluation based solely on the Newry intervention. However, as a result of delays and complications in implementation (*see below*), a dual evaluation strategy was devised that incorporated analysis of the Newry and Craigavon interventions. In order to develop a thorough understanding of the success of these interventions in achieving the objectives outlined above, the methodological approach implemented consisted of interviews, focus groups, observations and documentary analysis (*see Table B-1*).

Table B-1: Overview of evaluation methodology

Observation	Intervention session, Newry (n=2) Intervention session, Craigavon (n=2) BELONG Showcase Event, Armagh (n=1)
Focus group with children	Newry (n=9) Craigavon (n=12)
Interview: Programme Development Worker	Newry (n=1) Craigavon (n=1)
Interview: Sessional workers	Newry (n=3) Craigavon (n=1)
Interview: Facilitating artist	Newry (n=1) Craigavon (n=1)
Documentary analysis of existing sites	Dungannon Craigavon

Following the collection of data relating to these interventions, a thematic analysis was carried out to generate an understanding of the efficacy of the intervention in achieving its goals and objectives as outlined above.

3. Intervention A: Hear My Voice, Craigavon

The Hear My Voice intervention in Craigavon was implemented over a total of 14 sessions between September 2012 and January 2013. This implementation consisted of two separate activity blocks, focusing on the themes of Rights and Bullying (*see Table B-2*). Many of the children participating at the time of the evaluation had attended previous activity blocks within the intervention.

Table B-2: Hear My Voice intervention in Craigavon

Duration	20 September 2012 – 15 January 2013 14 sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 hours • Block 1: 5 sessions – Rights • Block 2: 6 sessions – Bullying
Staff	Programme Development Worker Facilitating artist Sessional support
Location	Brownlow Youth Centre, Craigavon
Ethnicity of children	Chinese (n=9) Pakistani (n=5) Traveller (n=2)

The artistic content of the intervention was facilitated by a local dance and drama teacher who used Image Theatre dramatic techniques to explore the themes of rights and bullying with the goal of developing a participant-authored and participant-directed drama reflecting these themes.

3.1 Implementation – Evaluation evidence

The implementation of this intervention was largely successful, consisting of physically engaging sessions and the progressive development of participants' ideas towards a participant-authored and directed dramatic work.

Physical activity was central to the Image Theatre approach and formed an integral element of the implementation of this intervention, ensuring that participants were alert and enthusiastic throughout

the sessions. Each session began with a series of running games that allowed participants to release excess energy. This developed a relaxed atmosphere in which participants were comfortable playing and working with children from different ethnic backgrounds. Breaks were also taken midway through the sessions for more running games and casual play; this allowed the participants an opportunity to refocus before recommencing the dramatic work. Participants physically presented their views and opinions on bullying and rights through dramatic work, as well as contributing to group discussions. As outlined by staff, this strategy was chosen in order to facilitate this group, which included a number of highly active children: *'They get to physicalize things that happen, so that works since a lot of the kids would be very active'* (Interview, 20 November 2012).

As evidenced by the session schedule in Table B-3, the intervention was designed to facilitate a progressive development of ideas relating to rights and bullying through drama, working towards the play being presented as part of the BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013.

Table B-3: Intervention outline

Date	Brief description of activities
Tuesday, 20 November 2012	Imaginative warm up. Group activities. Image work to create various tableaux. Discussion of points and development of ideas.
Tuesday, 27 November 2012	Warm up. Re-cap of children's names and new games. Image work from previous week, develop into snapshots of scenes on chosen topics.
Tuesday, 4 December 2012	Development of image work to create scenes. Each group contributing to the structure of the others. Children's rights and responsibilities.
Tuesday, 11 December 2012	Continue development of scenes and work on characterisation. Ideas for scripted performance and possible video and still image documentation.
Tuesday, 8 January 2013	Re-cap on scenes, work on scripts for performance.
Tuesday, 15 January 2013	Performance of devised pieces and filming of work to date.
September 2012 – January 2013	Evaluation of work and suggestions for the future.

As outlined in Table B-3, each session incorporated a re-cap of the activities and discussions from the previous week to refresh participants' engagement with the topic of bullying before beginning the new activities. However, staff recorded that implementation of this progressive model was hampered by the intermittent attendance of many of the children:

'... this group has been a bit problematic because it's been hard to get kids to commit to come every week, so you know, they come and go depending on the project ... it's problematic because they should be going towards a goal.' (Interview, 20 November 2012)

The session observed on 20 November 2012 focused on the exploration of the issue of bullying. Participants worked in groups to create dramatic still images, or 'freeze frames', that explored different concepts, engaging the participants in a process that combined physical activity with thoughtful reflection on the topic:

'We started with Image Theatre, so it's about creating, so they don't just have to rush in there and think about what the words are. They get to think about what the body is doing and then the meaning comes after that, so it's a really good way to make them think.' (Interview, 20 November 2012)

The participants were divided into two groups of 3 and were asked then to create 'freeze-frame' scenarios depicting what they believed were the most significant forms of bullying that affected children in everyday life. Directions were clearly delivered and pitched at the correct level for participants. This was evidenced by the fact that participants were able to work independently in groups to develop ideas around bullying. The facilitator showed adeptness in reading the children's reactions and in introducing new activities/running games when the concentration of the participants lapsed (Observation notes, 20 November 2012).

The success of this Image Theatre work in empowering the children to develop a short drama depicting their views on bullying was apparent in the second session, observed on 15 January 2013. The understandings generated by the participants on bullying through Image Theatre exercises and

other games were used as the cornerstone in the development of a play and a film (Observation notes, 15 January 2013), which was presented at the BELONG Showcase Event in Armagh on 13 April 2013. This is an important example of the manner in which artistic means of expression and creative activities can be used to enable children to engage in a process of civic engagement around the theme of bullying and rights. This performance brought the views and opinions of participants to the attention of a range of organisations working with, and for, children and families. The BELONG Showcase Event was chaired by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), who expressed a strong commitment to addressing bullying and the other children's rights issues raised in this drama (Observation notes, 13 April 2013). This constituted a robust example of creative activities being used to promote and empower children to express their views on the theme of bullying and rights.

The implementation of this intervention provides a good example of participant-led cross-cultural work. The high level of engagement by participants highlights the potential of drama to effectively facilitate children in exploring and communicating their understandings of issues relevant to their daily lives. This finding is also evidenced by documentary evidence from previous implementations of the intervention in Dungannon and in Craigavon. Participant reflections reviewed as part of this documentary analysis recorded the opportunity to take part in these projects as positive and in many cases explicitly stated that they felt that their views were listened to during these interventions. Participants and facilitators also reported high levels of cross-cultural cooperation among participants.

3.2 Outcomes

Participants showed an understanding of the concept of rights and of the issue of bullying. There was some variation between the levels of understanding of these themes displayed by younger (aged 7-9) and older participants (aged 10-12) during focus groups. Younger participants displayed an awareness of the different forms of bullying and a basic understanding of how best to react to bullying:

'[The Artist] taught us the verbal ones, physical, cyber-bullying.'

'And what we should do if someone bullies us'.

'Yeah, like what to do, like tell someone and all.' (Focus Group 1 [aged 7-9])

In addition to this, younger participants displayed an ability to articulate the negative effects they associated with bullying:

Interviewer: So how do you think you might feel if you were being bullied?

'I would be sad.'

'Left out.'

'Low self-esteem!' (Focus Group 1 [aged 7-9])

Younger participants also displayed a basic understanding of the concept of rights and an ability to relate this concept to issues relevant to their everyday lives:

'Rights mean like everyone has a right to not be bullied because they can do something.'

'And everyone has a right and they have to follow them rights.' (Focus Group 1 (aged 7-9))

Older participants (aged 10-12) had developed more in-depth and nuanced understandings of bullying than younger participants, drawing on concepts such as peer pressure and intimidation during discussions. They were also articulate in describing exclusionary practices, as depicted in Image Theatre creations:

'She doesn't want to join in and be mean, but like they are making her be a bully too. It's like peer pressure.' (Focus Group 2 [aged 10-12])

These participants were articulate in describing strategies for dealing with bullies:

'Well, you should tell someone and not try to go through it alone. I was bullied once and my friends and teachers helped me, and I would want to help if someone I knew was being bullied.' (Focus Group 2 [aged 10-12])

The cultural confidence and competence of participants were described by staff as being positively influenced by the Hear My Voice intervention:

'... So this programme provides an opportunity to know each other, who they are, who am I, and to know about the culture and study the culture and study everything together as one group.' (Interview, 20 November 2012)

This was enhanced by the engaging nature of the activities. Many of the children, before commencing the Hear My Voice intervention, were described by staff as reluctant to mix with children from other cultures, socialising exclusively within their own ethnic group. However, participants became increasingly comfortable with each other as the intervention progressed. This increased cultural competence was described by the facilitating artist as a significant outcome of the intervention, with the children increasingly gaining confidence in working as part of an ethnically diverse group.

'... The thing that I noticed was that they couldn't really pronounce each other's names very much and ... they would talk to each other obviously and they would play, but addressing each other directly was a problem ... whereas they do now. So I think their awareness definitely is real, you know, heightened.' (Interview, 20 November 2012)

Observations of the sessions also highlighted an increase in levels of comfort in engaging with children from different ethnic backgrounds. While children were noticeably shy of socialising outside their ethnic group during the session observed on the 20 November 2012, participants engaged freely and appeared comfortable in interacting with participants from different cultural backgrounds during the session observed on the 20 January 2013.

Having an opportunity to engage with children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds was also described by participants as a positive experience during focus group sessions. In particular, older participants described their appreciation at having an opportunity to learn about other cultures:

'It was really good 'cos we got a chance to meet with children from other countries and to find out like how they live and stuff.. (Focus Group 2 [aged 10-12])

The Hear My Voice intervention has notable implications for good practice in cross-cultural work. The level of engagement displayed by participants during observations indicates that the use of dramatic techniques is an effective means of engaging children in interactive cross-cultural work. This technique was also effective in developing an awareness of concepts such as bullying and rights among participants. Children who had attended previous phases of the Hear My Voice intervention were particularly confident in contributing to discussions during focus groups. The majority of participants attended other BELONG activities such as the Education and Learning Support intervention and had developed strong relationships with programme staff and sessional staff. This evidences complementarity between the Hear My Voice programme and other single cultural identity and cross-cultural interventions.

The Hear My Voice project in Craigavon strengthens existing links with organisations represented in the BELONG partnership, such as *Wah-Hep*: The Chinese Association and the SELB. The sessions took place in a local facility with permission of the SELB and positive working relations were observed between BELONG staff and youth workers from the SELB.

The Hear My Voice intervention can also be seen as having a positive influence on the work of service providers in the area. The sessional support worker interviewed as part of this evaluation highlighted that her work on this intervention was complementary to other work within *Wah-Hep*. In particular, it afforded her an opportunity to gain experience in cross-cultural work and in developing new techniques for programme delivery and implementation.

4. Intervention B: Hear My Voice, Newry

4.1 Description of intervention

The Hear My Voice intervention in Newry (Bessbrook) focused on the exploration of the theme of 'rights' over a total of 11 sessions between December 2012 and March 2013. Bessbrook, Newry is home to a large population of Travellers who attend the local primary school. The intervention was also attended by two Lithuanian children. Participants in this intervention also attended the BELONG Education and Learning Support intervention, but had not previously taken part in the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme.

Table B-4: Hear My Voice intervention in Newry

Duration	14 November 2012 – 27 March 2013 11 sessions 22 hours
Staff	Programme Development Worker (n=2) Facilitating artist (n=1) Sessional Support Worker (n=3)
Location	Primary School, Bessbrook in Newry
Ethnicity of children	Traveller (n=8) Lithuanian (n=2)

4.2 Implementation – Evaluation evidence

The artistic content of the Hear My Voice sessions was facilitated by the BELONG ESW and by a local artist who instructed the participating children in working with clay. Three sessional support workers were incorporated into the implementation process as a result of the behavioural issues that arose with this group. Artwork created by the children was displayed during the BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013 and the local primary school provided a commitment to prominently display the artwork created in the school on completion of the intervention.

The implementation of this intervention was problematic for a number of reasons. As a result of changeovers in staffing in BELONG, the start of the intervention was delayed until December 2012. Facilitators discovered during the initial session that there were behavioural issues and learning difficulties in the group. As a result, the initial sessions were spent in developing strategies to deal with the challenging behaviour of some of the children rather than in conducting work around the concept of rights. The schedule of the intervention had to be modified significantly in order to accommodate the standard of the children taking part.

'We had planned to do children's rights, understanding of rights and human rights ... and then after Week 1 we established that the level we had pitched at was just too high ... We then had to sort of bring it down a wee bit and sort of pitch it at a scale where they would be able to understand it.' (Interview, 15 January 2013)

The delivery of the session was made especially challenging by behavioural issues within the group. In order to engage the children in the work of the intervention, they were divided into two groups, one of whom worked with the facilitating artist on clay and the others who completed a workbook-based activity with the ESW in a separate room. Three sessional workers assisted with the intervention in order to help engage the children in the work. A session of the Hear My Voice intervention, observed on 23 February 2013, verified that this strategy was successful in improving the focus and concentration of the children. Children were more calm when working in smaller groups than when they were all together. However, since there were constant behavioural issues and low levels of literacy in the group, work on exploring and understanding emotions and rights progressed at a slower pace than expected.

Because it was necessary to adapt the content of the intervention to facilitate the group, it was not possible to immediately engage the children in work on the topic of rights. Instead, it was decided to focus on the topic of emotions, with the intention of developing an understanding of the concept of empathy (Interview, 15 January 2013).

The materials used to develop this focus included a series of worksheets that allowed for a discussion of things that made the children feel happy, sad and proud. These worksheets afforded the children an opportunity to reflect on incidents in their own lives that induced these emotions and to colour in pictures. The materials were pitched at an appropriate level for the participants. This was evidenced by the discussions of the participants in focus groups:

'I liked talking doing the happy picture 'cos I talked about my birthday and I coloured in the picture in yellow.' (Focus Group 1)

The clay work developed by the artist was also adapted to focus on the theme of emotions, with the children working to create clay models of their own faces featuring particular emotions. The majority of the children outlined during focus groups that they had found working with the clay to be extremely enjoyable. They were invited to present their artwork to the group during focus group sessions. While some children did not wish to cooperate with this exercise, most children appeared proud of their work and were eager to show it to the group:

'This is my fella! I gave him really big ears and lots of hair and I coloured his eyes in green like me. I liked doing the hair best!' (Focus Group 2)

This intervention was extended to continue beyond the evaluation period. This enabled staff to begin to work on the concept of rights with the children. Materials used for this purpose included a colouring book that offered children an opportunity to engage with the concept of rights. A collage depicting children's rights created by participants was displayed at the BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013. However, it was not possible to gauge children's level of understanding of rights through this exercise since the children did not attend the Showcase Event (Observation notes, 13 April 2013).

As a result of the challenges arising in its implementation, this intervention cannot be seen as having achieved its proposed outcomes. The challenges encountered are indicative of the types of issue that arise frequently in youth work. As the level of the participants was not established prior to delivery, the intervention required considerable adaptation. As a result, the first two sessions were spent in developing strategies to engage the children and in modifying the intervention schedule. This highlights the importance of obtaining information on the level and competencies of the group prior to commencing an intervention.

5. Summary

The evaluation of the Hear My Voice interventions in Craigavon and Newry evidence the potential of this intervention in empowering BME children and young people to express and develop their opinions and understandings of important and relevant issues, such as bullying and rights.

On an implementation level, evaluation of these interventions highlighted a number of practical challenges associated with this process. Evidence from the intervention in Newry is illustrative of the importance of effective planning, as well as the importance of being able to adapt interventions to suit the needs of participants. Evaluation data also highlight the positive effects associated with effective delivery and innovative content on interventions. The Hear My Voice intervention in Craigavon, in particular, demonstrated that physically engaging participants in drama-based activities can lead to enthusiastic and focused participation. The experience of participants in presenting their work at the BELONG Showcase Event demonstrates that this intervention can provide an effective model for enabling BME children and young people to engage in a process of civic engagement.

Appendix C: We R U

1. Overview

The We R U intervention was designed to facilitate the engagement of Traveller children with mainstream youth services in the Craigavon area in order to address the sense of exclusion and marginalisation prevalent among Traveller children. The intervention consisted of separate work with Traveller and Majority Ethnic groups, before bringing these groups together for a joint activity. The specific goals of the intervention were:

- to enhance capacity and capabilities among BME communities;
- to increase awareness and understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions;
- to increase awareness of bullying and anti-racial bullying.

Work with the Traveller children, which took place in a local Traveller Support Centre over a period of 6 weeks, focused on the development of increased cultural confidence and competence. In parallel with this process, 6 sessions were conducted in a local youth club with Majority Ethnic children, with a view to enhance understandings of cultural difference and increase cultural competence. The two groups were then combined together, also in the local youth club, to conduct a joint project for a period of 3 weeks. It was intended that by achieving the goals outlined above and by introducing the Traveller children to the youth club facilities, the intervention would result in Traveller children accessing mainstream services on a regular basis. Table C-1 provides an overview of the intervention.

Table C-1: Overview of We R U intervention

Duration	9 weeks in total <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 weeks working separately• 3 weeks joint work
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BELONG PDW• BELONG ESW• Youth club leader• Sessional support
Ethnicity of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travellers (n=8)• Majority Ethnic children (n=12)
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traveller Resource Centre (6 sessions)• SELB Youth Club (9 sessions)

2. Evaluation outline

In order to achieve a thorough understanding of the We R U intervention, the evaluation methodology was designed to incorporate the views of the participating children, their parents and youth workers involved in the implementation, as well as observations of the activities (see Table C-2).

Table C-2: Overview of evaluation

Evaluation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of intervention on cultural competence, confidence, resilience and self-esteem of participating BME children • Effect of intervention on access to local mainstream services among BME children • Increased awareness among Majority Ethnic children of cultures and traditions of BME population • Enhanced awareness of issues such as bullying and racial bullying • Experience of joint working
Evaluation methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with programme staff and sessional workers (pre-intervention, n=3) • Interviews with youth workers from mainstream clubs (post-intervention, n=2) • Interviews with participating children (Traveller, n=1; non-BME, n=3) • Interviews with parents of both settled and BME children who participated (n=0 – parents were not available for this aspect of the evaluation) • Questionnaires completed by parents of children from Traveller group (n=3) • Observation of separate activities (n=2) • Observation of joint project between settled and BME children (n=1) • Documentary analysis focused on establishing documented good practice and tracing pathways of insights from children as part of work on influencing policy

The evaluation methods outlined above were developed in order to provide a thorough understanding of the effect of the intervention. However, as the parents of the children were not available to participate in interviews, questionnaires addressing their opinions of the intervention were prepared and conducted by a BELONG Educational Support Worker (ESW). The data were thematically analysed in order to reflect the objectives of the intervention.

3. Implementation and evaluation evidence

Originally, the We R U intervention outline consisted of 8 sessions of separate work with the Traveller group and Majority Ethnic group, followed by 3 weeks of joint work. This was reduced to 6 weeks of separate group work and 3 weeks of joint activity work because the Christmas break caused an interruption and there were issues of attendance among both groups. This intervention schedule was based on a pilot activity implemented with a group in 2012. However, the programme was adapted considerably over the course of the intervention to accommodate the levels of competency and attitudes of the groups.

We R U sessions were observed on 9-10 November 2012 and on 8 March 2013. During these sessions, facilitators provided support and guidance for participants in completing activities. There were different levels of understanding within both groups and extra support was given to younger children and children who did not understand the activities. Facilitators moved activities along quickly in order to avoid the children getting bored and losing concentration, and adapted activities to suit the standards and competencies of the groups. A break was taken halfway through the sessions for the children to have snacks and to play casually. While some fruit was on offer, in most cases children chose crisps and chocolate. It is recommended that snacks provided during activities should consist only of healthy foods in line with public health guidelines (Food Standards Agency, 2012).

The sessions conducted with the Traveller group focused on strengthening cultural confidence, developing understandings of rights, increasing awareness of bullying and developing understandings of how to deal with incidents of bullying. Sessions incorporated games and activities addressing these themes. The first session with this group, observed as part of the evaluation, took place on 9 November 2012. A large amount of time during this session was spent on ice-breaking games and activities since some participants were boisterous and needed extra time to settle down before commencing with the artwork and planned activities of the session. Participants were asked to create maps of their local area, working in groups. This exercise involved drawing places of importance to their daily lives in their local areas. All participants seemed to enjoy this exercise and engaged enthusiastically within their groups. In particular, they seemed proud to have a chance to explain what each of the venues depicted were and to discuss their significance in their daily lives (Observation notes, 10 November 2012). Reflections by facilitators indicate that a similarly positive atmosphere was maintained in subsequent sessions. However, the planned sessions had to be modified to accommodate the learning difficulties of

some members of this group. As this necessitated spending more time than envisaged on some activities, this resulted in delays in implementing the intervention.

The goal of the 6 sessions conducted with the Majority Ethnic children was to challenge stereotypes relating to Traveller communities. The initial sessions focused on introducing the ideas of culture and identity to the children, focusing on respect for diversity and challenging stereotypes regarding BME groups. A number of sessions focused on Traveller culture in order to increase the levels of awareness of cultural difference among the Majority Ethnic group, and sessions also focused on understandings of bullying and racial bullying. Many of the sessions required adaptation as some of the children were boisterous and reluctant to engage in complex activities that required concentration (Interview, 8 March 2013). The session observed on 10 November 2012 with the Majority Ethnic group was the first session of this intervention, with 12 children taking part. The main activity was the construction of mind maps. Children were given large pieces of paper and asked to write their nationality on one side of the paper, creating a spider chart of the characteristics they associated with this identity, while creating a spider chart of the characteristics they believed other people associated with this nationality. The explanations of this exercise were clear and some of the older children benefited from the exercise. However, for many of the younger participants, confusion arose around the issue of nationality. Many participants were unsure whether to call themselves Irish or English. Facilitators used this issue as a means of engaging participants in discussions of culture and identity, and in introducing the idea of the cross-cultural joint sessions to participants.

Participants expressed a high level of prejudice towards Travellers during this session, reacting extremely negatively on hearing that they would be joined by a Traveller group for the joint activity. The children were extremely vocal in expressing their negative perceptions of Travellers, with some asserting that they would not feel safe taking part in the joint activity. Facilitators challenged stereotypes throughout the discussion, with the result that participants agreed to '*give the Travellers a chance*' and continue to take part in the intervention at the end of the session. However, some participants displayed extreme reluctance in engaging in this agreement (Observation notes, 10 November 2012).

The final 3 weeks of this intervention were spent in conducting a joint activity with the goal of introducing the Traveller children to the youth club. The session on 1 March 2013 was only attended by 3 members of the Traveller group. The second session was well attended by members of both groups. However, the final session was only attended by one member of the Traveller group. Nonetheless, the experience of joint working was largely positive. Reflection sheets outline that some of the Traveller children displayed some caution during the first session, checking regularly that the facilitators were present. However, the Majority Ethnic group were welcoming to the Traveller group, showing them the facilities and including them in their games on the *Wii* immediately. This positive dynamic and friendly interaction was also observed during the session on 8 March 2013. The sessions were adapted to capitalise on this positive dynamic, allowing casual play to continue for longer than anticipated before commencing structured activities. The children also interacted well during organised activities and games, as illustrated by reflections and photographs of the clay modelling sessions. The one member of the Traveller group who did attend the final session was warmly welcomed by the children and included in games on the *Wii* and other games and in clay modelling activities, during which all of the children interacted freely (Observation notes, 8 March 2013).

Information was also available concerning those children who had not attended the joint sessions. The ESW reported that she had been speaking with the other families and while the children had wished to attend the session, they were unable to do so on account of the weather.

The joint work between the Traveller group and the Majority Ethnic group was successful, with participants from both groups engaging positively with each other. However, facilitators and BME parents outlined that they believed the intervention would have been more successful if this joint work had been continued over a longer period of time. In an interview, the BELONG PDW outlined that because of the challenges within both groups (sporadic attendance, learning difficulties and negative attitudes), the separate work programme had taken a much longer time to accomplish than envisaged. As a result, the joint work was only run over a period of 3 weeks, with most of the Traveller children only attending one of these sessions. This issue was discussed with the parents of the Traveller children. Two of the 3 parents expressed the belief that the Traveller children would be more

likely to access the mainstream youth club in the future if the intervention had run over a longer period of time.

'But it'd be better if there was someone they trusted there [at the youth club] for longer – you know, not just for [a] while – like this time. They'd go more if someone was there more.'
(Traveller parent, 20 March 2013)

Another parent emphasized that running interventions over a longer period of time was necessary to accommodate Traveller traditions of nomadism. She believed that short interventions were unsuited to some Traveller children since they missed many sessions when they were travelling:

'They couldn't go to the Centre all the time because of being busy with other things. But they wanted to go and if they wanted to go they mustn't have been worried. So maybe it would have helped if they had longer to go – they missed a few times, but if it was longer, like all year, they could go some weeks. What if they go away or something, travelling?' (Traveller parent, 20 March 2013)

Two of the 3 parents also indicated that they believed their children would begin to attend the mainstream activities in the youth club. However, they believed that the intervention had not run for a sufficient length of time for the children to have become comfortable attending the youth club without BELONG PDWs being present:

'If there was someone there they knew, yes. But I don't think they'd go on their own, not yet. It needs to be longer. They aren't long enough.' (Traveller parent, 20 March 2013)

'It's hard to tell ... maybe if they had longer or more times able to go, it would be easier to tell, but I don't know. But the boys go to boxing now. Just started a few weeks ago. Does that count?' (Traveller parent, 20 March 2013).

The contributions of these parents highlight that implementation of this programme was perceived as being very positive by the children. They emphasized that their children would have benefited greatly from continued implementation of the intervention.

4. Outcomes

Reflections on the We R U intervention by facilitators indicate that the cultural confidence and competence of the participating BME children were enhanced by the activities of this intervention. Photographs taken during sessions feature artwork completed by participants during the intervention. Only one BME participant attended the We R U intervention on 8 March 2013, the date scheduled for interviews. Therefore, it was not possible to achieve a conclusive understanding of the impact of this intervention on the cultural confidence and competence of this group as a whole. The sole Traveller participant who completed this interview showed high levels of cultural competence, readily discussing how well she got along with the Majority Ethnic children in the youth club. She described the other girls as her 'friends'. This high level of cultural competence was also exemplified by the freeness of her interactions with other participants. Staff of the youth club reported that she had started attending mainstream activities during the weekend without the presence of the facilitators. She strongly asserted that she enjoyed taking part in the activities held in the youth club and said that she intended to continue attending after the end of the We R U intervention. She also expected the other Travellers to attend the youth club with her, '*when it was not too cold and wet to walk to the club*'.

Parents of the BME children indicated that they had enjoyed taking part in the intervention immensely. All 3 parents expressed regret that the intervention was not being run for a longer period of time.

Parents indicated that they could not say whether the intervention had had a positive effect on the confidence of the participants, but that it must have done so if the children always wished to attend the sessions. All 3 parents outlined that the participants talked at home about what they had learned during the intervention. In particular, parents emphasized that the intervention had enhanced children's understandings of bullying:

Interviewer: Do you think that the We R U programme has made him/her better at dealing with issues like bullying?

'She knows now that it shouldn't happen and it's not her fault that the other kids are wrong. If she gets bullied, she'll tell me or her teacher.' (Traveller parent, 20 March 2013)

This is indicative of the positive effect of the intervention on participants' understandings of bullying and of racial bullying.

One of the primary outcomes of this intervention was an improvement in the attitudes of the mainstream children to members of the Traveller community. BELONG staff outlined that addressing the prejudiced attitudes of the Majority Ethnic group was one of the greatest challenges of this intervention. The Majority Ethnic group evidenced strong opinions and negative attitudes towards Travellers at the beginning of the intervention. However, as outlined by the PDW during an interview, attitudes gradually improved as the intervention continued and the facilitators repeatedly confronted and challenged preconceptions:

'Yeah, there was one session. do you remember. and they were talking about Travellers and said they were dirty and their clothes are ripped and this that and the other and they were sitting in front of us in a circle and they had holes in their clothes ... I was like "look at you" ... So she got really like defensive and then I was saying, "Well, that's because you say the same thing about Travellers, so that's how they feel when you talk about them like that. Is that fair to them if you talk about them like that and you're exactly the same". And she was like "Ach no, I get you".' (Interview, 8 March 2013)

Interviews were conducted with 3 children from the Majority Ethnic group on their experience of the We R U intervention. In order to gain an understanding of the effect of the intervention on levels of awareness of Traveller culture and attitudes to racial bullying, participants were asked to elaborate on what they had learnt about Traveller culture as a result of the intervention. Participants displayed some cautiousness and reticence in speaking about Travellers, giving short answers to questions on this subject and redirecting the conversation to the activities and games they had taken part in rather than dwelling on the topic. Nonetheless, the experience of learning about Traveller culture was portrayed as mainly positive, with participants outlining that they had not known anything about Travellers before commencing the intervention:

Interviewer: So, was what you learned about Traveller culture different to how you would have thought it would be?

'No, because I didn't really know anything about them before.' (Participant, aged 9)

'I learned that, like they travel around and they're just normal people like us. And they, like, they're not mean or anything.' (Participant, aged 11)

Majority Ethnic participants also expressed positive opinions of the Traveller children who had attended the intervention, outlining that it had afforded them an opportunity to get to know them better:

'No, I didn't know her until she came. Now I think she is very nice.' (Participant, aged 9)

This intervention had a positive outcome in terms of the attendance of Traveller children in mainstream activities. Staff at the youth club outlined that a member of the Traveller group had started attending the weekend mainstream activities following the first joint session of the We R U intervention. During an interview, this girl outlined her intention to continue attending the youth club and stated that she believed the other Traveller children would accompany her when the weather improved sufficiently for them to walk there.

5. Summary

Evaluation of the We R U exemplar evidences the potential of this intervention to provide an effective model for enhancing engagement between Traveller groups and Majority Ethnic groups. While a notable increase in the numbers of Traveller children attending the mainstream club did not occur over the evaluation period, there is clear evidence that this intervention was successful in laying the groundwork for pursuing this goal. This was illustrated in particular by the changes in attitudes and greater awareness of cultural diversity among members of the Majority Ethnic group.

Data relating to the implementation of this intervention evidence the challenges encountered in facilitating a joint project with Traveller and Ethnic Majority children. In particular, delivery was delayed by the irregular attendance of the Traveller group and the necessity of challenging the high levels of prejudice. In spite of these challenges, flexibility in delivery, an ability to adapt intervention content to suit the needs of participants and positive engagement was shown to result in effective intervention delivery.

Appendix D: Assessment of External Learning Skills

1. Overview and intervention description

The goal of the Assessment of External Learning Skills intervention was to increase the recognition among schools of the value of external knowledge in the school setting. BME children from two schools in the Craigavon area were invited to participate in a project that consisted of the completion of a portfolio documenting their learning outside the school environment, which would be shown to teachers on completion in order to heighten awareness in schools of the activities and the knowledge that participants accumulate outside the school environment. It was intended that this intervention would result in the following:

- improvement in links between schools and local community services providing after-school activities for attending pupils;
- an increase in levels of awareness among schools of any external learning and training of pupils, which can be used to better plan and monitor individual development;
- the sharing of indicators of curricular development with after-schools services for planning purposes.

As well as devising a more holistic overall picture of the child for schools and staff, this intervention was intended to help strengthen the sense of belonging felt by BME children and raise children's self-esteem and confidence.

Table D-1: Overview of intervention

Schools	Primary schools (n=2)
Staff	Education Support Worker (n=1)
Duration	6 November 2012 – 25 June 2013
Participants	15 children (migrant and Traveller)

2. Evaluation outline

The exemplar evaluation investigates both the implementation of the intervention and its impact on the educational experience of participants. The research questions listed below were prepared to guide the evaluation process:

- Do schools recognise the value of external knowledge as a result of the programme?
- Is there greater awareness of children's external learning and training in schools?
- Do participants have an improved sense of belonging in the school?

The proposed evaluation methodology also included research questions regarding the effect of the intervention on the relationship between after-school activities and schools:

- Have links improved between schools and after-schools services?
- Are the schools providing the necessary information for planning to the after-schools?

However, it emerged during the consultative process that participants were not involved in extra-curricular activities. These research questions were therefore not relevant to this exemplar.

The evaluation methodology is outlined in Table D-2.

Table D-2: Overview of evaluation methodology

Evaluation methods	Date
Brief review of key support literature.	September 2012
Documentary analysis of portfolio development process	November 2012
Interviews	Teachers: <i>not applicable</i> Principals (n=1) After-school leaders: <i>not applicable</i>
Focus group	Traveller children (n=8)
Observation	Portfolio consultation sessions (n=1)

The involvement of teachers, school principals and after-school leaders in this intervention was more limited than envisaged as a result of a number of external factors (these issues are accounted for in the following section). Therefore, only one interview was carried out with the principal of a participating school.

3. Implementation – Evaluation evidence

A number of external factors impacted on the delivery of this intervention. The start of the intervention was delayed as a result of the need to accommodate participating schools. In particular, flexibility regarding the timing of developmental meetings and recruitment of children during the early stages of the school year was necessary. Intervention delivery commenced in November 2012 with Traveller children attending a primary school in the Craigavon area. Another group of BME children from a second school commenced the intervention in January 2013. The portfolio consultation process with the first group took place in a local after-school facility, while sessions with the second group were facilitated on the school premises.

Evaluation evidence is indicative of a positive delivery of the portfolio consultation process. During a session observed in December 2012, children were seen as engaging effectively in activities. Clear directions were given by facilitators on the completion of the work, enabling older children to work independently on the completion of their portfolios, drawing pictures of themselves and including photographs and information on activities that they participated in outside of school. Staff were cognisant of the different levels of support required by children. While most of the older children progressed quickly with the completion of the portfolios, facilitators provided constant support to younger participants for whom the completion of the various tasks associated with the portfolio was challenging (Observation notes, 11 December 2012). The content and layout of portfolios also facilitated the participation of the range of age groups and abilities among participants. The portfolios were age-appropriate and sufficiently accessible in their content to allow younger participants to complete them with some help from staff. They combined colouring, drawing and artistic exercises with related writing tasks. Participants were also encouraged to collect photographs relating to their personal experiences and skills. The layout of the portfolio afforded extra space for older and more advanced participants to elaborate on their experiences in more detail where they wished

The experience of taking part in the portfolio development process was a positive one for the children involved. Focus groups were held with the children on their experience of the intervention. While some children had progressed further than others in their work on the portfolio process, most children expressed their enjoyment of the process:

'After school, like, you'd be rushing to get back to the homework club and rushing to get your homework finished so that you could get on and work on your folder.' (Focus Group, 4 February 2013)

The children were asked to present their portfolios to the group as part of the focus group. The majority of children showed a sense of pride when outlining their external learning. In particular, some children reinforced that they had learnt to speak Cant in the home and one boy highlighted his expertise in working with horses:

Interviewer: So what's that picture on the cover of your portfolio?

'That's a horse 'cos, like, I know everything there is to know about horses!' (Focus Group, 4 February 2013)

Older children articulated the positive relationship between their learning at BELONG activities, such as the Education and Learning Support intervention, and their achievement at school:

'It's good, like, 'cos they help you with your homework and all and then you get on better in school.' (Focus Group, 4 February 2013)

The portfolios completed by the children afford some insight into the skills and knowledge acquired by children in the home setting. They also contained information on extra-curricular activities in which children take part.

A number of issues – including the challenges associated with working with schools during the start of the school year, changes in staffing and the reticence of children to show their portfolios to teachers

and principals – culminated in insufficient time being afforded schools to assimilate any learning generated from this process (Project Journey, ESW). An interview was conducted with the principal of one participating school, who outlined the intervention as a good start and confirmed that the portfolio process was beneficial to the confidence of the children. However, it was felt that the value of the portfolio as a source of information was limited since those children who commenced the intervention in January 2013 had not included information on their cultural identities and their religion. The principal, nonetheless, underlined the intervention to be an original and potentially effective concept. She highlighted that this intervention could prove a valuable means of enhancing the sense of belonging of BME children in mainstream education. In particular, the view was forwarded that the intervention could be implemented in conjunction with the school curriculum and could play an important role in empowering participants to contribute to events such as the school intercultural week (Interview, 22 March 2013).

4. Outcomes

Evidence indicates that this intervention had a positive effect on the cultural confidence of participants. It was clear from observations that children enjoyed the experience of compiling the External Learning Skills portfolios. Contributions by participants during focus groups indicated that the completion of portfolios documenting their external learning was a source of pride, a view which was further asserted by the principal interviewed.

The interview conducted with the school principal illustrated that there is recognition of the value of external learning among school staff. While incorporation of the portfolios into the school environment did not take place to the extent envisaged over the evaluation period, the school principal expressed the view that the intervention was a potential means of enhancing the sense of belonging of BME pupils in the school.

As the implementation was not at an advanced stage at the end of the evaluation period, evaluation evidence does not show an increase in levels of awareness of children's external learning and training in schools or of an increase in the sense of belonging in schools among participants. A further evaluation objective was to strengthen links between after-school activities and schools. However, as participants were not involved in extra-curricular activities; this proposed outcome was not relevant to this exemplar.

5. Summary

This exemplar was a pilot intervention and as such exhibits many of the challenges associated with the development of new and innovative intervention models. In particular, a number of external factors impacted on the delivery of the intervention. Most prominent among these was the need to adapt to the busy schedules of schools and subsequent delays in implementing the portfolio consultation process. While the intervention has not been successful in achieving its stated goals over the evaluation period, as a pilot intervention it was successful in generating practical learning regarding the incorporation of external learning into the school environment. The success of the portfolio consultation process is suggestive of the efficacy of this type of work as a means of raising levels of self-esteem and cultural confidence among BME children. The support expressed by the participating school principal for the intervention and the commitment to continuing involvement in future implementations of the intervention is indicative of its potential to make an important contribution to the educational experience of BME children.

Appendix E: Transition intervention

1. Overview

The Transition intervention was designed in order to provide support to BME children and their parents during the transition from primary to post-primary school. The intervention aimed to provide relevant support to children, making practical information available to them, and to create a forum conducive to the discussion of fears relating to the transition process. The intervention was run in Dungannon and Newry in August 2012. Children and parents were invited to attend 4 day-long sessions during which topics relating to the transition to post-primary school were discussed. Participants were also provided with relevant and practical information relating to post-primary school.

An important element of this intervention was the completion of an ICT-based portfolio project, 'All About Me', which could be shown to teachers in their new schools. This project provided the children with an opportunity to present their experiences, fears and hopes, as well as enabling them to assess their own needs during the transition period. The group was also invited to attend an outing to the Belfast W5 Science Museum on the final day of the intervention. While it was intended that parents would attend the intervention to facilitate a 'learning together' experience in this informal setting and that they would participate in focus groups, their attendance was sporadic. Table E-1 provide an overview of the intervention.

Table E-1: Overview of Transition intervention

Newry		Dungannon	
Location	Ballybot House, Newry	Location	STEP, Dungannon
Date	20-24 August 2012	Date	20-24 August 2012
Participants	5 children	Participants	6 children
Facilitators	BELONG ESW Sessional support	Facilitators	BELONG ESW Sessional support
Trip	W5 Science Exhibition, Belfast	Trip	W5 Science Exhibition, Belfast

2. Evaluation outline

In order to assess the success of this intervention in providing support to participating children and parents during the transition to post-primary school, the evaluation explored the following:

- the effect of the intervention on the fears of children and parents relating to the transition to post-primary education;
- whether children and parents have increased confidence expressing their needs/fears;
- whether children and parents are familiar with the key language of the curriculum;
- the utility of the ICT project in enabling the children to express their fears, build confidence and develop important skills;
- key learning for bringing a focus of diversity/cultural difference into mainstream transition programmes.

An in-depth research methodology was prepared for the exploration of these themes (see *Table E-2*).

Table E-2: Overview of evaluation

Evaluation methods	Date
Brief questionnaire with children and parents (pre and post)	Pre-questionnaire: 20 August 2012 Post-questionnaire: 24 August 2012
Follow-up focus groups with children	Newry: 19 November 2012 (n=2) Dungannon: 2 December 2012 (n=5)
Follow-up questionnaires with parents	Newry (n=2) Dungannon (n=6)
Telephone interviews with relevant teachers who have specific roles relating to BME children	28 February 2013 – 1 April 2013 (n=6)
Review of programme materials	1 March 2012 – 15 March 2013
Interviews with programme staff	19-21 November 2012 (n=4)

Since parents reported that they were unable to attend focus groups sessions and did not wish to participate in interviews with a stranger, a questionnaire was designed to investigate their views on the intervention. This questionnaire was administered by BELONG staff. Parents were provided with a sealed envelope in which the questionnaire could be placed to ensure anonymity and to minimise influence of the presence of the BELONG staff on their contributions.

3. Implementation

The sessions were designed to allow participants time to engage in discussions about their anxieties, as well as completing activities and presentations addressing these anxieties. Time was also allocated for individual work to be carried out on the ICT project. The variety in the scope and content of the activities prepared for this intervention was also a strength. Activities took the format of quizzes, reading sample timetables and taster sessions of new subjects to be commenced as part of the post-primary curriculum. This was reported as being an engaging and fun way of addressing practical issues and learning by participants during focus group discussions.

Sessions were structured in order to create a relaxed informal atmosphere where participants would feel comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions. Discussions covered a range of topics relevant to the experience of the transition phase, including adapting to new routines and becoming familiar with the environment of the school:

'Yeah, we kind of did it like a round table. At the beginning we would sit around the table and we had a topic each day. We had getting to know your school, the routine of the school and the map of the school and what your set up of the day would be.' (Interview, 19 November 2012)

Group discussions are reported in programme reflections as being productive and engaging for the participants, with some children being reticent to engage in the beginning but becoming more confident as the intervention progressed.

'It was initially when you got them round the table, there was a lot of giggling going on. I think it's just a shy nervousness around the table ... Through the week they did come out of themselves a lot more.' (Interview: 21 November 2012)

The effectiveness of these discussions in preparing participants for the transition to post-primary school was also highlighted in post-intervention questionnaires.

The ICT project was cited by participants and ESWs as being a particularly positive aspect of the intervention, with 6 of the 12 children describing it in post-intervention questionnaires as an opportunity to develop an important new skill. Participants with a high level of competence were able to work independently, developing more complex and in-depth projects. Some participants found the ICT project difficult and required extensive assistance from the sessional staff (Interview: 21 November 2012).

ESWs and sessional support staff outlined that levels of parental attendance at the intervention were extremely low. Of the 8 parents who completed the questionnaires in February 2013, 2 had attended all 5 days; 2 parents attended for 2 days; and 4 parents had not attended any day. The follow-up questionnaires investigated the reasons for parental non-attendance; the main reason cited was work commitments (5), with only one parent stating that she did not think it was necessary to attend.

Feedback in these questionnaires highlighted that parents believed they would have attended the intervention if separate training had been provided during the evenings and that they would have found it useful to have attended a Transition intervention earlier during the year. All parents who attended the intervention for 2 days or more (n=4) outlined that they found the content of the intervention to be extremely relevant and the format of the delivery to be extremely clear. They were provided with a booklet called *101 Tips for Parents: Going to secondary school*, which provides practical and applicable advice for parents on the challenges that children face during the transition period. However, while the language used is clear and simple, this booklet is only available in English.

It was intended that by sharing their work on the ICT project, participants would be able to express their anxieties, hopes and expectations with teachers in the post-primary school. BELONG staff

outlined that they had informed teachers of the intervention by post and in some cases had forwarded copies of the ICT project by e-mail. However, of the 6 teachers interviewed as part of the evaluation, only 2 had been aware that their students had taken part in the programme. These teachers had not known what the programme entailed and had not seen the ICT project, although some had discussed it with the children in preparation for the evaluation interviews. One teacher in particular expressed regret that she had not been aware of the programme and of the ICT project, stating that she believed this would have helped her to establish a link with a particularly shy participant at the start of the year (Interview, 8 March 2013). All teachers believed that the intervention was an excellent idea and highlighted that many BME children are in need of additional support at this juncture in their lives.

4. Outcomes

The Transition intervention provided children with a forum to express their fears and anxieties, and to assess their needs relating to the transition to post-primary school. Children reported during focus groups that they had found the experience of taking part in discussions of their concerns to be reassuring:

Interviewer: So was it good to get a chance to talk about the things that you were worried about?

'Yeah, 'cos like you got to show your feelings and all'. (Participant 1, Dungannon, Focus Group)

'Well, we just got to like express what we were worried about'. (Participant 2, Dungannon, Focus Group)

'And so people could help you get better and all'. (Participant 3, Dungannon, Focus Group)

As mentioned previously, BELONG staff recorded that children were shy to discuss these concerns at the start of the intervention, but gained confidence in expressing their views as the intervention continued.

Post-intervention questionnaires indicated that all participants had found the ICT projects to be the most enjoyable aspect of the intervention. They were used as a basis for the focus group discussions, with participants invited to present their work to the group. Participants engaged with this enthusiastically, freely discussing the fears and anxieties they had recorded in their projects. Participants reported that they had found the ICT project to be helpful and a valuable means of expressing their anxieties and fears, and of preparing themselves for the experience of entering a new school.

'Yeah, like it [the ICT project] was a help because you know ... then you're ready for it so it helps'. (Participant, Dungannon, Focus Group)

Comparison of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires completed by participants provides some insight into the effect of the intervention in allaying anxieties and fears relating to the transition to post-primary school. All 6 participants from the Dungannon-based intervention recorded a slight decrease overall in the extent to which they were worried about entering post-primary school. In particular, participants recorded that they were much less worried about practical issues, such as getting lost in the school and managing the timetable following the Transition intervention.

Results from the post-intervention questionnaires completed by participants in the Newry intervention were also positive. All participants reported decreases in levels of anxiety regarding their ability to follow the timetable and getting lost in the new school.

However, a slight increase was recorded in levels of worry relating to bullying, homework and making new friends by 3 participants from the Newry intervention. This finding conflicts with views expressed by participants in reflection sheets at the end of the intervention, where it was outlined that they had found the intervention to be extremely helpful. As only 2 participants attended the focus group scheduled for 15 November 2012, it was not possible to explore this inconsistency. It may be indicative that discussions of bullying during the Transition intervention augmented existing fears rather than providing reassurance. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as evidence that participants were more comfortable acknowledging their fears after the intervention than when completing the pre-intervention questionnaire.

Evidence also suggests that the intervention had a positive effect on levels of parental confidence. In spite of the low levels of parental attendance at the intervention, 6 of the 8 parents who completed follow-up questionnaires outlined that they felt more confident about their children entering post-primary school following the intervention. 7 parents stated that they felt more confident discussing fears and anxieties regarding the transition process with their child. The findings of the follow-up questionnaire indicate that while most parents were unable to attend the Transition intervention programme, they found the fact that their children had participated in this intervention to be reassuring. This culminated in a decrease in levels of anxiety and in improved levels of communication with children around this topic.

Participant reflections and post-intervention questionnaires reflected that participants felt that they had become much more familiar with the key language of the post-primary school curriculum. Most participants recorded that they had developed a much better understanding of school timetables and reported a decrease in their levels of worry about managing to complete their school work and finding their way around the school. Participants also demonstrated high levels of familiarity in discussing aspects of the school curriculum during focus groups. Participants also discussed differences in the disciplinary practices and class structures of their post-primary schools with each other:

'Your school does like detentions where there's really no reason. Our school doesn't give detentions for anything. I have a few friends that got a detention, but they didn't do much, they just got bad marks.' (Participant 5, Dungannon, Focus Group)

'Just like you get a bad note and it goes back to the teachers and your head of year and all. It's ... not very much. Sure, a teacher caught me and a friend just messing about, like mucking about punching each other and digging each other, and the teacher was like "Don't do that" and I'm like OK.' (Participant 6, Dungannon, Focus Group)

Interviews with teachers from these schools also suggested that the pupils who had attended the intervention had been successful in coping with the academic expectations of the school.

Analysis of the data collected relating to the Transition intervention suggests that the intervention was largely successful in achieving its goals of decreasing levels of anxiety among children and parents about the experience of entering post-primary school.

5. Summary

Evaluation data suggest that this intervention was successful in allaying the levels of anxiety among BME children around the transition to post-primary school. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires highlight that, overall, levels of worry among 10 out of 12 participants were reduced by the activities of the intervention. While parents did not attend the intervention regularly, they recorded an increased level of confidence in discussing fears and anxieties with their children.

At an implementation level, there were strong indications that the design and content of this intervention were factors that underpinned positive participant engagement. Focus group discussions and post-intervention reflections by participants indicate that the intervention provided a forum where they could freely express their fears and acquire practical knowledge to facilitate the transition process. The use of ICT was cited as an especially positive aspect of the intervention, enabling participants to reflect on, and to express, anxieties and expectations in their own terms. While engagement with post-primary schools was not a strong feature of the intervention, interviews with teachers were indicative of a strong level of support for the intervention.

Appendix F: Diversity Awareness Training

1. Overview

The core aim of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention was to develop increased levels of diversity awareness among Classroom Assistants, to raise expectations for BME children in participating schools and to build a positive view of, and approach to, working with BME children in the school environment. Day-long diversity training programmes were provided by BELONG staff in conjunction with the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) for Classroom Assistants in the Dungannon area. The aim of these training days was to raise awareness of the challenges encountered by BME children in schools and to provide access to strategies and resources that would be of benefit in dealing with BME children in the school environment.

In total, 98 Classroom Assistants from 7 schools in the Dungannon area attended the intervention in August 2012 (see *Table F-1*). The intervention consisted of 3 day-long sessions. Sessions were facilitated by BELONG staff in conjunction with the IDS.

Table F-1: Overview of Diversity Awareness Training intervention

Participating schools	Primary: 4 schools (participants, n=71) Post-Primary: 3 Schools (participants, n=27)
Facilitators	Representative from IDS BELONG ESW (n=2)
Dates	28 August 2012 (Primary) 29 August 2012 (Post-Primary) 30 August 2012 (Primary)

Teachers from the schools involved played a central important role in this intervention. Link teachers from the schools were involved in the planning of the intervention through a series of cluster meetings and consultations, and in providing reflective feedback on the value of this training in schools following the intervention.

2. Evaluation outline

The evaluation of this intervention was based on the following research questions:

- Have Classroom Assistants developed a better understanding of the everyday school-based needs of BME children as a result of the programme?
- Are Classroom Assistants more aware of cultural diversity as a result of the programme?
- Do schools in which BME children attend have greater expectations for them after the programme?
- What was the impact of the involvement of the teachers?

The evaluation methodology is outlined in *Table F-2*.

Table F-2: Evaluation methodology

Interviews with programme staff and sessional workers (n=4)
Interviews with representatives from IDS (n=1)
Focus group interviews with a sample of Classroom Assistants from primary and post-primary schools (n=2)
Telephone interviews with participating teachers from primary and post-primary schools (n=5)
Observation of training events for groups of schools (n=2)
Attendance at cluster meetings (n=2)
Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires with Classroom Assistants (n=67)

3. Implementation

In total, 98 Classroom Assistants took part in diversity awareness training in the Dungannon Teacher Training Centre over a period of 3 days, from 28-30 August 2012. Sessions were delivered by BELONG ESWs in conjunction with the IDS. Sessions observed on 28 and 29 August 2012 indicate that training delivery was clear and pitched at a suitable level for Classroom Assistants. This was evidenced by the fact that nearly all Classroom Assistants engaged in active discussions of the materials. The use of group work was seen as particularly successful since some Classroom Assistants who were reluctant to contribute to general discussions played a more active role in participating in activities and discussions carried out through small groups (Observation notes, 29 August 2012).

Post-intervention feedback following the first day of implementation (28 August 2012) recorded that participants were not satisfied with the level of training provided. Classroom Assistants indicated that they had found the content of the training day to be too basic and that they were already familiar with the resources used in the training. In accordance with the principle of reflexive feedback, the programme of delivery planned for the second day of implementation (29 August 2012) was modified to incorporate more resources and to allow more time for discussion. This resulted in a higher level of engagement and in a more positive atmosphere. This effective self-reflection by IDS and BELONG staff during delivery was highlighted in the positive feedback received by facilitators. Similarly, positive reactions to the intervention delivered on 30 August provided further evidence of the efficacy of the revised delivery.

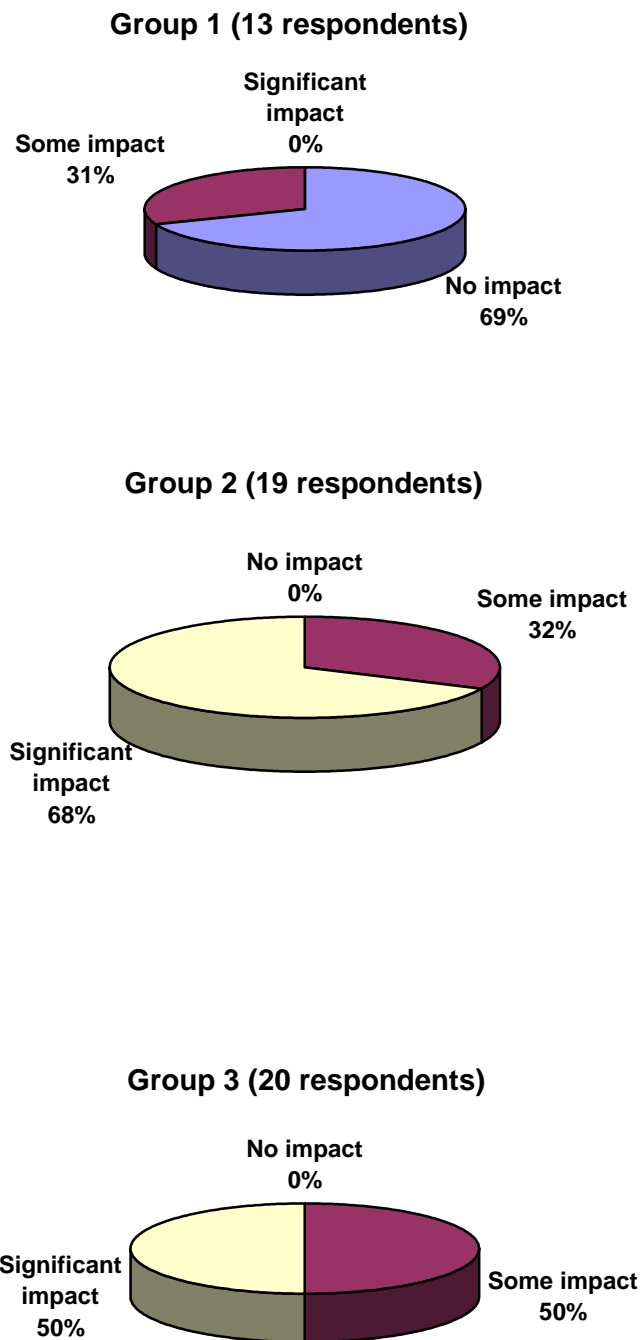
This issue demonstrates the need for re-evaluation of the role played by teachers in the design of this intervention. The content of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention had been designed by the IDS, based on recommendations of teachers involved in the cluster process in May 2012. Teachers were given a 'menu' of activities and modules for possible inclusion in the training. It was recommended that teachers consult with school principals and Classroom Assistants in choosing the content of these sessions. However, it was clear from focus group sessions held with Classroom Assistants that they had not been involved in the choosing of the content for the training, with only a few of them reporting that they had any prior knowledge of the topics selected (Focus Group 1). This issue was discussed during the cluster meeting on 11 October 2012. Teachers acknowledged that they had underestimated the level of expertise of the Classroom Assistants in choosing the content of the training. There was a general consensus among teachers of the need to consult Classroom Assistants directly regarding the content of future training initiatives (Observation notes, 11 October 2012). Steps have been taken by the IDS to consult Classroom Assistants directly through questionnaires and focus groups on content for inclusion in future implementations of this intervention (Interview, 11 November 2012).

4. Outcomes

As outlined in Table F-2, participants were invited to complete a questionnaire addressing their levels of diversity awareness prior to participating in the intervention and a follow-up questionnaire in January 2013. This research method allowed for an investigation of the efficacy of the diversity awareness training in influencing Classroom Assistants' practices relating to BME children. It also allowed for analysis of whether levels of diversity awareness had decreased or increased since the completion of the training programme. As previously outlined, 76 participants completed the initial questionnaire, with the follow-up questionnaire receiving a response from 61 participants. Responses were analysed using SPSS software.

In order to investigate the effect of the differing deliveries of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention over the 3 days, respondents were divided into 3 groups: (a) 15 respondents who completed the post-intervention questionnaire had attended the diversity awareness training on 28 August 2012 (first day of training) are categorised as Group 1; (b) the 21 respondents who had attended the training offered on 29 August 2012 are classified as Group 2; and (c) the 25 respondents who had attended the training on 30 August 2012 (last day of training) are classified as Group 3. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of impact which the Diversity Awareness Training intervention had had on their own practice, choosing from the options of 'no impact', 'some impact' or 'significant impact'. Figure F-1 provides an overview of the responses to this question according to group.

Figure F-1: Perceived impact of Diversity Awareness Training intervention on practice of Classroom Assistants



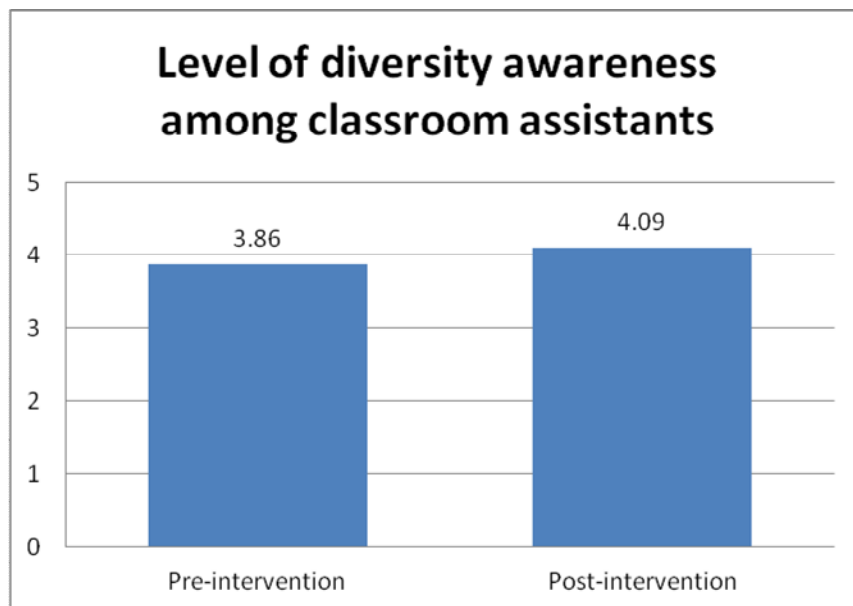
The respondents from Group 1 who had attended the diversity awareness training on the first day of the intervention provided a negative reflection of the effect of the training. Of the 15 respondents who had attended training on the first day, 13 responded to this question: 9 respondents (69%) indicated that the training had had 'no impact' on their practice in dealing with BME children, while 4 indicated that it had had 'some impact'. No respondents from the group stated that the intervention had had a 'significant impact' on their practice. This appraisal of the effect of the intervention is consistent with reports from BELONG staff of the issues arising in the delivery of the intervention on 28 August 2012. While participants had seemed to be engaging effectively with the materials and discussions during

the training, post-intervention feedback indicated that the material had been pitched at too basic a level for the participants.

As stated above, BELONG and the IDS re-designed aspects of the intervention to improve the level of delivery. Further activities and new materials were introduced into the intervention for Groups 2 and 3. The benefits of this re-design are reflected in participants' appraisals of the impact of the training on their practice relating to BME children. Of the 21 respondents in Group 2, 19 completed this question: 13 respondents (68%) indicated that the intervention had had a 'significant impact' on their practice, while 6 indicated that it had had 'some impact'. The respondents from this group were secondary school Classroom Assistants and reported in post-intervention feedback that they had found the training to be beneficial and of practical use. Responses from the participants on the third day of training are also suggestive of the improvement in the design and material used in the intervention. 20 respondents from Group 3 completed this question: 10 respondents (50%) indicated that the training had had a 'significant impact' on their practice, while 10 indicated that it had had 'some impact'.

The evaluation questionnaire also measured changes in practices relating to BME children. Across 27 questions, participants were asked to specify how often they engaged in a range of practices relating to diversity awareness; they could rate their practices from 1 (rarely) to 5 (always). In order to investigate whether the diversity awareness training had had an impact on the levels of awareness and practices of the participants, the average score from the pre-intervention questionnaire was contrasted with the average score from the post-intervention questionnaire. As illustrated in Figure F-2, a slight increase in levels of diversity awareness was recorded by participants.

Figure F-2: Mean score of participants for levels of diversity awareness pre-intervention and post-intervention



The mean score from the pre-intervention questionnaires was 3.86 across all 27 questions. The mean score (across the 3 groups) increased to 4.09 in the post-intervention questionnaires. This variation of 0.23 is indicative of a very slight increase in levels of diversity awareness among participants. The smaller sample of participants who completed the post-intervention questionnaire imposes some caveats on the reliability of this finding.

The outcome of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention for Classroom Assistants was discussed with link teachers from the participating schools. Teachers provided positive appraisals of the effectiveness of the intervention. Of the 5 teachers interviewed, 4 indicated that they believed the intervention had had a positive impact on the practices of Classroom Assistants in the school. It is of note that the one teacher who believed that the intervention had had 'no impact' was representing Classroom Assistants who had attended the intervention on the first day of delivery (28 August 2012), prior to the adaptation of the intervention (Interview, 20 January 2013). Other teachers from primary schools represented on the first day of training outlined that while the Classroom Assistants had not

acquired new skills during the training due to the limitations of the content, the intervention had nonetheless been of practical benefit to their practices in the school. They asserted that Classroom Assistants had become more confident in putting existing skills to use. At an overall level, Classroom Assistants were described as being more proactive in developing strategies to help BME children learn within the classroom. They were seen as being able to work more independently, meeting the specific needs of BME children, and as being more innovative in seeking out resources, such as picture dictionaries and online resources to help enhance the understanding and the work of BME children.

Post- primary teachers reflected that Classroom Assistants (Group 2) had benefited greatly from the intervention. In spite of the lack of significant changes recorded in the post-intervention questionnaire, Classroom Assistants were described as having adapted the way that they communicate with BME children as a result of the training. They were described as being more careful to speak slowly and to use accessible language when dealing with children whose command of English is limited. Classroom Assistants had also effectively engaged with initiatives such as the Education and Learning Support intervention and the breakfast club. In addition, they were seen as having become increasingly supportive of BME children, encouraging them to remain motivated with school work (Interview, 24 November 2012).

One of the aims of the Diversity Awareness Training intervention was to raise expectations among Classroom Assistants for BME children in schools. Follow-up questionnaires and feedback from teachers indicate that rather than raising expectations for BME children in participating schools (as outlined in the Planning Template for this intervention), the intervention has made Classroom Assistants 'more realistic' about the academic challenges faced by BME children. In particular, it has heightened awareness of the difficulties encountered by newly arrived children who are often under pressure to acquire language skills. Participants outlined that this enhanced awareness was a positive development since it had resulted in Classroom Assistants becoming more patient and willing to offer support to BME children (Interview, 24 November 2012). This view was also expressed during teachers' interviews. In particular, Classroom Assistants were described as having adapted the way they communicate with BME children as a result of the training, being more careful to speak slowly and to use accessible language. In addition, they are also able to play a very effective support role for BME children, encouraging them to remain motivated with school work (Interview, 11 November 2012).

5. Summary

The Diversity Awareness Training intervention aimed to increase the levels of diversity awareness among Classroom Assistants from primary and post-primary schools. Follow-up questionnaires are indicative of a slight increase in levels of diversity awareness among participants. This positive outcome was shown in evaluation data to have had a positive effect on engagement within the school setting. In particular, Classroom Assistants were described as assuming a more proactive role in helping BME children in the school setting.

The misalignment of the intervention content with the abilities and experience levels of Classroom Assistants attending the first day of the intervention illustrates the importance of involving Classroom Assistants in the design of programmes to the greatest extent practicable. However, the successful adaptation of the content of the intervention during subsequent training days is indicative of the capacity for BELONG and the IDS to engage in effective self-reflection and to adapt the intervention to suit the needs of participants. This is also an indication of the effective relationship that BELONG has established with the IDS as a delivery partner, as well as a strategic-level partner.

Appendix G: BELONGing Index

1. Developing the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT)

Deciding on the most appropriate measure of resilience for inclusion in the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT) was relatively straightforward. The Child and Family Research Centre is fortunate to have a close working relationship with the International Resilience Project, led by Dr. Michael Ungar and Dr. Linda Liebenberg, two world leaders in the study of resilience. Their project developed **The Child and Youth Resilience Measure** (CYRM-28) in the Resilience Research Centre in Canada after collaboration with 14 communities in 11 countries around the world. The CYRM is designed as a screening tool to explore the resources (individual, relational, communal and cultural) available to young people that may bolster their resilience. The CYRM as used in the BIT consists of a 28-item questionnaire⁵⁷ that explores the resources noted above.

According to Liebenberg *et al* (2012, p. 223): 'Results suggest that the CYRM-28 has three subscales reflecting the major categories of resilience. Furthermore, each subscale has its own groupings of questions that serve as indicators of the construct's major categories. The first subscale reflects an individual factor that includes personal skills (5 items), peer support (2 items), and social skills (4 items). The second subscale deals with caregiving, as reflected in physical caregiving (2 items) as well as psychological caregiving (5 items). The third subscale comprises contextual components that facilitate a sense of belonging in youth, components related to spirituality (3 items), culture (5 items), and education (2 items).'

In addition to the 28-item scale, a further 10-item scale⁵⁸ was developed locally by BELONG to ensure that the measure remained contextually relevant to the needs of BELONG. This is an agreed part of the CYRM implementation process. Therefore, combining the recognition in academia and practice for this tool along with the opportunity for BELONG to develop its own 10 questions for inclusion ensured the use of this tool in the study.

To uncover the most appropriate standardised measures of belonging, a detailed search of the academic, policy and practice literature was conducted, in addition to direct contact being made with key theorists in the area. The search criteria used ensured that the tools found were suitable for the age range of the children involved in BELONG, were valid and reliable instruments, had been peer-reviewed and included questions that probed the types of belonging work engaged in by BELONG. A check was also made to see if any tool used in any previous BELONG studies could be re-used. The search revealed that while several measures of belonging exist (e.g. measures of belonging for adults, for healthcare professionals working with BME groups, for teachers working in ethnically diverse schools), only a tiny number actually fit the search criteria for the BIT. Therefore, as will be explained below, the remaining four measures contained in the BIT were uncovered after a mix of literature searching and advice from key theorists.

Biggart *et al* (2009) conducted an epidemiological study of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children's perceptions of exclusion in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland for BELONG. One of the tools used in that study was an adapted version of the measure of **Belonging in Youth Development Programmes** (BYDP) (Anderson-Butcher and Conroy, 2002). Several youth development agencies in the USA routinely use a 10-item measure of belonging, which was initially designed for use in a chartered Boys and Girls club (*ibid*). Given that little was known about the psychometric properties of the tool, Anderson-Butcher and Conroy (2002) tested the factorial validity of the tool in 2002. Subsequently, 5 of the original 10 items were removed from the scale due to their sub-optimal statistical fit. The results showed that the remaining 5 items⁵⁹ all tapped a common sense of belonging along the domains of support, acceptance, comfort, being part of and being committed to the programme. The Evaluation Team discussed with Biggart *et al* (2009) their experiences of using this tool and afterwards decided to include this tool in the BIT. This was based on the possibility of

⁵⁷ Questions 23-50 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

⁵⁸ Questions 51-60 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

⁵⁹ Questions 1-5 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

doing some comparative analysis between the results generated by the BIT and with Biggart *et al*'s 2009 study, in addition to the suitability of the domain areas of belonging addressed by the tool.

Due to the overall lack of existing tools on belonging, specifically those relating to BME children and school, the next tool identified for measuring belonging was discovered after the Evaluation Team contacted Dr. Asher Ben-Arieh, the Chair of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) for advice. The team was subsequently put in contact with Dr. Steve Asher from Duke University in the USA who is engaged in research in this area. After discussing the needs of the BIT with Dr. Asher, he kindly provided access to a tool developed by Stroud *et al* (2009) called a measure of **Child Belonging in School (CBS)**.⁶⁰ This tool has been developed as part of research established to examine feelings of belonging in children, adolescents and college students. This tool specifically measures the level of felt belonging of children towards school. The tool fitted the criteria for the BIT and so was chosen for inclusion. It also allows for future comparative analysis of datasets.

The next tool included in the BIT to measure belonging was developed by Morgan (2006) and is called the **Social Distance Scale (SD)**.⁶¹ Based on the initial Social Distance Scale developed by Bogardus in the 1930s, Morgan created an adapted SD for children to assess selected social values held by children towards racially different peers within the context of school-related experiences. The children's degree of social acceptance is measured using 7 items, scaled to seek children's willingness to participate in a social relationship with children and adults from another ethnicity. As the tool fitted the criteria for the BIT, it was deemed eligible for inclusion.

The fifth and final tool chosen for inclusion in the BIT that focuses on measuring belonging was developed by Anderson-Butcher *et al* (2007) and is called the **Perceived Social Competence Scale (PSCS)**.⁶² This tool was developed to measure social competence among children, particularly those involved in settings emphasizing prevention, early intervention and youth development. Competence, which is core to the BELONG Programme of activities, is defined as '*... the degree to which children and youth engage in prosocial behaviours and are able to successfully create and maintain positive social interactions with others*' (*ibid*, p. 47). Social competence is linked with resilience in children and youth, and the development of this attribute is viewed as a protective factor for children. Belonging is also known to be associated with social competence (*ibid*). The authors also developed it as a response to an expressed need among practitioners for a short, valid and reliable way of establishing competence levels among the children with whom they are engaged. Given the suitability of this tool when viewed against the criteria for the BIT, it was deemed appropriate for inclusion.

2. Reliability of the measures

One of the initial data analysis tasks undertaken by the research team was to assess how consistently respondents answered questions on each item contained in the 5 standardised tools in the BELONGing Index Tool (BIT). As noted by Brady *et al* (2010), this consistency is checked by using Cronbach's alpha, a statistical test that determines the internal consistency of items in a standardised measure. Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating no internal consistency and 1 indicating a strong reliability.

The reliability scores using Time 2 data for each of the 5 tools used in the BELONGing Index is shown in Tables G-1 – G6. This ranged from a high of 0.91 for Tool B to 0.67 for Tool D. In this study, an alpha value of 0.60 or higher was considered acceptable for a set of items to be considered a reliable scale (Brady *et al*, 2010). The internal consistency figures reported by the authors of the respective tools are also shown in Table G1. Details on the mean scores, standard deviations and numbers of respondents for each item from across the 5 measures are contained in Tables G-2 – G-6.

⁶⁰ Questions 6-11 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

⁶¹ Questions 12-18 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

⁶² Questions 19-22 on the BELONGing Index Tool.

Table G-1: Reliability data at Time 2 for the 5 measures contained in the BELONGing Index Tool

Standardised measures		Number of items	Time 2 reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha)	Reliability coefficients from Source Author(s) (Cronbach's alpha)	
Tool A	Belonging in Youth Development Programmes	5	0.75	0.93	
Tool B	Child Belonging in School	6	0.91	0.93	
Tool C	Perceived Social Competence Scale	4	0.67	0.87	
Tool D	Social Distance Scale	7	0.83	<i>Awaiting confirmation</i>	
Tool E	Child and Youth Resilience Measure	28 (+ 10) ⁶³	0.89	Individual	0.84
				Relational	0.66
				Community	0.79
				Culture	0.71

Table G-2: Reliability data for Tool A: Belonging in Youth Development Programmes (BYDP)

Item	Mean	SD	n	Cronbach's alpha
1	3.32	.838	374	.75
2	3.45	.715	374	
3	3.28	.827	374	
4	3.48	.633	374	
5	3.61	.565	374	

Table G-3: Reliability data for Tool B: Child Belonging in School (CBS)

Item	Mean	SD	n	Cronbach's alpha
6	4.42	.798	378	.91
7	4.38	.870	378	
8	4.30	.900	378	
9	4.50	.795	378	
10	4.29	.974	378	
11	4.42	.930	378	

Table G-4: Reliability data for Tool C: Perceived Social Competence Scale (PSCS)

Item	Mean	SD	n	Cronbach's alpha
19	4.11	1.104	391	.67
20	4.19	.952	391	
21	3.88	1.131	391	
22	4.25	.974	391	

Table G-5: Reliability data for Tool D: Social Distance Scale (SD)

Item	Mean	SD	n	Cronbach's alpha
12	4.24	1.031	362	.83
13	3.82	1.285	362	
14	3.71	1.371	362	
15	2.92	1.545	362	
16	3.63	1.438	362	
17	2.65	1.544	362	
18	2.67	1.566	362	

⁶³ The final 10 items on the scale were developed locally in association with BELONG.

Table G-6: Reliability data for Tool E: Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)

Item	Mean	SD	n	Cronbach's alpha
23	4.31	1.067	289	.89
24	4.23	1.039	289	
25	4.63	.849	289	
26	4.37	.988	289	
27	4.48	.939	289	
28	4.80	.572	289	
29	4.70	.766	289	
30	4.35	.890	289	
31	4.02	1.171	289	
32	4.67	.790	289	
33	4.36	.914	289	
34	3.92	1.295	289	
35	3.89	1.309	289	
36	4.53	.841	289	
37	4.52	.866	289	
38	4.47	.961	289	
39	4.71	.670	289	
40	4.50	.867	289	
41	4.34	.991	289	
42	4.54	.824	289	
43	4.64	.728	289	
44	4.04	1.273	289	
45	4.52	.886	289	
46	4.78	.600	289	
47	4.65	.720	289	
48	4.56	.960	289	
49	4.38	.964	289	
50	4.70	.742	289	
51	4.04	1.178	289	
52	4.29	1.020	289	
53	4.68	.752	289	
54	4.15	1.148	289	
55	4.08	1.093	289	
56	4.64	3.117	289	
57	4.43	.918	289	
58	4.62	.866	289	
59	3.84	1.396	289	
60	4.54	.882	289	

3. Statistically significant findings

The results of the statistical analyses will be presented below according to whether or not findings were statistically significant. The significance criterion (α) is the standard of proof that the phenomenon exists. In this study, the significance criterion (α) is set at 0.05, the conventional level of significance, and this means accepting a 5% chance of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis, i.e. in 5 times out of 100 such a finding could be obtained, but it would be as a result of chance rather than a true reflection of the situation.

Effect sizes

The effect size statistic used in this study is a standardised way of presenting the difference in scores between pre-test and post-test for BELONG children and also differences in scores between BELONG children at post-programme and both BME comparison children and non-BME comparison children. Effect sizes are presented as Cohen's *d* values and the convention recommended for their interpretation is that 0.2 is small, 0.5 is medium and 0.8 is large (Cohen, 1988, pp. 19-27).

4. Calculation of BELONGing Index Scores (BIS)

Obtaining the BELONGing Index Score (BIS) at T1 for the BELONG group involved the following process of standardisation. First, mean scores for each tool and for all 5 tools combined were standardised ($M = 0.00$, $SD = 1$). Second, these standardised scores (z-scores) were converted to 100 by simply adding 100 to the standardised scores. The standard deviation was also set to 10 by first multiplying the standardised score by 10. This process created a BELONGing Index Score with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10. A separate Domain score was also created for each of the 5 tools with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10. The new scores were created by computing:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{BELONGing Index Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \\ \text{BYDP Domain Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \\ \text{CBS Domain Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \\ \text{PSCS Domain Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \\ \text{SD Domain Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \\ \text{CYRM Domain Score} &= (10 \times z) + 100 \end{aligned}$$

To ensure the analysis could represent change over time, Index scores for the BELONG children at T2 were calculated as follows: for each of the 5 tools and for the 5 tools combined, the T1 mean score was subtracted from the T2 score of each individual and divided by the T1 standard deviation. These standardised scores were converted to the same scale as the T1 scores by simply adding 100 to the standardised scores. Again, the standard deviation was also set to 10 by first multiplying the standardised score by 10.

5. Factor analyses

On the basis of the factor analysis, 5 factors were created for T1 and T2 data:

- **Factor 1:** Child and Youth Resilience 1 (Questions 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 53)
- **Factor 2:** Child and Youth Resilience 2 (Questions 19, 22, 33, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60)
- **Factor 3:** Child Belonging in School (Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 38)
- **Factor 4:** Social Distance (Questions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
- **Factor 5:** Belonging Youth and Development Programmes (Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Table G-7: Factor analysis output

Pattern matrix ^a					
	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Q37 – I know where to go to get help	.639				
Q29 – If I am hungry, there is enough to eat	.634				
Q28 – My parents know a lot about me	.621				
Q39 – My family stands by me when times are hard	.597				
Q27 – My parents watch me closely	.590				
Q46 – I feel safe when I am with my family	.589				
Q45 – I think it is important to help others in my community	.524				
Q47 – I have chances to learn things that will be useful later in life	.488				
Q34 – I talk to my family about how I feel	.473				
Q42 – I have chances to show others I am growing up and can do things for myself	.467				
Q40 – My friends stand by me when times are hard	.465				
Q25 – Doing well in school is important to me	.459				
Q26 – I know how to behave in lots of different situations	.459				
Q53 – I can be myself with my family	.404				.305
Q41 – People in my life and community treat me fairly	.401				
Q48 – I enjoy my family's cultural and family traditions	.401				
Q32 – I am proud of being X (ethnicity)	.400				
Q43 – I know the good things about myself	.398				
Q30 – I try to finish what I start	.388				

Q50 – I am proud to be X nationality	.336				
Q36 – I feel supported by my friends	.328				
Q31 – Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me					
Q23 – I have people to look up to					
Q35 – I can solve my problems without hurting myself or other people					
Q7 – School fits me well		.871			
Q8 – Feel connected to school		.859			
Q9 – Feel welcome at school		.831			
Q6 – Feel like I belong at this school		.771			
Q10 – School makes me feel like I belong		.771			
Q11 – This is definitely my school		.762			
Q38 – I feel I belong at my school		.502			
T2Var15Rev			.786		
T2Var16Rev			.752		
T2Var14Rev			.746		
T2Var18Rev			.694		
T2Var13Rev			.682		
T2Var12Rev			.605		
T2Var17Rev			.599		
Q20 – I help other people					
Q21 – I ask others if I can be of help					
Q1 – Take part in after-school programmes regularly				.775	
Q4 – Am supported at the programme				.703	
Q2 – Am comfortable taking part in after-school programmes				.684	
Q5 – Am accepted at the programme				.680	
Q3 – Am committed to the programme				.653	
Q51 – I feel comfortable saying what I think					.690
Q52 – I feel comfortable saying what I like					.677
Q54 – I can be myself everywhere					.674
Q58 – I am comfortable speaking my first/family language outside of my home					.564
Q57 – I can develop my talents and abilities out of school					.559
Q19 – I am good at making friends					.489
Q33 – People think I am fun to be with					.444
Q55 – When I give my opinion, adults listen to me	.323				.438
Q22 – I get along well with others					.432
Q59 – I am not responsible for other people's actions					.412
Q60 – I feel confident about being X (ethnicity) when I'm with children from other cultures					.409
Q49 – I enjoy my community's traditions					.403
Q44 – I participate in religious activities					
Q56 – I can develop my talents and abilities at school					
Q24 – I cooperate with people around me					
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis					
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization					
Rotation converged in 10 iterations					

6. Data analysis by research question

In analysing the data, the Evaluation Team focused on three core research questions. The primary research question was to establish *What gains were made by children in the BELONG Programme in terms of belonging and resilience?* To address this, paired-samples t-tests were used. Any gains found to be statistically significant were unlikely to have been caused by chance.

The second research question examined *if there was an association between programme exposure and gains made by children in the BELONG Programme?* To answer this question, a repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted. The test compares the variance (variability in scores) between the different groups (believed to be due to the independent variable, i.e. programme exposure) with the variability within each group (believed to be due to chance). It calculates an F ratio: a large F ratio indicates there is more variability between the groups (caused by the independent variable) than there is within each group (caused by chance).

The third research question set out to establish *What differences were observed between children in the BELONG Programme and both BME children and non-BME children not in the BELONG Programme?* To answer this question, an analysis of variance was used to compare the scores of BELONG children, non-BELONG BME children, and non-BELONG non-BME children.

Appendix H: Literature Review

This literature review provides an overview of the academic literature relating to the needs and experiences of BME children and communities. Section 1 addresses the conceptual and theoretical concepts underpinning the BELONG Programme; it engages with theories of ‘belonging’, before outlining the chief tenets of the theory of ecological childhood development in Section 2. The review then shifts its focus to issues affecting ethnic minority children and youth, providing a review of studies addressing resilience (Section 3), empirical studies addressing cultural confidence (Section 4) and cultural competence (Section 5). Section 6 then discusses rights, empowerment and participation, followed a review of studies relating to the educational experience of BME children (Section 7) and bullying and racial bullying (Section 8).

1. The concept of ‘belonging’

The concept of ‘belonging’ has been the subject of extensive academic attention across a number of disciplines. The need to belong, to feel trust, acceptance and respect within larger groups, such as the family unit and peer groups, plays a vital role in psycho-social development throughout the life span (Erikson, 1968). Jenkins (2008) highlights that membership and acceptance are fundamental tenets of human identity: *‘Knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, etc’*. Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs similarly theorises a sense of belonging as being central to human existence. ‘Belonging and love’ are the third level on his hierarchy, directly after the attainment of basic physical and safety needs.

A number of studies have pointed to the importance of the sense of security, emanating from feelings of belonging, to social development among children. The security associated with belonging is vital for social development throughout childhood and, indeed, throughout the life span. A sense of belonging within the family unit, within the school setting and among peers is central to the creation of a *secure base* for children. A child who feels secure in their acceptance and belonging in these environments in which they spend their daily lives will feel more confident in unfamiliar situations. Having a secure base is therefore instrumental in social development, ‘rendering safe’ exploration of the outer world, and influences the overall quality of life for young people (Gilligan, 2000, pp. 39-40).

Belonging can, however, be a problematic concept in the context of youth migration (McGarry and McGrath, 2013). Theories of symbolic construction posit social membership, or belonging, as being inextricably linked to a sense of shared identity (Cohen, 1982 and 1985). For members of BME groups and communities with a culture that is discernibly different from that of the majority population, achieving acceptance and belonging can be an intricate process. For many BME children and young people, the effort to adapt to the culture of the host society can be a challenging process (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

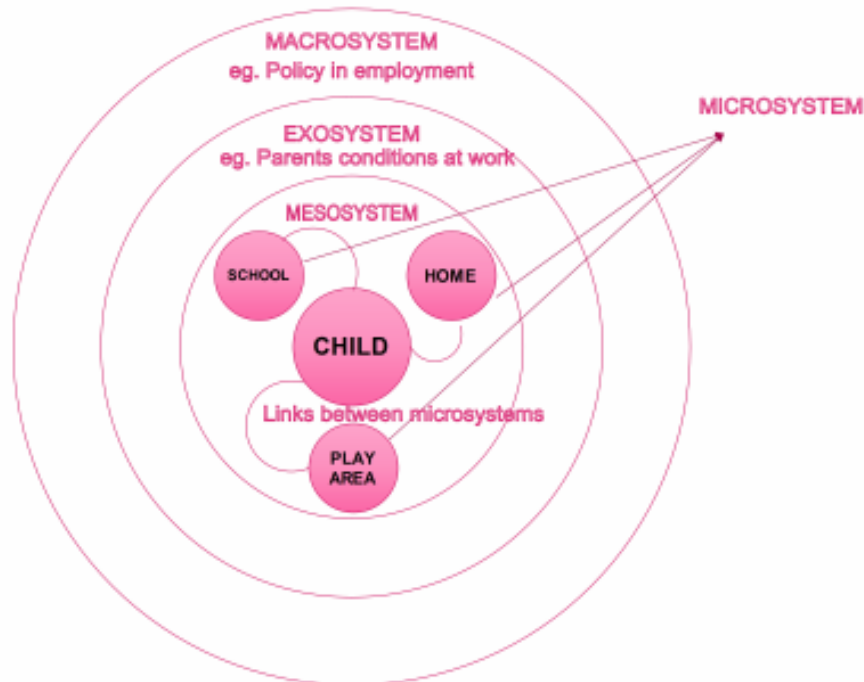
One of the chief tenets of the BELONG Programme is the importance of social supports to the development of a sense of belonging among BME children. Social support can be defined as a *‘multidimensional construct that encompasses a broad range of social interactions that have beneficial emotional or behavioural effects on the individual’* (Cox, 2005, p. 244). Types of social support can further be differentiated as emotional, tangible and informational support, as well as formal support (e.g. services such as BELONG) and informal support (e.g. friends, family). Numerous studies have suggested that social supports, such as mentoring programmes and access to extra-curricular programmes, can positively influence the experience of BME youth in ‘acculturating’ or adapting to the cultural norms of the majority society (Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005; Dwivedi, 2002).

2. Socio-ecological perspective

The theoretical framework of ecological childhood development underpins the BELONG Programme. The foundation of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) socio-ecological perspective is that the individual and the environment are interrelated and affect each other on many levels. This theoretical prism posits these levels as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (see *Figure H-1*). The

microsystem includes the individual's experiences and for the most part is unique to the individual due to the fact that no other person experiences the environment in the same way (Compton and Galaway, 1994). The *mesosystem* includes relationships between major groups, organisations and institutions that the individual is in contact with in their daily life (e.g. school). The *exosystem* refers to any setting that affects the individual indirectly rather than directly (e.g. parental leave policies within a parent's workplace affecting a child). Finally, the *macrosystem* involves social, cultural and economic structures, and includes language, customs and religions (Compton and Galaway, 1994).

Figure H-1: BELONG Ecological Model (adapted from BELONG, 2009, p. 19)



3. Resilience

Social belonging is closely linked to the development of resilience during childhood. The security associated with having a strong sense of social belonging is seen as vital in enabling children to 'bounce back' having endured adversity (Gilligan, 2000, p. 37). Belonging, therefore, plays a central role in enabling children to '*continue to develop normally under difficult circumstances*' (Fonagy *et al*, 1994, p. 233). The theory of resilience suggests that a person, family or community can have the capacity to cope and overcome adversity. Resilience can be defined as '*a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity*' (Newman and Blackburn, 2002, p. 1). Resilient children and families are often described as those that can 'bounce back' or exhibit positive coping skills in the face of change, uncertainty, difficulty or adversity. Clarke and Clarke (2003) suggest that a person or family who take a more strengths-based perspective to challenges or difficulties are much more likely to cope and develop resilience. Resilience is not considered as immunity or imperviousness to trauma or difficulties, but rather the ability to recover from adverse experiences (Dolan, 2006; Rutter *et al*, 1998).

Gilligan (2001) describes having capacity for resiliency as a balance between levels of risk factors and protective factors. Resilience may be modulated by both risk and protective factors. *Risk factors* represent personal and environmental variables that increase the likelihood of negative responses in adverse situations. *Protective factors* are the set of variables relating to the individual or to the context that boosts the ability to resist conflicts and manage stress. In the case of BME children, families and schools play an obvious protective role when they exhibit characteristics of caring, cohesion, openness, commitment and support, and provide positive role models for children (Bogenschnider, 1996). Conversely, if schools or communities tolerate discrimination or racial bullying, then risk factors are heightened for BME children.

The theories of Werner (2000) are of particular relevance to the BELONG Programme. Werner outlines that resilience in children has 3 major components:

- personal;
- family structure;
- environment outside the family.

On the personal level, variables for children linked to developing resilience include their level of autonomy, empathy and problem-solving ability. On the external level, family and environmental variables include peer support networks, safety networks and protection inside the family, school and social life.

Gilligan (2001) suggests that resilience can be modelled or developed as part of family life. He outlines 5 principles which, if used in an open and consistent way, can enhance resilience:

- responsiveness;
- relationship;
- reciprocity;
- ritual;
- routine.

Resilient individuals possess personal attributes such as an internal locus of control, pro-social behaviour, empathy, positive self-image, optimism and the ability to organise daily responsibilities. These attributes enable individuals to build supportive relationships with family members and friends that are used in stressful times. In addition, resilient individuals appear to be more adaptable to change than vulnerable people. Through the use of protective resources, which are both within and outside the control of the individual, resilient people are able to deal with adversity effectively (Friborg *et al*, 2003).

A key protective factor is social support, which can be defined as a '*multidimensional construct that encompasses a broad range of social interactions that have beneficial emotional or behavioral effects on the individual*' (Cox, 2005, p. 244). Types of social support include emotional, tangible, advice and esteem support (Dolan and Brady, 2012). It can be sourced from 'formal' (e.g. services such as BELONG) and 'informal' (e.g. friends, family) relationships (Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005; Dwivedi, 2002). It is notable that in the emerging ecological framework for understanding resilience, Dolan has highlighted the connection between social support for children, their civic engagement and resilience development (Dolan, 2008 and 2012). Research has also highlighted the utility of social support in attaining a sense of belonging for BME children and adults (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005).

The link between resilience and the environment of the child is further developed in Ungar's (2011) theory of the social ecology of resilience. Drawing on a range of in-depth empirical studies, Ungar examines the links between a child's environment and levels of resilience, outlining that in efforts to increase levels of resilience among children, the focus should be placed on changing the environment. Indeed, it has been argued that it is essential to take risk factors associated with the everyday environment of the child into account in efforts to address resilience among children and youth (Liebenberg and Ungar, 2009, pp. 3-4). This multilevel approach in working with and for children through culturally appropriate interventions has been particularly reinforced recently by Gowen *et al* (2012). While the need to work across ecological contexts (rather than at just a 'silo'd' child intervention or policy advocacy level) has been well documented (for example, see Jack, 2000 and 2013), so also has the failure of implementation models been highlighted (Gill and Jack, 2007).

4. Cultural confidence

A number of definitions of culture have developed over time and within a variety of academic specialties (Geertz, 1973; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1963; Swindler, 2001). D'Ardenne and Mahtani (1999, p. 3) posit the following definition: '*Culture means the shared history, practices, beliefs and values of a racial, regional or religious group of people.*' This definition has strength when considering BME children, in that it provides scope for 'culture' to emerge in many ways, both locally, nationally and internationally. This definition is not based primarily on race, ethnicity or location; rather, it engages with the possibility of a pluralistic society where more than one definition of culture is viable.

In a similar way, Dwivedi (2002, p. 10) states that, on the one hand, '*culture constructs us and our sense of who we are, and on the other hand, we construct it*'.

The process of adapting to cultural differences, widely described as *acculturation*, has been shown in many studies to be especially central to the life experiences of younger members of migrant and ethnic minority groups who find themselves '*at the frontline of the migration experience*' (DeBlock, 2007). Berry (1991, 1992 and 1995) describes acculturation in its broadest sense as the psychological adaptations individuals make when they move between cultures. Berry defines acculturation as a process of behavioural changes related to the experience of negotiating new cultural and psychological experiences. This process can be either positively or negatively affected by both internal (individual behaviours and traits) and external (ecological, social and cultural) structures (Berry, 1995). Further research has highlighted the importance of social support in attaining a sense of belonging for BME children and adults when undergoing this process of adaptation (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Cutrona and Cole, 2000; Cox, 2005).

Feeling confident about their cultural identity has been shown to be an important factor affecting the experiences of BME children in adapting to life in the host country. Having a high level of cultural confidence has been linked in successive studies of BME youth to the process of *selective acculturation* (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996 and 2001; Stepick *et al*, 2001). Selective acculturation refers to situations where younger members of minority ethnic populations maintain aspects of the immigrant culture that are seen as fundamental to their identities, while adopting elements of the host culture (such as language skills) that are central to their ability to participate within the host society. Data from the *Children of Immigrants, Longitudinal Study (CILS)*, which charted the experiences of a large sample of migrant youth over a period of 14 years, found that children who displayed high levels of cultural confidence were more likely to engage in a process of selective acculturation, maintaining good relationships within their ethnic communities and families while achieving social mobility within the host society. Conversely, children with low levels of cultural confidence were more likely to undergo a process of downwards assimilation, adopting the negative attributes of indigenous subgroups (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

Cultural confidence and selective acculturation also impact on relationships within the home setting for BME children. First-generation migrants, who have spent their childhoods in the country of origin, often have different 'frames of reference' to second generation and BME children who have grown up in the host society (Zhou, 2001). While this can often be the source of significant intergenerational conflict, BME youth who engage in a process of selective acculturation are more likely to have positive relationships with parents. This is especially likely in cases where parents undergo a similar process of selective acculturation with parents also adapting to life in the host society, while maintaining aspects of the culture of origin that are seen as central to their identities (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996, p. 242).

5. Cultural competence

Cultural competence, or the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, is a central tenet of a successful multicultural environment. Rather than being founded on presumptions or deployment of specific knowledge, cultural competence is founded on a comprehensive understanding of the broad nature of potential differences between people and diverse ethnic backgrounds (Laird, 2008, p. 40). Cultural competence is especially important in environments and settings frequented by BME children. Lack of sensitivity to cultural differences and religious values has been shown to impact negatively on the confidence of BME children and can be detrimental to the creation of a sense of belonging and inclusion. Laird outlines that culturally competent service provision for BME children involves practitioners identifying, respecting and incorporating the values of service users into the design and delivery of their service. Cultural competent service delivery necessitates a combination of knowledge, awareness and sensitivity. In order to ensure effective service delivery for BME children and community members, all aspects of the organisational structure should reflect a culturally competent approach (Husain, 2005, p. 8).

While individual levels of cultural competence are beneficial to the experience of BME children in a specific context, in order to inculcate the sense of social inclusion and cultural confidence experienced by BME children, it is necessary to adopt an ecological approach to cultural competence.

Sue's (2001, p. 801) multidimensional model of cultural competencies provides a practical framework for optimising levels of cultural competence on a macro level as well as on an individual level. She outlines that in order to create an inclusive social model of cultural competence, it is necessary to remove barriers at 4 levels: individual, professional, organisational and societal. Successful development of cultural competence at these levels can lead to social cohesion and positive intercultural relations, in her view.

6. Children's rights, participation and empowerment

There has been extensive debate in the academic literature as to what constitutes meaningful participation, which has led to the development of specific models of participation in service provision and in research (Cutler and Frost, 2002; Christensen, 2004; Sinclair, 2004; Tisdall and Davis, 2004). In accordance with a child rights framework, children have the right to be heard and have the same rights as adults and service users to participate in research (Bessell, 2009; Harcourt, 2008; Lundy, 2007; Kirby and Bryson, 2002, Moore *et al*, 2011).

The Republic of Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE, 2008) usefully drew together the main reasons for participation by children, based on key literature: improved services, improved decision-making, enhancing children and young people's skills, enhancing democratic processes, and (in the specific context of its own statutory responsibilities) promoting children's protection. Lundy (2007, p. 933) proposes that in order to fully achieve children's rights in relation to participation, 4 areas must be considered: a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views, that they are facilitated in doing so, that they are listened to, and that if it is appropriate their views are acted upon.

Bessell (2009) describes this type of framework as 'child rights-based participatory research'. This model can be seen as directly linked to the concept of empowerment. Benefits for children involved in such participatory processes include increasing their sense of citizenship and the experience of democratic decision-making, which result in a level of improved service provision and a sense of ownership by the children (Bishop *et al*, 2009; Kellett *et al*, 2004; Kellett, 2005; Lansdown, 2001). Meaningful participation of children has been linked to higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy in those participating (Alderson, 2005; Hart, 1997; Morrow, 2001; Shier, 2001). Research shows that by engaging children in meaningful research, the participants have demonstrated that they care deeply about having a say in issues that affect their lives (Cook-Sather, 2002; Hill, 2006; Kilkelly, 2005).

Hill *et al* (1999, p. 3) suggest that meaningful participation of children is central to the development of strategies to deal with social exclusion, by stating that '*participation can be thought of as the opposite to the process of social exclusion*'. However, as a specific note of caution, Tisdall and Davis (2004, p. 104) stress the importance of the methods of participation used with children in evaluations being respectful of the cultural diversity of children in the group. This is especially so for children in the BELONG Programme evaluation since BME children can already be experiencing marginalisation and the research process should not heighten this (Kennan *et al*, 2011).

Ethnic solidarity has been shown to be of significant benefit to BME communities in offering a sense of belonging. However, successive studies have demonstrated that lack of opportunities to engage with members of the majority population can lead to the development of ethnic enclaves (Anthias, 2007; Reynolds, 2006). A high degree of closure in the ethnic community may limit the capacity to forge beneficial links outside the community network, hindering the development of a sense of belonging in wider society and reducing prospects of social mobility. A community with a high level of solidaristic closure is likely to have few ties with the host society; as a result, solidaristic closure is limited in the opportunities it can offer to younger members who wish to forge strategic alliances with mainstream society.

In a study of a Caribbean community in London, Reynolds (2006) demonstrates that lack of engagement with other ethnic groups leads to the fortification of boundaries around the group and can result in community members following an insular pattern of socialisation. Interviews with younger members of the community revealed that their entrenchment within the network ties of the community leads them to sacrifice personal ambitions in order to maintain the strong community ethos that informs their day-to-day lives. Many adolescents interviewed by Reynolds spoke of not attending third-level educational institutions, which would necessitate them leaving their community. While some second-

generation community members emphasized that they believed they performed more successfully in the workplace because they were surrounded by so many members of their own community, others alluded to disappointed ambitions due to the expectations that they would continue to live, and to attend college, in the local area. Reynolds (2006) posits that this development has detrimental outcomes not only for the second generation community members, but also for wider society since the creation of enclaves undermines the creation of a cohesive inclusive society.

Engagement with members of diverse ethnic groups and with members of the majority society is therefore essential to a process of belonging within wider society for BME children. Studies of BME children who engage in extra-curricular activities outside their ethnic groups indicate more positive levels of self-esteem developing as a result of regular interaction with members of the majority society. In particular, BME children who took part in sporting activities on a regular basis recorded high levels of self-esteem and belonging (McGarry, 2012). However, BME children who had arrived in Ireland recently often lacked the levels of confidence necessary to engage in mainstream extra-curricular activities.

7. Education and BME children

The educational challenges faced by young members of ethnic minority groups have received considerable discussion in the social sciences. While particular ethnic minorities have distinguished themselves academically, other groups have come to be seen as 'at risk' in terms of academic achievement and social acceptance in the school system of the majority society.

Receiving support within the school setting has been shown to be of central importance to the educational experience of children. In particular, O'Connor *et al* (2012) highlight the potential of Classroom Assistants to influence the educational experience of children positively. As a result of the intensive levels of contact they have with children on a daily basis, Classroom Assistants and Special Needs Assistants are in a unique position to form bonds with, and to influence, the educational experience of children.

Recent studies have highlighted the correlation between learning in the home setting and success in the school setting.⁶⁴ In particular, bilingualism and use of a second language in the home setting have been shown to be advantageous to BME youth in fostering academic achievement, cultural competence and resilience. In studies of second-generation Latino youth in the USA, Orellana *et al* (2003) and Dorner *et al* (2007) demonstrate the manner in which bilingualism, learned through interactions in the family setting, acts as a benefit in the school setting. Participants in this study outlined that growing up in a bilingual environment was beneficial in acquiring learning skills and in improving their levels of literacy. Indeed, bilingualism is often seen as an indicator of cultural confidence and therefore conducive to a positive experience of school attendance. In a study of Mexican-American migrant youth in the USA, Bowman and Howard (1985, p. 140) highlight that children who learned about their cultural and racial identity in the home achieved significantly higher grades than children who did not.

Participation in extra-curricular activities has been shown to be associated with increased levels of school completion among 'at risk' youth groups (Mahoney and Cairns, 1997). Indeed, BME youth who take part in sports and extra-curricular activities have been shown to be less likely to engage in substance use (Cooley *et al*, 1995). Participation in extra-curricular activities among BME youth nurtures and encourages the development of social and educational skills that are of significant benefit to the school experience (Gerber, 1996). In a study of the correlation between extra-curricular activities and school experience among BME youth in the USA, Brown and Evans (2002) measured the impact of differing types of extra-curricular activities on a sense of connectedness in the school setting. Their study concludes that participation in sports activities and youth clubs had more positive

⁶⁴ While this report wishes to emphasize that any analysis of the school experience should take into account levels of resilience and a sense of belonging, rather than merely reflecting academic attainment, many of the studies reviewed in this literature review have focused on school experience in terms of academic success.

outcomes in fostering connectedness in school among BME youth than attendance at fine arts programmes or specially designed educational programmes.

Increased awareness of external learning and skills has been shown to be of benefit to teaching strategies in the USA. Studies exploring the use of culturally responsive pedagogy demonstrate that teaching approaches that draw on the racial identity, cultural competencies and other skills developed by BME youth through the home setting and through participation in extra-curricular activities provide an effective means of addressing the educational challenges faced by many immigrant youths. BME youth largely fail to perform in traditional testing scenarios due to the low expectations into which they are socialised through traditional teaching patterns (Claus-Ehlers, 2004). Indeed, by undermining many of the positive practices associated with the culture of origin, traditional White dominant educational approaches have been shown to place BME youth at a significant disadvantage (Valenzuela, 1999). Culturally responsive pedagogical approaches, in contrast, have highlighted the significant benefits of teaching strategies that embrace the cultural and racial identity of the learners. Such approaches capitalise on the external learning skills of BME youth, using what has been learned in the home setting, in the community setting and through participation in extra-curricular activities to increase educational achievement and resilience in the school setting.

Teaching strategies that relate lessons to the cultural background of the students have been shown to be successful. This approach makes the learning more relevant for the students and acts as a significant source of motivation (Wodlowski and Greenburg, 1995). In a study of the factors influencing the educational achievement of African-American youth in the USA, Smith-Maddox (1998) found that cognisance of the students' homework habits, aspirations, participation in extra-curricular activities, as well as the parents' socio-economic status, were shown to lead to a positive relationship between students and teachers, and ultimately to higher levels of educational success. Stone-Hanley and Noblit (2009) highlight the most important aspects of this approach as being:

- the development of caring relationships between the students and teachers;
- the use of culture to promote positive conceptualisations of racial identity;
- the promotion of active learning through the assumption of success;
- community involvement in the development of teaching strategies in order to avoid teachers making erroneous assumptions relating to the BME culture.

The prioritisation of these principles in the classroom setting has shown to be conducive to motivating students and to empowering them to take responsibility for their own education, as well as fostering more positive relationships between teachers and students.

8. Bullying and racial bullying

The substantial increase in immigration to Northern Ireland in the 10-year period 1996-2006, in conjunction with the high birth rate on both sides of the Irish border, challenged the perception of identity and citizenship in Northern Ireland (Fanning, 2002; Gundara, 2011; Robins and Kinlen, 2011). As Northern Ireland has become more culturally diverse, incidents of racism and racial-based bullying toward BME children have occurred (Biggart *et al*, 2009; Equality Commission, 2009; NCB NI and ARK YLT, 2010). Findings suggest that beyond the traditional sectarian divide in Northern Ireland, a lack of cultural awareness, frequent racial discrimination, harassment and violence were reported to have occurred toward BME children and families (Connolly, 2002; Danaher *et al*, 2009; Martynowicz and Jarman, 2009; Knox, 2011).

For the Traveller community in Northern Ireland, racism and racist bullying is something that was, unfortunately, apparent long before the migration boom of 1996-2006 (Fanning, 2002; Farrell and Watt, 2001; Lentin and McVeigh, 2002). Research undertaken with Travellers in Northern Ireland demonstrated that their experience of racism and discrimination was widespread and affected many areas of their lives (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010; Connolly and Keenan, 2000; NCB NI and ARK YLT, 2010). An area where discrimination was particularly apparent, and relevant for the objectives and outcome of the BELONG Programme, was within the education sector. Notably, 7 out of 10 respondents from the Traveller community involved in the *All Ireland Traveller Health Study* stated that they had experienced discrimination in accessing or attending school..

A number of research studies have focused specifically on educational issues (including bullying) concerning Travellers, BME children and their families (Danaher *et al*, 2009; Hamilton *et al*, 2007; Livesey *et al*, 2007; Martiynowicz and Jarman, 2009; OFMDFM, 2007). Matters that were seen to negatively influence integration, and increase occurrences of bullying for Traveller children, included frequent school absences and changes in school environments (Livesey *et al*, 2007; McAllister *et al*, 2009). At both primary and post-primary level, Traveller children were shown to have an absence rate 6-7 times higher than that of the general population or of other ethnic minority groups (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010).

The *All Ireland Traveller Health Study* also revealed that while 90% of 5-year-old Traveller children had started school, less than three-quarters of 14-year-olds remained in education (*ibid*, p. 15). In line with the BELONG Programme parameters, a key recommendation from the cross-border study was 'to increase the levels of participation and continuation in education among children and young people from a Traveller background, and to review the relevance of the curriculum to Travellers' (*ibid*, p. 13).

Prevention and management of bullying and racial bullying of children in Northern Ireland is guided by policy documents such as *Every Child Matters* (Department of Education and Skills (UK), 2003) and *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*, the 10-year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland (OFMDFM, 2006). The foundation of these documents is that children and young people have the right to live in a safe and respectful environment. In 2003, the Department of Education (NI) introduced legislation 'which requires all grant-aided schools to include within their discipline policy measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils' (Department of Education, 2003, p. 1).

Despite the strong policy and legislative foundation against bullying and anti-racist bullying, Livesey's (2007) research on bullying in Northern Ireland schools has highlighted the difficulties BME children face in the school environment and suggests there are ongoing challenges in their lives. In this study, a number of questions were included relating to aspects of bullying that could be considered racially motivated. Findings of particular note in relation to children in the age range of the BELONG Programme were as follows:

Issue	More likely	Does not make a difference
That a pupil's race or skin colour could make them more likely to be bullied (Year 6 students)	46.4%	44.1%
That a pupil's religion could make them more likely to be bullied (Year 6 students)	33.0%	48.3%
That a pupil's race or skin colour could make them more likely to be bullied (Year 9 students)	61.9%	34.0%
That a pupil's religion could make them more likely to be bullied (Year 9 students)	53.3%	36.7%

In addition, this research has also raised concerns about bullying on the grounds of disability, religion and ethnicity.

9. Summary

This literature review has provided a review of academic literature relating to migrant and ethnic minority youth. The centrality of the concepts of belonging, social support and resilience to childhood experience were outlined, with an emphasis on the interconnected nature of the environments in which a child lives his or her daily life. Belonging is shown to be central to childhood development and is linked with the development of resilience. Theories of resilience, the ability to 'bounce back' having endured adversity, also underpin current understandings of childhood development. Resilience is strongly linked to provision of social support and the minimising of risk factors in the environments in which children interact.

The second half of the literature review outlined the chief tenets of academic debates concerning migrant and ethnic minority youth. The process of acculturation, or adapting to the cultural norms and expectations of the Majority Ethnic group, is especially challenging for many younger members of minority ethnic and migrant groups. Selective acculturation, whereby positive elements of the child's original culture are preserved while adopting or adapting to beneficial aspects of the majority culture, is widely thought to have the most positive outcomes for BME children. Having the prerequisite skills and knowledge associated with cultural competence and confidence are shown to be inherently linked with this process. Studies of education experience among migrant and ethnic minority youth underline the potential of pedagogical approaches that are cognisant of cultural identity and specific skills acquired in the home and community settings to foster educational achievement. Similarly, participation in extra-curricular activities is shown to be a core element in increasing educational attainment for BME youth. In the context of BME children living in Northern Ireland, bullying has been shown to be a widespread issue. In particular, children from Traveller groups have been shown to be likely to have suffered the negative effects of bullying.

Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview

Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme		Duration													
Intervention – Activity Block	Location	2010			2011			2012			2013				
		Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr
BME Children (Single Cultural Identity Projects)															
Chinese New Year	Dungannon/Belfast	■													
Multiple Realities Programme	Armagh		■	■											
Traveller Summer Scheme	Newry			■											
Traveller Focus Week	Coalisland				■										
Equality Commission Presentation	Coalisland					■									
Halloween Themed Art Workshops	Dungannon						■								
Traveller Focus Week	Newry							■							
Belonging	Coalisland														
Creative Clay – Traveller Focus Week	Craigavon														
Thursday Club	Craigavon							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Bounce – Family Outing	Banbridge														
BOUNCE	Banbridge														
Polish Supplementary School	Banbridge							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Colourful Culture Club	Craigavon							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Young People's Club	Craigavon							■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Christmas Culture Club Workshops	Warrenpoint														
Culture Polish Club	Newry														
Playing together	Coalisland								■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Happy and Healthy	Coalisland														
Cool Kids	Coalisland														
Chinese New Year	Craigavon														
Language Club	Dungannon														
Language Club	Armagh														
Language Club	Coalisland														
Hear My Voice – Rights	Armagh														
Hear My Voice – Bullying	Armagh														
Hear My Voice – Diversity	Craigavon														
Hear My Voice – Rights & Bullying	Craigavon														
Hear My Voice – Cultural Identity	Craigavon														

Right ingredients programme (Migrant)	Dungannon					
Right ingredients programme, (Traveller)	Coalisland					
Right ingredients programme (Migrant)	Coalisland					
Right ingredients programme (BME)	Portadown					
3 ways Soccer programme	Newry					
Sessions during homework activities	Coalisland					
We R U – Pilot	Craigavon					
We R U	Craigavon					
Transfer BELONG/ After school to Mainstream	Newry					
Charter for Change	Craigavon					
Parental Support						
Information to newly arrived parents	Southern Area NI					
Rights information: Traveller parents	Southern Area NI					
NI Human Rights Commissioner visit	Coalisland					
European Humans Rights Commissioner & NI Human Rights Commissioner visit	Coalisland					
Questionnaire/Needs Assessment	All areas					
Training on Children's Rights (NICCY)	Banbridge, Dungannon					
CYPSP Regional BME parents Reference Group	Craigavon, Banbridge					
Parents information evening: Education	Newry					
Parental learning sessions	Newry					
BELONG Parenting Support Programme	Warrenpoint					

Intervention	Location	Duration													
		2010			2011			2012			2013				
		Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr	May-Jun	Jul-Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-Apr
Wider Community															
Belfast Mela Festival	Dungannon				■										
Polish Flavoured Christmas	Banbridge						■								
CYPSP	All areas									■	■	■	■	■	■
Targeted Awareness	Regional									■	■	■	■	■	■
Diversity Awareness	Dungannon									■	■	■	■	■	■
NICCY	Regional									■	■	■	■	■	■
BME Volunteer Scheme	Newry									■	■	■	■	■	■
BELONG Charter	Dungannon, Craigavon												■	■	■
BELONG Showcase Event	All areas													■	■
Media campaign across 9 sites	Southern Area NI				■										
Childcare Strategy for NI – Consultation	Coalisland														■

Anti- Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme

Intervention	Location	Duration													
		2010			2011			2012			2013				
		Jan Feb	Mar- Apr	May-Jun	Jul- Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov- Dec	Jan Feb	Mar- Apr	May-Jun	Jul- Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov- Dec	Jan Feb	Mar-Apr
BME Children															
One-to-one mentoring	Southern Area NI														
Parental Support															
Anti-Bullying workshop	Dungannon														
Anti-Bullying workshop	All areas														
Children's Rights workshop	Dungannon														
Anti-Bullying workshop	Armagh														
Anti-Bullying Art workshop	Carnagat Newry														
Bull Dance	Dungannon														
Advocacy workshops	Dungannon, Armagh, Newry														
Parental support: Hidden harm	Dungannon														
Direct support to parents	Dungannon, Armagh, Coalisland														
NI Anti-Bullying Forum															

Education Sub-programme

Intervention	Location	Duration													
		2010			2011			2012			2013				
		Jan Feb	Mar- Apr	May-Jun	Jul- Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov- Dec	Jan Feb	Mar- Apr	May-Jun	Jul- Aug	Sep-Oct	Nov- Dec	Jan Feb	Mar-Apr
BME Children															
Education and Learning Support	Coalisland														
Education and Learning Support	St. Joseph Bessbrook Newry														
Education and Learning Support	Newry														
Education and Learning Support	Craigavon														
Education and Learning Support	Warrenpoint														
Additional Support Year	Coalisland														
Transition Project	Craigavon														
Transition Project	Coalisland														
Transition Project	Newry/ Rostrevor														
Transition Project	St. Joseph Newry														
Transition Project	Newry														
Transition Project	Dungannon														
Additional Literacy and Numeracy Support	Coalisland														
Additional Literacy and Numeracy Support	St. Joseph Newry														
Additional Literacy and Numeracy Support	South Down														
Additional Literacy and Numeracy Support	Craigavon														
Assessment of External Learning Skills	Craigavon														
Parental Support															
Learning Together	Armagh														
Learning Together	Coalisland														
Learning Together	Dungannon/Newry														
Literacy and Numeracy Project	Newry														
Literacy and Numeracy Project	South Down														
Literacy and Numeracy Project	Coalisland														
Literacy & Numeracy Project DELTA	Craigavon														
Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Newry														
Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Coalisland														

Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Portadown				
Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Armagh				
Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Craigavon				
Developing Parental Knowledge: ES	Cookstown				
Supporting schools to engage	Coalisland				
Wider Community (Teachers)					
Advocacy work – Literacy and Numeracy	Coalisland				
Advocacy work – Cluster meetings	Dungannon				
Advocacy work – Citizen Panel	Regional				
Advocacy work – Assessment of External Learning	Craigavon				
Training for Teachers and non-Teachers	Dungannon				
Training Diversity Awareness/ Special Education Needs	Dungannon, Armagh				

Appendix J: Monitoring data

1. Overview

One of the primary challenges in evaluating the BELONG Programme is to do justice to the extent of intervention-level implementation. This review aims to capture the extensive range of interventions implemented across the three sub-programmes of the BELONG Programme. In doing so it provides understanding of:

- the extent of the activities provided by BELONG for BME children in the Southern Area of Northern Ireland;
- the result of BELONG activities for children, parents, communities, service-providing organisations and their staff.

Section 2 provides an overview of the evaluation methods and the research questions informing this study. Section 3 outlines the extent of the implementation of the BELONG Programme. It provides an overview of the intervention-level implementation since the foundation of the programme in 2010. The review then turns to focus individually on each of BELONG's sub-programmes. Section 4 offers a discussion of the extent of the activities implemented as part of the **Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme**, focusing on the outcomes associated with it. In Section 5, the interventions and outcomes associated with the **Education Sub-programme** are discussed and Section 6 reviews the **Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme**.

2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology for this review consists primarily of content analysis of monitoring data captured as part of the ongoing implementation of the programme. Attendance sheets, staff project journeys, staff weekly reflection sheets, final reflection sheets and participant reflection sheets supplied by BELONG have been examined in order to gain an understanding of the practical issues and challenges associating with implementing the BELONG Programme. Table J-1 provides a detailed overview of the evaluation methods.

Table J-1: Overview of monitoring data information evaluation

Data source	Evaluation method	Quantity
Children's database	Content analysis	1
BELONG activities output	Content analysis	1
Reflection sheets	Content analysis	215
Intervention planning documents	Content analysis	67
Children's reflection sheets	Content analysis	102

3. Implementation

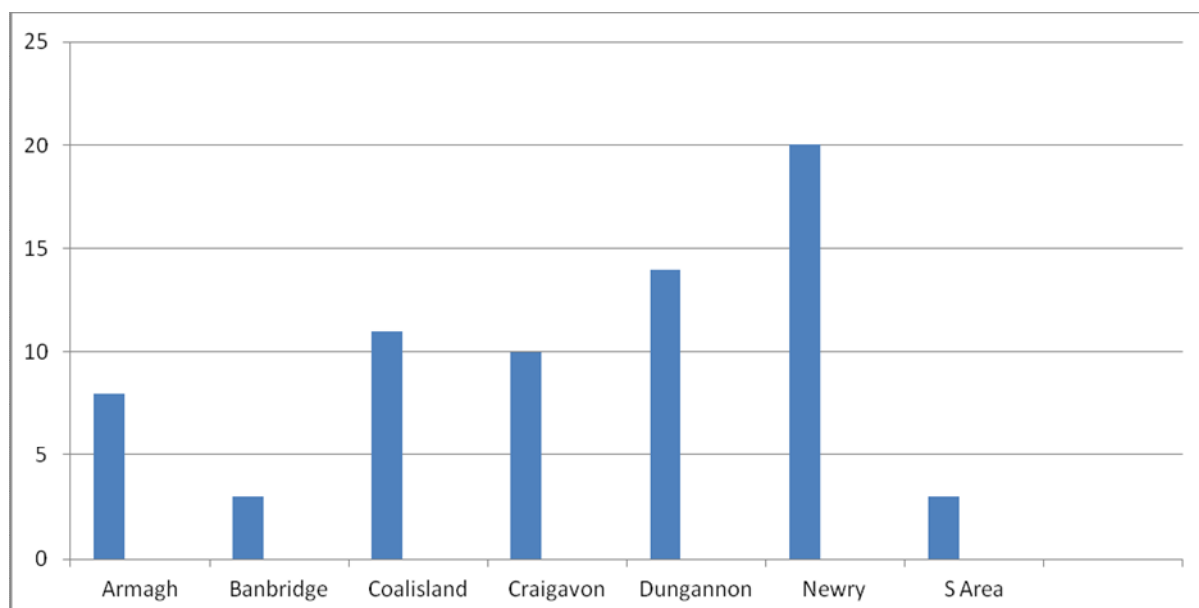
BELONG has implemented over 130 interventions with children, parents and members of the wider community since its foundation in 2010. The majority of these (80) have been implemented as part of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme, with 39 being implemented as part of the Education Sub-programme. The Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme has received the least extensive implementation, with a total of 11 interventions implemented since 2010. While some of these interventions are single activities of events (such as parental information evenings), others have run over a period of a year and consist of multiple activity blocks (see *Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview*).

As evidenced in Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview, the range and extent of the interventions implemented by BELONG increased notably from 2011 to 2012. This can be seen as resulting from the structural characteristics of BELONG as a programme. The BELONG Programme was designed as an organic model, whereby the programme capacity was gradually increased over time (see *Appendix K: Organisational Review*). BELONG operated at first with only a Programme Manager and Programme Director, with 3 Programme Development Workers employed in the summer of 2010. However, implementation was much slower than expected as a result of the need to build up rapport

and trust with the BME communities prior to recruiting children for the programme (Forkan *et al.*, 2011). The number of interventions provided as part of the Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme and the Education Sub-programme increased from 2011 on, with continuous activities being provided for children in 5 areas in 2012. In addition to this, the implementation of the Education Sub-programme was subject to significant delays: BELONG were delayed in the recruitment of Educational Support Workers as a result of the recruitment ban in the public sector. However, Education and Learning Support and additional Literacy and Numeracy Support interventions have been implemented consistently since early 2011.

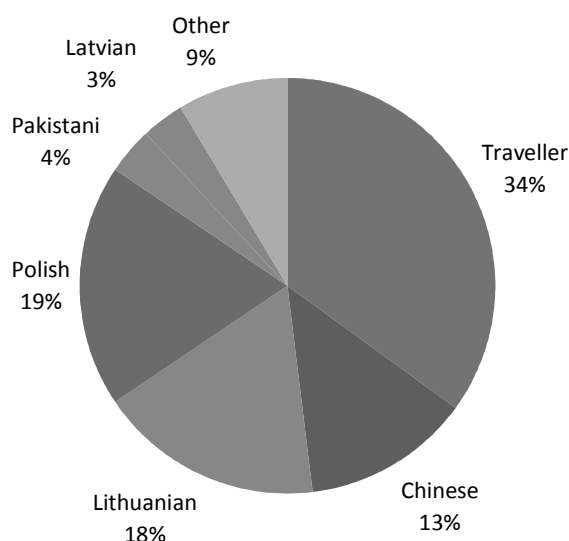
BELONG has been successful in improving service provision across the Southern Area of Northern Ireland. As illustrated in Figure J-1, it has provided interventions in 5 areas: Coalisland, Dungannon, Armagh, Craigavon and Newry. The majority of programmes have been concentrated in the Craigavon and Dungannon areas.

Figure J-1: Geographical spread of BELONG activities, by number of interventions



BELONG has been successful in engaging with children and parents from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Figure J-2 affords a representation of the attendance rates according to ethnic background. The most heavily represented ethnic group is Travellers, with Traveller children accounting for 34% of participants. Polish and Lithuanian children were the next most heavily represented, accounting for 19% and 18% of participants respectively. A total of 13% of participants come from the Chinese community while Pakistani and Latvian children each accounted for 3% of BELONG participants. The remaining 9% of participants are members of a variety of ethnic groups.

Figure J-2: Attendance at interventions, by ethnicity



The BELONG Service Plan (2009) outlined that 60% of the resources of the programme would be focused on the provision of services to members of the Traveller community. As outlined in Figure J-2, Traveller children accounted for 34% of the total participants on the BELONG Programme. However, Traveller participants are heavily represented in the Education and Learning Support and targeted Literacy and Numeracy Support interventions implemented, with 7 of the 10 interventions implemented including only Traveller children. These interventions are run on an intensive basis, often consisting of 4 sessions a week, indicating that BELONG has achieved its target of allocating 60% of its resources for members of the Traveller community.

4. Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme

As outlined in Appendix I: BELONG Activity Overview, the Cultural Confidence and Competence Sub-programme has received the most extensive implementation since 2010. A total of 80 interventions have been implemented, ranging from single events to interventions that have run over a period of a year and consist of multiple activity blocks.

The Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme consists of two separate strands of interventions for children – single cultural identity interventions and participation in youth clubs and after-schools activities interventions. Single cultural identity interventions, as outlined in the BELONG Service Plan (2009, pp. 32-33), were intended to be implemented with groups of children from a single ethnic background in order to afford them an opportunity to develop levels of cultural confidence. In contrast, participation in youth clubs and after-schools activities interventions were designed with the intention of supporting children in accessing mainstream clubs and activities (BELONG, 2009, p. 34). A total of 25 interventions have been implemented as part of the single cultural identity strand, with 32 having been implemented as part of the participation in youth clubs and after-schools activities strand.

Plans for individual interventions and associated session plans indicate that the core aims of the sub-programme were prioritised in intervention design. BELONG has been successful in achieving its medium-term outcome of improving the range of and access to single culture identity projects, youth and after-school activities and community events and festivals for BME children. A total of 545 children had attended this sub-programme by the end of 2012. The parental support strand of the sub-programme has seen 10 interventions implemented, while 11 interventions have been implemented as part of the wider community strand.

Evaluation of the monitoring data relating to this sub-programme consisted of the content analysis of 43 staff reflection sheets, 28 participant reflection sheets and 8 intervention planning documents relating to the single cultural identity interventions. No intervention documentation was received on BELONG's work with the wider community.

4.1 Work with children

Monitoring data evidenced the necessity of adapting recruitment and implementation strategies to suit the needs of participating children. BELONG's single cultural identity interventions (SCIs) were designed in order to afford BME children an opportunity to build cultural confidence and to raise capacities and competence by participating in interactions with members of their ethnic group (BELONG, 2009, p. 33). Project journeys, however, revealed that SCIs in most cases were implemented with mixed groups of BME children rather than with a group of children from a single ethnic group. This adaptation was shown to be a positive development in monitoring data. BME children were documented as mixing comfortably with children from other ethnic groups in interventions. In many cases, BELONG staff documented the positive intercultural engagement as a particularly positive outcome of interventions.

As outlined in the Service Plan (2009, p. 32), SCIs afford children an opportunity to develop the necessary levels of cultural confidence prior to engaging in intercultural situations. However, monitoring data suggest that many of the BME children in the BELONG Programme possess sufficient levels of confidence to engage comfortably with children from other BME groups. As a result, the adaptation of SCIs to include children from a variety of backgrounds is a positive response by BELONG to the needs of participants.

One of the key strengths of BELONG's implementation of SCIs was the use of art as a medium for engaging participants in activities and for developing learning around core concepts such as rights, bullying and cultural identity. Staff reflection sheets conveyed art-based activities as positively influencing the cultural confidence and competence of participants. In particular, the use of art-based activities was shown to be effective in enlisting the enthusiasm of the children. This finding was also apparent from participant reflection sheets. Participants from the Hear My Voice intervention in Armagh and Dungannon, highlighted that they believed creating artwork '*made their opinions valuable*' and '*got adults to listen*'. This view is consistent with current understanding of art as a source of youth empowerment. Participatory methods that engage children and youth in artistic activities have been demonstrated to lead to a sense of empowerment among young participants (Morrow, 2001; Alderson and Hill, 2004).

A key learning from the implementation of the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme is the importance of timing to the successful implementation of interventions. Staff reflection sheets highlighted the importance of running programmes over a sufficient period of time to allow the participants to become comfortable with the topics under discussion. For example, staff reflection sheets from the Hear My Voice intervention in Armagh, which dealt with the issue of bullying through a 2-week long thematic activity block, revealed that the activity block did not afford sufficient time for children to become comfortable dealing with this topic. Reflection sheets also highlighted the necessity of having some prior knowledge of the children attending during the planning process. In cases where this was not available to staff, the need to adapt interventions resulted in delays in implementation.

The importance of timing issues is exemplified by monitoring data on the pilot We R U intervention implemented in Craigavon from March to June 2012. This intervention consisted of a programme of separate work being carried out with a Traveller group, aimed to increase levels of cultural confidence, and a mainstream group from the local youth club, aimed at challenging stereotypes and enhancing knowledge of Traveller culture. The two groups were subsequently brought together for an activity at the youth club. Reflection sheets reveal that the majority group engaged successfully with the intervention, reacting positively to learning about Traveller culture and challenging their existing preconceptions about Travellers. However, the monitoring data from this group records that work with the Traveller group progressed much more slowly than expected due to disruptions and irregular attendance. As a result, insufficient time (2 sessions) was allowed for joint work with the Traveller and mainstream groups. During one of these sessions, Travellers did not see the PDW when they arrived at the youth club and left the club without attending the session. Therefore, only one session of joint

work was carried out as part of the intervention. Staff reflection sheets record that this duration was insufficient to ensure continued attendance at the youth club by the Traveller group.

4.2 Work with parents

Monitoring data relating to the 10 interventions implemented in order to provide support for parents demonstrate the challenges faced by BELONG in implementing this aspect of the sub-programme. In particular, ensuring attendance of interventions was shown to be a challenge. The language barrier was also shown to be an issue that impacted on BELONG's provision of services for BME parents.

Interventions were provided for BELONG parents with the aim of enhancing parental ability to engage with issues of bullying and cultural identity and rights. Staff reflection sheets demonstrate that BELONG conducted extensive pre-intervention consultation with the parents in order to arrange suitable times and dates with them. In spite of this, 3 parental support evening events were cancelled due to low levels of attendance. This highlights the significant challenges faced by BELONG in engaging parents.

Linguistic issues were also highlighted as being a considerable challenge in engaging with BME parents. Monitoring data recorded that many parents had low levels of proficiency in English and were more comfortable working with an interpreter during interventions. This strategy was adopted during parenting support sessions with Polish and Lithuanian parents. Staff reflection sheets record that, on one occasion, the interpreter's lack of experience in working with groups caused the delivery of the session to be considerably disrupted. In addition to this, monitoring data reflect that organising parental information sessions for one-language groups at a time is of practical benefit since it minimises disruption for translation purposes. While this may not be always possible for practical reasons, allowing sufficient time for delays caused by interpretation is essential for effective implementation. It was also noted in staff reflection sheets that the provision of additional supporting materials in the languages of the parents is a beneficial step.

5. Education Sub-programme

Delivery of the Education Sub-programme has been gaining momentum since early 2011. A total of 170 children have attended Education and Learning Support interventions in 6 different locations across the Southern Area. In addition to this, targeted Literacy and Numeracy Support interventions have been provided for 78 children. BELONG has also implemented Transitional Education interventions for 54 children moving from primary to post-primary school.

A total of 32 parents have been involved in a parent-specific literacy and numeracy project, as well as in a 'learning together after school' intervention. BELONG has assisted 64 parents in developing their knowledge and understanding of the education system, with additional specific work with 39 parents on improving their links with schools. Diversity Awareness Training has been provided for a total of 98 Classroom Assistants in the Dungannon area.

Analysis was carried out on the monitoring data from Education and Learning Support interventions and additional Literacy and Numeracy Support interventions in Coalisland (3), Newry (1), Warrenpoint (1) and Craigavon (1). Monitoring data for this programme consisted of 67 staff reflection sheets, 82 participant reflection sheets and 4 session planning documents.

5.1 Work with children

One of the key strengths of BELONG's Education Sub-programme was the level of personal engagement between Education Support Workers (ESWs) and participants. Staff reflection sheets illustrate that ESWs were cognisant of progressions in the work of participating children and of changes in behaviour. Sustained improvement was documented in participants who attended Education and Learning Support interventions over an extended period of time. The high level of personalised staff engagement was particularly apparent in the design of additional Literacy and Numeracy Support programmes (as detailed in project journeys). In these programmes, a key worker was assigned to every child. Children were given a password to their personalised online literacy and

numeracy ICT support programmes. This programme allows for participants to document their own progress and to engage in self-assessment. Progression sheets are stored by participants and key workers in a personal folder. Staff reflection sheets indicate that participants engaged enthusiastically with these ICT resources.

Reflection sheets completed by participants conveyed that attending the Education and Learning Support interventions was a positive experience for the children involved. Participants noted that they appreciated the opportunity to get their homework done. A social element also emerged from participant reflection sheets, with many female participants documenting that, in addition to having an opportunity to do their homework, the club afforded them a chance to *'have fun and to make friends'*. The positive feedback of participants indicated that the level of personal engagement between BELONG's ESWs and staff is conducive to a high level of participant engagement and provides a good model for educational support with BME children. Staff reflection sheets illustrate the importance of establishing links with the schools when implementing educational activities. The lack of direct communication links between some Education and Learning Support interventions and the relevant schools resulted, in some cases, in ambiguity regarding homework received by participants and, in one case, uncertainly over whether a particular child was receiving additional support within the school.

While continued support and facilitation of their children's attendance at interventions is indicative of a high level of parental support for the work of BELONG, directly engaging with parents was noted as a challenge arising in some Education and Learning Support interventions involving Traveller children. In line with good practice in educational support, engaging parental support for educational development was documented by ESWs as being a priority. However, this proved elusive in some interventions due to the parents being shy. Strategies such as hosting 'meet and greet' sessions for parents during the Education and Learning Support intervention had limited effect initially, but over time were seen as a positively enhancing engagement. This provides an example of the manner in which protracted and proactive approaches to engaging with Traveller parents are necessary in order to enlist their support of education initiatives.

5.2 Parental support

Three parental support interventions were implemented by BELONG as part of this sub-programme, as well as 2 interventions that involved the joint participation of parents and children.

One of the chief challenges faced by BELONG was ensuring the attendance of parents at events and information sessions. This was exemplified by the DELTA intervention, which consisted of a 4-week intervention with Traveller parents from Craigavon. Parents had been consulted on the timing and location of this intervention and were also given an opportunity to choose the information that would be included. In spite of this pre-consultation of parents in the arrangement of the intervention, the DELTA programme was cancelled due to non-attendance. A contrasting experience was recorded in the monitoring data of the parental information evening hosted by BELONG in Coalisland in September 2012. This intervention was delivered by BELONG, in conjunction with the IDS and SELB, to parents of BELONG children in P6/P7 (entering secondary school within 2 years). Staff reflection sheets highlight that parents engaged well with the session and asked a number of questions. The co-delivery of the intervention with the IDS and SELB resulted in parents being facilitated in making links with these organisations towards the resolution of particular problems. Monitoring data from this sub-programme also echo the issues arising relating to language and translation (similar to those mentioned above for the Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme).

5.3 Wider community (Teachers)

Monitoring data relating to interventions involving teachers reflect on the Diversity Awareness Training programme provided for Classroom Assistants in Dungannon in August 2012. This intervention was developed by BELONG in partnership with the IDS. Consultation with teachers from 7 schools in the Dungannon area led to the development of a programme that aimed to enable Classroom Assistants to develop skills to deal with ethnic diversity in the classroom. Staff reflection sheets relating to the Diversity Awareness Training intervention highlight the positive working relationship established with the teachers involved in the cluster group. Teachers are recorded as having engaged enthusiastically

in this process. However, feedback from the initial session revealed that the material identified by link teachers was not reflective of the levels of adeptness of Classroom Assistants in dealing with diversity in the classroom. This illustrates the importance of direct consultation with participants in training sessions prior to interventions.

6. Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme

BELONG's Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme focused on the provision of group and one-to-one mentoring to BME children who had experienced bullying. 25 Traveller children participated in a group mentoring pilot, 9 children received one-to-one mentoring support and a further 134 children participated in interventions incorporating anti-bullying sessions and materials as part of the Cultural Confidence and Competence sub-programme.

BELONG has also engaged in work with parents and members of the wider community to raise awareness of the issue of racial bullying in Northern Ireland. BELONG has hosted a total of 10 interventions to this end since the foundation of the programme. Monitoring data indicate that these workshops were successful as a result of the extensive consultations with parents around the content and timing of the workshops. Inclusion of BME children and members of BME communities in this consultative process has been noted as a particular strength of BELONG's advocacy strategy.

7. Summary

This review has attempted to capture the breadth of the BELONG Programme and provide some insight into the range of interventions implemented since 2010. In doing so, it has aimed to highlight the key learning that can be generated from each of BELONG's sub-programmes and the outcomes of these programmes.

Activities have been provided throughout the Southern Area of Northern Ireland and have been attended by BME children from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. While the implementation was subject to some delays in the earliest phase of the programme, delivery-level activity has steadily been gaining momentum since 2010. The Cultural Competence and Confidence Sub-programme has received the most extensive implementation to date, with the Education Sub-programme also increasing in the extent of its provision since 2011. A change in focus has seen the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Racial Bullying Sub-programme receiving less explicit implementation to date.

Analysis of monitoring data from BELONG's 3 sub-programmes has revealed a number of strengths of BELONG's implementation, as well as highlighting challenges encountered in service provision. In particular, the innovative use of artwork as a means of engaging and empowering BME children in expressing their opinions can be seen as a beneficial feature of intervention design. Monitoring data relating to Education and Learning Support interventions highlight the positive relationship developed between ESWs, sessional workers and participants. The positive relationships create an environment conducive to productivity and friendly engagement. Staff reflection sheets evidence the high level of interest taken in the progression of participants. Developing links with parents was shown to be a challenging issue for BELONG. Due to work schedules and other commitments of parents, ensuring attendance at interventions was shown to be a problematic issue. Conducting pre-consultation with parents on the timing and content of interventions was shown to be an effective strategy in some cases.

Appendix K: Organisational Review

This appendix presents findings relating to the organisational review element of the BELONG evaluation. Following this introduction, the aims and specific research questions of this element of the evaluation are outlined, before the methodological approach for the work is presented. Section 3 presents evidence on the role of the Partnership Board in the implementation of BELONG, before evidence pertaining to the BELONG Team is outlined in Section 4. This is followed in Section 5 by evidence on the perspectives of sessional workers involved with BELONG. An overview of the main issues is provided in Section 6, which is followed by a brief summary.

1. Aims and objectives

The aim of the organisational review was to examine the role of BELONG – at the strategic and operational levels – in driving programme implementation, with a view to identifying transferable learning from BELONG to similar initiatives elsewhere in the future. More specifically, the following research questions have guided this work:

1. What are the key aspects of BELONG's structures and processes, and how have they contributed to the delivery of the suite of interventions?
 - (a) What are these aspects at the level of the BELONG Partnership?
 - (b) What are these aspects at the level of the BELONG Team?
2. What structures and processes worked well in contributing to implementation?
3. What structures and processes did not work well?

2. Methodology

A multi-methods approach was adopted for this element of the evaluation. A range of documents were sourced from BELONG and analysed for this research, including:

- BELONG Service Plan;
- Governance manual;
- Board meeting minutes;
- Team meeting minutes;
- Programme Manager's reports for the Board;
- Progress reports for The Atlantic Philanthropies.

In addition to this, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were undertaken with Board and members of BELONG. Sessional workers were also interviewed for the research, through focus group and individual interviews.

Board members were all e-mailed initially, with follow-up calls made to arrange interviews where necessary. In total, 4 Board members responded and participated in interviews, with other providing written answers via e-mail. Two other Board members were amenable to participating in the research, but could not participate due to existing work commitments. One Board member failed to respond to e-mail and repeated telephone contact.

Although there are 10 members of the BELONG team, one member was on maternity leave at the time of data collection, while another 2 only joined the team in April 2013; hence, it was decided not to interview these individuals. As a result, 7 team members were interviewed.

All 12 Educational Sessional Workers (ESWs) were contacted by BELONG on behalf of the Evaluation Team and invited to participate in a focus group. Nine of the 12 workers made themselves available for interview. On the day, one individual could not make the focus group, but instead provided a contact number. However, due to timing issues in travelling from one focus group location to another, it was not possible to interview this individual over the telephone. No sessional workers from the other BELONG activities were interviewed. Table K-1 outlines the sampling frame in each case and the total sample interviewed.

Table K-1: Sampling frame for interviews

Structure/Level	Sample frame	Eligible sample	Sample	Method
Board*	8	8	5	One-to-one interview; written reply in one instance.
Team	10	7	7	One-to-one interview.
Sessional workers	12	12	8	Two focus groups (n=2 and n=5), one individual interview.
Total	30	27	20	

* Board members were also interviewed regarding their perspectives on the impact of the services (see *Appendix M: Services Review*).

Across all these groups, interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours.

3. Findings from Board level on the implementation of BELONG

A note on quote attribution

As with the BELONG Early Implementation (2011) and Interim (2012) evaluation reports, quotes presented here and in the following sections are not attributed to particular individuals; they have been made anonymous in the form of, for example, Board member 1, Team member 3 and so on. The Evaluation Team decided that the potential for individuals to be identified through attribution was too great due to the small and closely knit group comprising both the Board and Team. Nonetheless, the findings contained here represent views from the full range of participants at each level or structure.

3.1 Strategic context of BELONG's work

All Board member participants spoke of the strategic context of BELONG's work since it began in 2009. Specifically, participants remarked how the context had, at different levels, both altered and remained static over the period. At one level, the proposed administrative re-organisation of the education and local government sectors had not progressed, yet the reforms in the health and social care structures had. That these two sectors, central to BELONG's work, were not 'jumping together' into change and the related changes in provision expected was viewed as having the potential to hinder aspects of the project's work. Many respondents felt this was particularly the case with education, a sector fundamental to BELONG's interventions. The continuing uncertainty was viewed as a contributing factor to the earlier difficulties in recruiting the education workers. Documentary data from Board meetings in 2010 highlight that ultimately the education sector could not recruit these workers due to an inability to cover contingencies for additional staff costs. Interview data further reveal that there was a general inability at particular stages to make long-term commitments to the BELONG project.

At a second level, all participants discussed the particularities of the political system in Northern Ireland, the stalling of decision-making and the resulting impact manifest in the dearth of policies emanating from the Executive. Some positive aspects were remarked upon, such as the report of the Taskforce on Traveller Education, the ongoing requirement placed upon statutory authorities by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the longstanding Children and Young People's Strategy. However, the absence of any progression on significant policies and strategies – such as the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Strategy or the Racial Equality Strategy – were viewed as potentially problematic to locating the learning from BELONG within a wider context.

Yet, despite these features, Board member participants were unanimously of the view that BELONG has progressed its work as much as it could have done, and successfully, so that in entering Phase 2⁶⁵ it was in a position 'to challenge the strategic context to change, to apply learning to a wider area,

⁶⁵ Phase 1 denotes BELONG activities from June 2009 – March 2013. Phase 2 relates to April 2013 onwards.

to Northern Ireland'. Many spoke of the significance of BELONG's work, and the model in particular, as offering an approach that can be emulated within the wider context of multi-agency planning in the region and current developments, such as the *Delivering Social Change* document published by the OFMDFM (2012). One respondent said, '*BELONG's ... model would offer one example of how the type of changed envisaged by Delivering Social Change could be delivered*'. Participants' perspectives on recent developments and documentary data, particularly from Board meeting minutes, suggest that the strategic value of BELONG was further reinforced by the statutory organisations' commitment to provide funding for the second phase of the work. The prevalence of 'BELONGing' in the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's *BME Children and Young People's Draft Action Plan* was viewed as a further indication of this. In addition, Board members remarked on the importance of South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) as a strategic actor, impacting on BELONG. The role played by STEP at the strategic level, through the experience it brought to the process, the familiarity it had with many of the key players and actors, and the broader value base it worked from, was viewed as very significant to the strategic aspect of the project.

3.2 Role of the BELONG Board

BELONG's Governance Manual sets out the main responsibilities of the Board. These can be separated into two areas: strategic and operational. At the *strategic level*, the Board is responsible for contributing to the development of BELONG overall and disseminating and integrating the learning from the programme into partner organisations. This area also includes representing the project externally, contributing to its overall structure (e.g. fora and user-boards) and sourcing funding. At the *operational level*, responsibilities included monitoring programme progress and taking corrective action where appropriate, providing mentoring and advice for programme operation, supporting recruitment and tendering processes, ensuring the anchor organisation (i.e. STEP) had appropriate procedures and processes, reviewing Board processes and membership, and approving and ratifying plans and reports of the project.

Documentary analysis reveals that, in the main, these responsibilities were upheld, although to varying degrees at particular times. From the outset, there was a discernible focus on the connection between Board members and their 'parent' organisations, and in implementing the strategic aspects of member roles in these organisations and elsewhere. For example:

- clearance from managers of Board members was sought for signing the BELONG partnership agreement on behalf of respective organisations in June 2009;
- strategic influencing became a standing item on Board agenda in May 2010;
- a decision was taken by the Board to reject the idea of employing a consultant to undertake strategic influencing on Board's behalf in September 2010;
- there was a refocusing on strategic linking through planning days (December 2011) and Board processes (September 2012).

The Board also discussed the difficulties at times in maintaining or progressing such responsibilities, predominantly as a result of the contextual circumstances outlined above. The recruitment for the proposed BELONG Consultative Forum was discussed at various stages, with different proposals outlined. The importance of a communications strategy was also discussed, with an action plan developed and assessed in 2011. The issue of funding for Phase 2 was addressed, particularly from 2011 onwards.

The same analysis reveals that the Board also took a strong and detailed role at times in the operational aspects of its remit. This included discussing issues of geographical and group coverage of programmes, the content of programmes (e.g. Mentoring programme), recruitment criteria and participation in interview panels, reviewing and assessing plans and procedures (e.g. tendering, evaluation), the (re-)establishing of Board subgroups, and the issue of membership and purpose of the Board itself.

Interview data corresponds with the intended roles and documented experience of the Board as outlined above. All participants spoke of the Board having an overall strategic role and connecting learning and the broader BELONG experience to their own organisations, and the need for this to continue more so into Phase 2. Participants differed, however, on the extent to which there was clarity at the start about other aspects of its role. While some viewed the role as being very clear, others viewed there being a particular ambiguity about it and the relationship it had with the anchor

organisation, STEP. However, all participants commented that, the main accountability and risk functions of a typical Board were taken on by STEP as per its contracted position, which released members from occupying these particular perceived roles. All participants commented that the monitoring and related roles occupied by STEP, and the provision of information to the Board when needed on these issues, were undertaken with professionalism and clarity.

Related to this, participants commented that as the project progressed, the Board tended to '*not mimic the roles of other Boards*', but instead assumed a more participatory and advisory role, supporting implementation through the provision of advice on various aspects of how the project can fit with and challenge the wider administrative and policy context. However, all members did comment that for a period the Board became too involved in operational aspects of the project – '*strayed into the minutiae*' – involving itself in aspects for which it either had no remit or was not necessary to the project's day-to-day workings. All members also commented that this was an experience of the past workings of the Board and not a feature currently. In particular, planning days over the past year (in one case facilitated by an external expert) served to broaden the discussion about the role and responsibility of the Board into the future and introduced the possibility of altering the structure to fit the purpose of the second phase.

Participants viewed the Board as supporting implementation of BELONG in a number of ways, including through creating space for reflection and discussion on particular aspects of the work, particularly through the sub-committees; through participating and working with the Evaluation Team to ensure learning emanated for dissemination; ensuring that BELONG is familiar with particular aspects of, and individuals in, the administrative system; through problem-solving; establishing and maintaining connections with individuals in Board members' teams and organisations; and critically, through working closely with the BELONG Programme Manager and Team directly.

3.3 Functioning of the BELONG Board

Board membership

The majority of participants identified familiarity with each other as an important aspect of their Board work and that many, if not all, had engaged in partnership-type arrangements with some of the other members at various stages over their careers or were knowledgeable of each other's role. Such familiarity was perceived as permitting a quicker generation and maintenance of trust and comfort among members, and overall relationships were assessed as positive, constructive, professional and open. These characteristics were deemed to have resulted in an environment where there was an ability to question, challenge and tease out particular issues, approaches or perceptions in Board meetings in a robust manner. It also brought a sense of realism to the project and what could be achieved within the timeframe set out. In this light, members described decision-making as consensual and, for the most part, effective. Creating an understanding of each other's organisations, and often the limits of such organisations, was also viewed as an important part of the exchange, as was honesty and transparency in engagement.

The majority of individuals spoke of '*having the right people, not necessarily the most senior people*' around the table as being significant to progressing the work of the project. Many commented that, while important organisations were represented, the Board constituted an equal partnership of committed individuals working from a base of respect and trust. Frustration with the education piece of the work was cited by many; however, it was clear that this was down to the structural and administrative impediments of the strategic context. The mix of hard work, dynamism, experience and knowledge was viewed as invaluable to the achievement, ultimately, of the first phase of work and re-invigorating the strategic process of locating it within the wider health and education sectors. Notwithstanding the structural difficulties of Government departments, individual members used their skills and strategic connections to see where particular elements of BELONG could fit with sectors of statutory organisations as the project moved into the second phase. Participants highlighted that BELONG was featuring in policy documents and operational plans of both education organisations (Southern Education and Library board (SELB) and the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS)), as well as in the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).

Board processes

Participants were asked to reflect on their experience and provide their perspectives on Board processes. Particular Board processes were identified as positive. That there was regular attendance by a core group of people around the table was indicative of a positive atmosphere and commitment to the work and value base of the project, especially in the face of ever-increasing workloads and more challenging organisational contexts. Aligned to this was the perceived commitment to and belief in the partnership way of working among members and the championing of this approach outside of the Board, both in the context of BELONG and more generally. This commitment was viewed as central to overcoming particular challenges that the project experienced, for example, in the eventual replacement of the Programme Manager and the re-evaluation of the Board's role as it moved into Phase 2.

All participants commented on the importance of good supporting processes in facilitating the Board to undertake its work positively. In this regard, leadership was identified as an important factor in participants' experience. First among these was the leadership and role of a good Chair, who could achieve a balance between creating space for dialogue and debate while moving meetings along and decisions being taken as and when appropriate and needed. While documentary evidence indicated that meetings were to have a section dedicated to informing members of relevant information from partner organisations, this did not always happen. The renewed focus on such a mechanism brought by the current Chair was viewed as particularly valuable. The emphasis of such a mechanism as a two-way process, '*bringing information to and from the table*', was viewed as especially important by participants to the strategic role of the Board. More generally, the rotating of the Board Chair in more recent times was seen as a positive step. Communication outside of Board meetings was also viewed as good overall, contributing to the meeting experience when the Board met formally.

Secondly, all participants highlighted the significant role played and leadership exercised by the current Programme Manager in supporting the work of the Board and individual members at times. Participants emphasized the constructive role played by the Manager in preparing Board documentation in a timely manner, working closely with the Chair to carefully plan the Board meeting in advance and give clear expectations about what was desirable from each Board meeting, as well as in strategic planning exercises (e.g. planning days). The role played by the Manager in facilitating the Board to re-evaluate its position (along with external facilitation) was cited by all as very important to the overall role of the Board in the future, as was the Manager's emphasis on connecting the Board with the Team through strategic planning days and contact on particular programmatic issues. More generally, there was deemed to be clear communication from the Team to the Board, which facilitating positive Board working and served to propel the project forward.

Many participants identified converse factors when discussing impediments to good Board processes occurring. The absence of leadership at particular times was cited as a difficulty, as was the gap in supporting members with training needs when required. Stemming from these factors were related issues pertaining to poor preparation for Board meetings (such as late submission of Board reports for consideration, or their absence at times), indecision in Board discussions and an absence of a clear process towards taking a decision on particular issues. Many participants identified this as a factor contributing towards the tendency for the Board to '*stray into the minutiae*', as mentioned above. Poor communication, both inside and outside Board meetings, was viewed as problematic at certain times. Some participants commented that it was not always clear what information was being brought to and taken from Board meetings. However, this challenge was viewed as being resolved now. Given increasing workloads, participants also remarked on the challenge of preparing fully for meetings from time to time. While Board documentation may have been read, the time and opportunity to prepare in a more rounded way (e.g. engaging with other information, research, literature and similar experiences) did not always exist.

Some Board members commented that, while consultation did exist throughout the first phase, a formal consultative forum was not established as intended. While documentary evidence highlights that this was an intention of the project, and was the focus for a period over the initial stage, it does not appear as frequently in Board minutes as the project progressed. The absence of such a forum was cited by these participants as deviation from the original plan and something that possibly should have been worked on more aggressively. However, the ethos of the project, and STEP more generally, was viewed as compensating for this.

3.4 Implementation drivers

Participants were asked to identify what has driven BELONG over the course of their involvement. First among a range of factors identified was the anchor organisation, **South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)**. All participants recognised the value base and experience that STEP brought to the project overall and the Board processes and engagement in particular. That it worked from a rights-based and community development perspective was important because it imparted these values to the project overall and created a solid foundation for implementation. STEP's leadership and experience in working with BME groups, and socially excluded groups more generally, was perceived as important since it permitted buy-in from organisations on the ground, across all sectors, as well as at the strategic level. Its role also permitted a greater understanding by some participants of community development and community sector issues more generally. Many cited the flexibility of STEP in undertaking tasks and overcoming challenges in a manner which other sectors could not, both strategically and operationally. At an organisational level, STEP's own processes and structures aided the project to begin work more quickly than it would have otherwise, with administrative and financial processes already in place. The STEP staff were cited as important in this regard.

Board membership was viewed as a central driver as well. Strong personalities were viewed as important to implementation, particularly at crucial moments, but also more generally. Ultimately, members were viewed as having the necessary commitment to progress the project at the strategic level and support the implementation at the operational level. While some elements of the policy context created space for BELONG (such as Section 75 cited above, and support from the CYPSP), members were viewed as having worked hard to overcome other, often especially difficult, challenges administratively and contextually to ultimately deliver their organisations for the project. The securing of funding for the second phase, as well as the connections between other staff of Board organisations and the BELONG team to support implementation, were cited as clear evidence of this.

All participants cited the role of the **BELONG team**, and current Programme Manager, as being instrumental to the implementation of BELONG and being responsible for driving it into the second phase. The Manager's ability to bring clarity to the work was cited as a particular strength, as was the re-focusing on the service plan and proposed outcomes for the project. In addition, the introduction of positive practices at the level of the Team, connections established with key stakeholders at the strategic level (e.g. teachers' unions), and work with the interim Chairs to re-invigorate the Board and facilitate assessment of its role were cited as additional examples of the important work undertaken over the past 16 months. The persistence with which the education component of the project was pursued was deemed to be central to manoeuvring the project towards the second phase. In addition to this, the role played in supporting Team members to undertake their work in a strategic manner was cited as an additional important aspect of the Programme Manager's work. Recent connections with regional organisations and structures, such as Parenting NI, the NI Anti-Bullying Forum and NICCY, were cited as relevant examples of such strategic work at the Team level.

3.5 Overall assessment of the Board as a partnership entity and the future

Participants were positive about their experience overall of the Board as a partnership entity. They viewed it as an opportunity to be part of something that could provide important learning for the future of services in Northern Ireland for BME children and young people, and generally. One participant in particular felt this was especially important to emphasize, given the move to regional groups and structures and the loss of learning opportunities that local, multisectoral partnerships present. More generally, the Board as a partnership was deemed to have been ultimately effective in the first phase: a strong development plan was produced and implemented; relationships were professional, positive and contributed to implementation; participants learned from each other and created a greater understanding; and engagement was based on trust, clarity and honest engagement. Members identified the second phase as an opportunity to disseminate the learning from BELONG and potentially widen the membership by creating a new structure to support such dissemination.

4. Findings from Team level on the implementation of BELONG

This section presents findings from Team interviews regarding staff experiences of BELONG.

4.1 Roles and responsibilities

At time of interview, the experience of staff interviewed ranged from 7 months to over 3½ years. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the majority of staff had recently changed. Documentary evidence indicated that such change mirrored broader changes in the strategic direction of BELONG (Phase 2): it became more regional in focus and concerned with disseminating its experience and learning, while also maintaining contact with BME families and organisations locally.

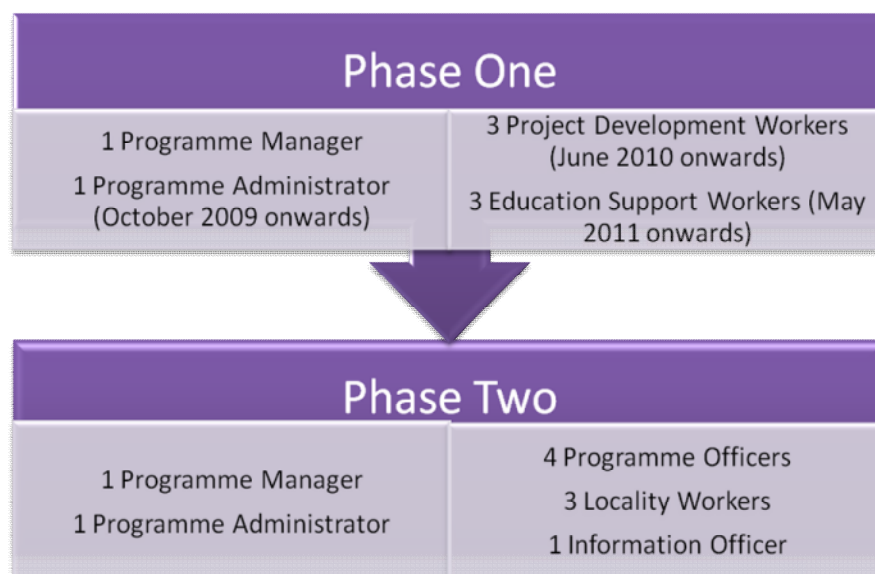
In Phase 1, in addition to the Programme Manager and Programme Administrator positions, there were 3 Project Development Worker (PDW) positions and 3 Education Support Worker (ESW) positions. The role of the PDWs was to support the implementation of the programme through activities, including liaising with and establishing working partnerships with other organisations and agencies; organising and delivering awareness-raising and information sessions; and providing rights-based information to families. The role of the ESWs was also to support implementation, through education activities, including working with local schools to enhance their cultural competence and awareness; improving access to out-of-school-hours learning; and facilitating communication between schools and families.

For Phase 2, the PDW and ESW positions were discontinued and 3 new categories of post were created, alongside the continuing Programme Manager and Programme Administrator positions. These categories were:

- Programme Officer;
- Locality Worker;
- Information (Support and Referral) Officer.

The first category comprised of 4 Programme Officers: Anti-Bullying; Cultural Competence; Education (Community) and Education (Schools). These roles were envisaged as being expertise-driven and focused on making links with the Education and Library Boards and the Health and Social Care Trust so as to influence these organisations' activities. The second category comprised 3 part-time Locality or Key Worker positions in Dungannon, Newry and Craigavon. The focus of the Locality Workers was to engage with families and communities in particular areas in the delivery of the BELONG Programme, as well as to support local organisations working with BME families. The third category of post was a 'cross-programme' Information (Support and Referral) Officer. The role of this officer was envisaged as ensuring that user engagement in, and benefit from, BELONG activities would be maximised through provision of rights-based information and service sign-posting. These changes in roles and responsibilities across phases are outlined in Figure K-1.

Figure K-1: BELONG staff posts by phase



4.2 Context of BELONG and working to achieve its aims and objectives

All staff spoke of BELONG's core aim – of creating a sense of belonging among BME children and their families. The importance of working *with* these children and parents was particularly prevalent in responses. Staff spoke of '*empowering parents*' and '*supporting children and families to live a full life in the community*' through their work. Staff provided specific examples of this work, including linking parents with schools and Education and Learning Support intervention activities, undertaking cultural identity work, bullying, and service sign-posting and referring. In all these activities, staff spoke of working from a rights-based and community development perspective, or '*working from the ground-up*' to improve the lives of these families within a rights-based framework. For many staff, there was a '*clear path, particularly recently*' from their activities to the overall objectives of the project. This was especially the case for those staff with longer experience in BELONG. Of this group, some spoke of the initial groundwork as being '*necessary, but we maybe stayed in it a bit too long*', with subsequent work being '*target and number driven [but] not having as much of a focus*'.

Staff were conscious of the policy and cultural context in which they worked. While demographic change in Northern Ireland was noted, some staff commented that there '*was a gap to what was happening on the ground*'. In this regard, many staff commented on the importance of extracting learning and experience from the past 3 years and developing an evidence base about what did and did not work for policy-makers and those interested in undertaking this type of work. While many staff roles had just changed at the time of interview, all staff commented on the more explicitly strategic aspects of their work, particularly since the current Programme Manager came on board. Sharing learning in strategic environments they participated in (e.g. fora, working groups) or working with regional organisations was spoken of as central to many staff's account of their work now, in addition to their geographical (locality) or thematic (programme) work. Some staff commented on a policy arena '*receptive to learning*' and viewed this new phase of work as critical to sharing learning of their experience. Staff commented that it was '*important that BELONG is heard, and that BME parents and children are heard*' in this arena.

4.3 Organisational processes supporting implementation

Staff were asked to identify and comment on organisational processes and supports that aid them in their work.

The BELONG Service Plan

BELONG's Service Plan (BELONG, 2009) was identified as important. Staff commented that the Service Plan guides them in their overall work and provides a picture, 'touchstone' or 'bible' to what is required of the project overall. For many, the work starts with the Service Plan, which is broken down into specific plans to be implemented. It also served a purpose for the Programme Manager in developing particular processes to aid the development of goal- or outcome-oriented work and in ensuring a suitable framework of delivery for implementation. These processes were developed or adjusted to ensure clarity in the work of the staff towards the project's aims. Documentary evidence from Team meetings highlighted that the Service Plan is utilised as a planning and guiding process, particularly and regularly from December 2011 onwards (Team meeting minutes), where there was a desire to plan strategically for the year ahead and incorporate elements of the project into a model. Further to this, meeting minutes in January 2012 identified the need for the Board and the staff to reconnect with the Service Plan, and work was undertaken to identify any gaps in the programme, both strategically and operationally. In addition to the Service Plan, some staff spoke of the original research undertaken by Queen's University Belfast as being important in their work, alongside the expressed needs of the community as identified through their work on the ground.

Supervision

Staff spoke particularly strongly about staff supervision as a supportive process, again particularly since the current Programme Manager introduced a new format. Often characterised as a 'two-way process' or 'dialogue', one-to-one supervision sessions occurred every 6 weeks and provided staff with the opportunity to discuss particular programme issues with the Programme Manager. Staff spoke about supervision as a focused process that brought clarity to their work and to that of their manager, linked strongly to the project's goals, but still created space for reflection, personal input and raising of other (personal) issues if and when required. Staff spoke of how this process sought to

link practice with the strategic aims of the project, to *'take what is happening on the ground and explore with [Programme Manager] how it fits or challenges the aims of BELONG'*. In this regard, it is viewed as being *'crucial'*, *'very focused on what needs to get done'*, but is viewed as *'directional, not directive'*. Staff commented that supervision was empowering in that it was *'more in tune with you as a worker, your strengths'* and offered the space to reflect, influence and put forward solutions to issues raised. Some staff did comment that it was a challenge adapting to different managerial styles, but were overall of the view that the current supervision process was an improvement on previous styles, which tended to emphasize *'accounting for time spent rather than goals achieved'*. Many staff commented that, in addition to structured supervision, they often received more informal support from the Programme Manager by way of e-mail and telephone, particularly, although not always, if pressing matters arose.

Supervision also created the space for staff to take more of a strategic role in their work, through discussion with the Programme Manager, and space in their work to undertake particular pieces of work (e.g. research, reading time). While all staff identified this as a particular aspect of the second phase and the new job roles, many felt that there was encouragement to act strategically and *'take leadership'* in their roles in the first phase of the work. This was felt to be particularly the case with the current Programme Manager. In this regard, supervision was viewed as an opportunity for individual staff to identify their own education, training and practice skills, and how they may be used in their work, as well as identifying additional supports they may need through training or seminars.

Related to supervision was the additional support of individual work plans and quarterly reports. Many staff remarked that these were useful in that they provided a clear link to the Service Plan, provided a plan or 'map' regarding what was required to be done, in some cases *'preventing you from going off on tangents'*, and permitted the identification of what worked well and what was challenging. Although remarked upon as time-consuming in their preparation, many staff recognised them as essential supports in their work and added to a goal-oriented way of working that was accountable. While the work was viewed as having the potential to be responsive to needs as they arise, there was an understanding among staff that, in the main, work needed to contribute to aims and objectives.

Meetings

Staff identified team meetings as an essential element of their work. Although described as intensive, they are viewed as having improved as other organisational processes were established. They were characterised as very organised and helpful, and viewed as an opportunity for staff *'to feed in, to raise issues, to contribute to ideas and plans, to share work'*. Many identified the recent BELONG Showcase Event as an example of these characteristics. Other staff pointed to their meetings being particularly important since not all colleagues are located together. While there was reported good contact between staff, team meetings permitted a focus on what needed to get done and enabled staff to *'see the overall work in the round'*, to *'let people know that they BELONG to something ... dedicated time to get'*, particularly due to staff working in different locations.

More prominent among staff responses was the usefulness of Sharing Practice Meetings. Established formally in January 2012, staff viewed these meetings as very constructive and supportive of their work. They were characterised as *'space for staff'*, and as an *'opportunity to learn'*, to *'share practice'*, to *'facilitate training'* and more generally to exchange ideas, approaches and learning, as well as permitting the piloting of new ideas, methods, resources and solutions. For some, the Sharing Practice Meetings brought the Team closer together and permitted the adoption of a more *'standard approach to the work, in as much as it could be'*.

Colleagues and other forms of support

In addition to the formal staff structures outlined above, staff spoke about the importance of exchanges with their colleagues in other ways that supported their work. The role of the Programme Administrator was identified in this regard. Many staff spoke about the central role played by the Administrator in supporting their work in specific terms (e.g. IT, offices, budgets, planning), in linking them with the evaluation, and in more general terms around supporting BELONG. Some staff members in particular mentioned the important and significant support the Administrator provided at times of transition in the project.

Staff also mentioned the informal support they receive from each other, through e-mails, telephone calls and in person (where possible) on particular issues or common challenges they were experiencing (e.g. behavioral issues in the Education and Learning Support intervention) or on approaches to engaging with particular organisations or individuals (*'What might work with one group might or might not work with another'*). In this regard, staff identified themselves as working both on an individual and team basis, although perceptions differed as to the extent of team and individual working in their roles. All staff characterised the team dynamic and team relationships as 'good' or 'very good', with most identifying them as 'positive' and 'supportive'. Many identified the willingness of all staff to be available to each other, to offer professional and personal support at times – important to their work.

Some staff also mentioned the supportive role played by other (non-BELONG) workers in the locality in supporting them, creating connections, providing contacts and sharing experiences. Many mentioned the role of STEP, and particular individuals in it, as providing particular forms of support – strategic, operational and individual.

External relationships

Staff commented that they were encouraged and supported from the outset to engage with other organisations as part of their work and that this has accelerated with the second phase's focus on dissemination and mainstreaming. Staff identified a range of organisations with which they work in the course of their work and which support them. Organisations mentioned included STEP, Craigavon Traveller Support Centre, *An Tearmann*, *Wah Hep*, the Polish school in Banbridge, Wheelworks, SELB, IDS, Dungannon Resource Centre, schools, St. Vincent de Paul and other unspecified community organisations. While many staff highlighted organisations that were worked with BME families, the importance of connecting with organisations without a specific BME focus was also mentioned. Many of these organisations were contacted and worked with for a variety of reasons, ranging from specific aspects of the BELONG Programme to retrieval of contact information or other forms of support.

In discussing these organisations, and the relationships they had with them, staff identified a number of factors that were relevant to facilitating these relationships. These factors included believing in what you are doing (i.e. in the work of BELONG); establishing and maintaining trust; being open and honest about the purposes of engagement and what is to be achieved (*'Engaging with a purpose, being clear'*); acknowledging different styles and being flexible to adapt; recognising where other individuals and organisations are at; working from a common (community-development) base or a common approach/complementarity in work; a belief in genuine partnership; persistence; balancing professional and personal approaches; Board member and Programme Manager contact/introductions; and formal agreements. Many staff also identified the importance of maintaining relationships through adhering to some of these factors, as well as building on positive work undertaken with organisations; incorporating staff into particular events (such as training); persistence; and communication (*'Not letting them forget about you or the work of BELONG'*).

In identifying impediments to good working relationships with others in the community, staff commented that these tended to be when some of the facilitating factors were absent, particularly an absence of clarity. However, they also identified other factors, including perceptions (particularly around 'territory'), roles, responsibilities and funding, and the formality of some organisations, particularly statutory (schools), but also particular individuals. Some staff commented that while doing as much as you could to engage with organisations, sometimes there was just no response and *'you had to know when to stop'*.

4.4 Staff perspectives on implementation challenges

Staff were asked to identify what challenges they encountered in their work. Many identified challenges in engaging some parents, particularly due to their working arrangements. Staff recounted experiences of parents working numerous jobs and the difficulties this posed in involving them in the work. Related to this, others recounted initial difficulties in building trust with parents or some families

leaving the area mid-delivery of programme activities. Others spoke about feuds or disputes in the community as an additional challenge.

Staff also spoke about the changes in the Programme Manager's position as being challenging at times, creating uncertainty and requiring adaptation to different managerial styles. Many identified the current phase as '*exciting, but challenging*'. Shifting roles, getting up to speed, learning to influence and connecting more explicitly with the strategic level were all deemed challenges. For some, the decreased focus of the 'on-the-ground' or direct work with families (due to the changing roles within the Team and the parallel advocacy focus) was difficult. In this regard, others found elements of the BELONG Programme challenging, in particular the time-bound nature of some of the work '*when you know it needed more*', as well as the gap between needs and the capacity of the organisation to meet those needs.

Some staff spoke of particular challenges in supporting sessional workers in dealing with particular issues, such as children's behaviour in the Education and Learning Support intervention. The challenge of providing consistency to children in these settings through retaining sessional workers was also mentioned by staff. Other challenges mentioned included the team working across three different locations; working on your own; the evaluation; office moves; working with particular organisations; and the uncertainty of the external context in terms of budgets and funding to mainstream, as well as proposed and actual administrative re-organisation more generally.

4.5 Staff perspectives on implementation drivers

Staff were asked to identify what has driven the BELONG Programme over the course of their involvement in it. Various factors were identified. Staff identified their other colleagues as being important drivers of the project, particularly the enthusiasm, energy and creativity which they brought to their work right across the team. Among the staff complement, the Programme Manager was identified as an especially important driver. In particular, leadership, the supportive environment created to explore, try out particular approaches and learn, as well as the overall clarity and focus brought to the project were identified as elements of this factor, as were providing connections and '*creating a sense of ownership*' among staff. BME children and parents were identified as important in propelling the project, as ultimately it was '*about and for them*'. The Board was identified as significant, particularly in the sense of being connected to staff and providing links to particular individuals, especially in the statutory sector. Staff also commented that the Service Plan was important, in that it provided a focus for the work, as did the initial research. Finally, the credibility earned among families and organisations in the community from the first phase of work was viewed as an important driver for the second phase of BELONG.

5. Sessional workers' perspectives on organisational aspects of BELONG

5.1 Background and qualifications of sessional workers

Of the 8 sessional workers interviewed, the majority were from an education background and were (retired) teachers or Classroom Assistants. In addition, some workers had other qualifications or experience which they drew on in the course of their sessional work, such as youth and community work, as well as health and social care. While many understandably identified a complementarity between a classroom setting and the Education and Learning Support intervention, other experiences were also utilised, particularly those of working with young people in non-formal settings, and of working with children with behavioral issues.

5.2 Working to the aims and objectives of BELONG

There was some variation in the amount of time spent each week working in the Education and Learning Support intervention. Some worked for 2 hours per week, some for 3 hours, others for 4 and one individual worked for 4½ hours. For some, this work occurred in a school setting, for others in BELONG premises, and for others again in other community organisations.

All participants had a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of BELONG and the centrality of education in contributing towards achieving those aims. In particular, some participants spoke of the

significance of improving educational achievement as a factor in *'improving self-esteem, self-confidence'*, of being able to *'communicate with others'*, of *'feeling more included'* and, ultimately, of *'preparing for adult life and employment'*. Many spoke of working from a rights-based perspective, of the importance of hearing the voice of the child and of working for the *'development of the whole child'*.

All spoke of the direct work undertaken in the Education and Learning Support intervention, that of supporting children and young people in completing their homework from mainstream schools, and were very clear that this was the main objective of the work, albeit delivered in a manner that was *'not simply an extension of the normal school day'*. However, for all, additional tasks were undertaken over the course of each afternoon to supplement mainstream education, such as one-to-one work on phonics, specific work for the transition to secondary school, additional educational work such as spelling, reading and numeracy. Others spoke of undertaking arts and crafts, cooking, baking, outdoor activities and games, practising poetry or prose reading, as well as using IT for broader education and learning. Others also emphasized the importance of broader development work, such as putting boundaries in place, dealing with conflict that may have arisen in the community or generally talking with children about particular things they may have experienced (e.g. issues of feelings, particularly as children approach the teenage years). In some of these situations, participants reported using role play as a tool to explore issues with children. Parental engagement was also a feature of many of the workers' roles, with participants reporting that they built up a good rapport with parents.

5.3 Supports received from BELONG in undertaking sessional work

All sessional staff spoke of the generally positive relationships they had with their BELONG workers. They were described as *'supportive'*, *'available'*, *'willing to help'* and *'empowering'*. Some differences were reported about the extent and regularity of contact; however, in these cases participants suggested that their Education and Learning Support intervention settings may have been a mediating factor, that there was on-site support from the host organisation, so the need for contact was not as great. Many spoke of the BELONG workers providing advice and support from the outset, induction (of varying degrees), information on specific things (e.g. cultural aspects of children worked with), one-to-one meetings on particular children – *'they'd come down, work with you, suggest solutions, contact parents and follow up with you'* – as well as feedback from workers on how they and the work was progressing in an overall sense. However, for the most part, workers felt that their skills and experience were respected in the Education and Learning Support intervention and they were allowed to *'get on with the job'*. All characterised the environment and engagement with their BELONG workers as supportive overall.

In the main, participants highlighted that there was never an issue in sourcing additional resources from BELONG when requested. Some of the resources received included materials (e.g. markers, pencils, paper), other educational resources (e.g. dictionaries, particular tests and texts for transition work and other educational needs), financial support for particular activities (e.g. baking and cooking, outings), games and IT provision. Some participants spoke of differences in the amount and extent of resources received (additional IT resources were identified as a need), but again the role of the particular Education and Learning Support intervention settings was suggested as a factor in this. Other participants reported bringing some of their own resources to the Education and Learning Support intervention.

Participants highlighted that they sourced support from their colleagues, both in the Education and Learning Support intervention and the organisation/setting in which it was located. Some participants spoke of engaging with teachers from time to time about particular issues, such as ensuring homework was given, checking what homework was given or clarifying particular issues with teachers.

5.4 Challenges in undertaking sessional work

A small number of challenges encountered in the Education and Learning Support intervention were identified by participants. For many, behavioral issues were prominent among responses. The disruption caused, both in the Education and Learning Support intervention and on outings, was sometimes difficult to manage. Participants reported addressing this challenge through experience, speaking directly with the child or children concerned, and referring to their BELONG worker. Related

to this, cultural differences within the Education and Learning Support intervention group were also highlighted as a challenge. Perceptions among children about each other, as well as about workers, were reported as challenging, although again these were overcome through discussion and experience.

For many, the length of the Education and Learning Support intervention was a challenge. There was often too little time for children to finish their homework and little support at home if they had to complete it there. Language difficulties with parents were also highlighted, with children translating for parents viewed as a challenge. Participants also highlighted particular family circumstances, where children could not attend regularly or avail of the Education and Learning Support intervention at all due to travel distances or care responsibilities at home.

5.5 Sessional workers' perspectives on drivers of BELONG and impact

All participants remarked on the importance of the BELONG workers and the BELONG vision as propelling the work overall and that of the Education and Learning Support intervention in particular. The commitment of individuals 'from bottom to top' was viewed as very strong and central to BELONG. Participants again spoke of BELONG workers whom they had contact with, while others spoke of publicity like the Armagh Showcase Event as indicative of this commitment. The enthusiasm of participating children and families was also a factor identified. Participants reported that parents were very grateful for the work undertaken with their children and that the children enjoyed the Education and Learning Support intervention, particularly as *'they know it's for them, it's their club'*. Funding was also cited as a factor since it permitted a dedicated service for children to be developed who *'are not captured by extended school activities'*.

Many participants spoke of the positive impact the Education and Learning Support intervention has had on children. Evidence of this was apparent in the improvements by children involved in the intervention. Some participants spoke of children excelling in mainstream education and of being placed in a high stream in secondary school. Other benefits included children integrating into non-school activities, such as clubs; more general improvements in child behaviour; and the sense that the intervention has enhanced the acceptance of education and learning support generally. Children who started in BELONG Education and Learning Support activities are now attending school homework clubs. Where schools previously *'didn't want to know about homework clubs, now they do'*.

6. Overview of BELONG's organisational issues

6.1 Strategic context of BELONG

Findings outlined above indicate that the strategic context of BELONG has had an impact on its work. At the level of the partnership, anticipated changes within this context served to delay elements of programme implementation. This was clearly the case with the education sector, where inability to commit to employing education support workers, as well as difficulties more generally in taking information to and from the Partnership table, were deemed to have delayed the programme. The perceived inability of the political system to produce policies to be implemented also added to creating an uncertain strategic context within which BELONG had to operate. However, it should be noted that, despite these difficulties, BELONG still progressed its work and was perceived by Board members to have been successful in completing its first phase of work. Much of this appears to be down to the expertise and commitment of particular individuals around the table, as well as a greater focus on the role of the Board and the processes by which it works, especially in more recent times.

At the level of the Team, it is clear that there has been an increased focus on strategic aspects of work in recent times, in addition to delivering the programme on the ground. The role of the Programme Manager is strong in this regard, as well as working to clarify the role of the Board, both now and in the future. That staff are empowered to engage their broader skill set in the work of the project, as well as take on more strategic tasks in the first and second phase, is a clear strength emanating from the data. This shift was important, in both realigning the project at an uncertain time and propelling it forward towards its dissemination and mainstreaming phase. While certain aspects of the political and administrative system stalled, BELONG has nonetheless located itself within ongoing regional developments relevant to its brief. Membership by staff of the Anti-Bullying Forum, as well as influencing the CYPSP BME Action Plan and engaging with other policy processes such as

consultation for the CSI strategy, are important indicators of successful engagement in seeking to influence the strategic context and disseminating the BELONG model and experience throughout Northern Ireland. The leadership role played by all staff in taking on this aspect of the work is significant in that it reflects a concern and focus throughout the organisation to achieving its central aim and objectives.

6.2 Anchor organisation

Emanating strongly from Board and Team data is the central and critical role played by South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP) in the BELONG project experience. STEP is viewed as providing the overall ethos or 'touchstone' for the project, namely rights-based working and a community development orientation. STEP brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the process, holds important governance functions, as the grant holder is the accountable organisation and provides various operational supports at different times – in particular to the Programme Manager. In addition, it has been the effective 'interim manager' when the Programme Manager position was vacant and ultimately employed the education workers so as to progress that aspect of the project. Its familiarity with the issues faced by BME families in Northern Ireland, as well as with the organisations working with and for them, is an important benefit to the project and of great value to its implementation and further development. STEP serves to 'ground' BELONG in the strategic and operational reality present in Northern Ireland today and support it through its journey.

6.3 Organisational structures and processes for delivery: Management and support

When the principles and practices of partnership working are considered, it is apparent that the Board has experienced difficulties. These difficulties centred predominantly on an inability of some members to 'deliver' their organisations due to flux in their sector, as well as certain process issues in and around Board meetings. Although both of these have now been overcome, they were perceived to have complicated the workings of the Board and dampened elements of its strategic role and responsibility. Currently, partnership working is assessed positively by Board members, with the requisite characteristics of communication, planning, trust, honesty, enthusiasm and commitment all present among a core of people, as well as leadership and a clear process. Relationships are characterised as professional, positive, with decision-making consensual, and now effective, leading to greater fulfilment of its strategic role. The role of the current Chair is noteworthy in this regard. In addition, the ability of the Board to re-evaluate its position (with support from the Programme Manager) and to reflect on its future in relation to the needs of the structure for the next phase of the programme are further indications of its maturity and sound process. The move to reconstitute the Board as a more explicit Strategic Advisory Group structure is a positive development, reflecting the realities of the situation and the needs of the project in Phase 2.

Data from previous evaluation reports highlighted the organic nature of BELONG and the sense that time was required for this model to emerge and evolve. Data gathered for this round, reflecting on the first phase overall, suggest that there is a more defined model and learning that can now be strengthened and mainstreamed. However, the delivery of the programme was clearly not without its problems. Even when a full complement of staff was in place, there was an absence of a holistic or outcomes-focused approach to the work at Team level. This is not to say that good work with children, families and communities was not undertaken. Rather, in the words of some Team members, it lacked focus and connection with the aims and objectives of the project. There was also an absence of leadership at times at the Team level, which was perceived to have negatively impacted on the workings of the project.

Board and Team findings suggest that, with the current Programme Manager, the project is now in a far stronger position. The re-emphasizing of the Service Plan as *the starting point* for all work, the introduction of clear planning processes, as well as Team processes (such as supervision, quarterly planning and reporting, Team meetings and Staff Sharing Practice meetings), have all served to bring clarity to the work, support Team members and connect delivery of the project with its strategic aims and objectives. The empowering of staff to take on strategic aspects of their role is broadly welcomed, as is the conscious effort to utilise their wider skills and experience in supporting implementation.

Another important aspect in delivering the project is the focus on connecting the Board with the staff. Although brought together in planning days, there is evidence that connections are more regular than this, with Team members working with the staff of Board members. This is particularly the case in education, a central aspect of the BELONG Programme. The processes put in place, and more generally the day-to-day and strategic leadership displayed by the Programme Manager, indicate the importance and necessity of a skilled experienced individual at the helm of such a project to lead the implementation process with enthusiasm and verve.

Implementation is supported or driven by other mechanisms as well. Significant among these are the children and families that BELONG works with and for. It is clear from the data that their needs and desires feature strongly in the work of BELONG and propel it towards achieving its aims. There is also a strong emphasis on establishing and maintaining relationships with other organisations in the community. Schools are understandably prominent in this regard, but so too are the range of organisations working with BME families in the region. In addition, organisations are also engaged with for future strategic reasons, to support the dissemination and mainstreaming activities of the project in the second phase. These relationships are viewed as positive overall and useful to BELONG's programme of work. They serve as communication channels, gathering relevant information into BELONG and disseminating BELONG information out into the community. They are developed and maintained through honesty of engagement and exchange, trust, clarity, persistence, endeavour and good communication.

The pool of experienced sessional workers contracted by BELONG appears to play an important implementation role as well. They are resourced to implement the Education and Learning Support intervention and are provided with whatever materials they need. Their array of skills in education and related sectors contribute to the delivery and success of the intervention. In supporting this, the BELONG workers provide advice and a point of contact, as well as being supportive, but also empowering to let the experience of the sessional workers come to the fore.

7. Summary

This appendix has provided an account of the organisational aspects of the BELONG project. Through extensive documentary analysis and interviews with Board and Team members and a selection of sessional workers, a complex, yet overall positive picture has emerged of BELONG's processes and structures. The research has indicated that, despite difficulties, the project has thrived through a committed core of Board members, an experienced and accountable anchor organisation, leadership throughout the project and a team with a range of skills and expertise that complements each other and the aims of the project.

Appendix L: Policy Review

1. Introduction

In order to improve the delivery of services to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and their families, it is important to have an understanding of the relevant and current international and Northern Ireland policy and practice issues. The central purpose of this appendix is to outline the legislative and policy backdrop that currently exists in Northern Ireland and emergent policy developments. To this end, Section 2 presents the overarching international policies affecting BME children and communities. Section 3 focuses on racial equality legislation and policy in a Northern Irish context, as well as examining policy relating to health, education and children's rights, and emergent policies currently in development. Section 4 looks at BELONG's contribution to policy development.

2. International context

2.1 United Nations

During the 1960s, a consensus arose on inequality in societies. It was widely acknowledged that in order to address inequality, it was necessary for Governments to take proactive steps, in effect positive action. **Article 1 of the UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination** (CERD), adopted in 1969, identifies that special measures are needed to '*secure adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups ... requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights*'. The CERD Convention is a key international instrument on racial discrimination.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and contains a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children. It addresses civil and political rights, social and economic rights, and protection rights. The general principles of the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation, and survival and development provide the framework for actions concerning children. A number of Articles have been shown to be particularly relevant to BELONG's work (see *Table L-1*).

Table L-1: UNCRC Articles relevant to BELONG Programme

Article 2: Non Discrimination

All rights apply to all children without exception. The State is obliged to protect all children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.

Article 3: Best Interests of the Child

All actions concerning the child shall take account of his or her best interests. This includes research activities in which the interests of the child must be considered as paramount.

Article 3.3: Right to Services

The child's right to high quality services (including access to school, research and any treatment).

Article 8: Preservation of Identity

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognised by law without unlawful interference.
2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 12: The Child's Opinion

The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 13: Right to Express Views

The child's right to express their views in a way that is comfortable to them (this may not be in a form traditionally associated with gathering data, e.g. surveys).

Article 30: Children of Minorities or Indigenous Peoples

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 18 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** establishes the rights of minority ethnic, religious groups to enjoy their own culture, to practise their own religion and to speak their own language.

Article 20 of **A World Fit for Children 2002 – Special Session of the General Assembly of the UN** discusses the goal of eliminating discrimination against children, *'whether rooted in the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status'*. Furthermore, Article 22 identifies that appropriate measures must be taken to end discrimination and provide special supports for indigenous children and children belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups who are disproportionately disadvantaged in many countries.

The fullest appreciation of these rights instruments is only achieved when they are considered against 'general comments' and 'concluding observations' provided by the relevant international and regional institutions (e.g. see CERD, 2003).

2.2 European Union context

At European Union level, the **Racial Equality Directive** (EU Council Directive 2000.43.EC) implemented the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. This directive established *'a binding framework for prohibiting racial discrimination throughout the EU. It defines direct and indirect discrimination and provides for redress for racial discrimination and shifts the burden of proof to respondents'* (Watt and McGaughey, 2006, p. 31). This, for the first time, guaranteed a common legal framework of minimum protection across all EU Member States. The scope of the Racial Equality Directive includes the provision of, and access to, goods and services, including health and social care.

The rights of minority groups in Europe are also explicitly prioritised through the Council of Europe's **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**. The purpose of this convention is to ensure that the signatory states respect the rights of national minorities, undertaking to combat discrimination, promote equality, preserve and develop the culture and identity of national minorities, guarantee certain freedoms in relation to access to the media, minority languages and education, and encourage the participation of national minorities in public life.

The **European Convention on Human Rights** (formally the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) is an international treaty to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. A number of Articles relate directly to the work of BELONG. In particular, Article 2 provides for the right not to be denied an education and the right for parents to have their children educated in accordance with their religious and other views. Article 14 prohibits discrimination based on *'sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status'*. The position of the European Convention on Human Rights in the UK is strengthened by the **Human Rights Act 1998**. This Act aims to 'give further effect' in UK law to the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. In particular, the Act makes it unlawful for any public body to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention, unless the wording of any other primary legislation provides no other choice.

3. Northern Irish policy and legislation

3.1 Background

The expansion in the population of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and families in Northern Ireland is a relatively recent phenomenon. The 2011 Census revealed that 1.8% (32,400) of the usually resident population of Northern Ireland are members of minority ethnic groups. This represents a dramatic increase since the previous 2001 Census, with the proportion of ethnic minority's residents in Northern Ireland more than doubling in that time. Indeed, the level of ethnic diversity in Northern Ireland is further illustrated by the fact that 3.1% of the population registered that English was not their main language during the 2011 Census. Polish was classified as the next most widely spoken language after English (Russell, 2013). Recent figures released by the Department of Education record a total of 10,605 BME children and young people as being enrolled in both primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland during the school year 2012/2013. Of these, 2,477 BME children and young people were enrolled in schools within the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB).

3.2 Northern Irish legislation and racial policy

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998, followed by the **Northern Ireland Act 1998**, created a Northern Ireland Assembly, which has the power to enact primary legislation. Because of the long history of segregation between the two dominant cultures, the principles of equality and rights equality are firmly enshrined in Northern Irish legislation. The Northern Ireland Act also established the Human Rights Commission, whose duty is to review NI law and practice relating to the protection of human rights, to advise Government on new bills and legislation, and to assist people whose rights are denied to take action or to carry out investigation where necessary. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on all public authorities *'to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity throughout nine equality strands and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people on the basis of race'*.

Campaigning by minority ethnic groups, voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), supported by the evidence from research (Connolly, 2002), succeeded in creating an awareness of racism in Northern Ireland. **The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997/2003** made it unlawful to discriminate on racial grounds in the areas of employment and training, education, provision of goods and services, disposal or management of premises, and in advertising. In addition, this Order established and outlined the duties of the Commission of Racial Equality (since 2000 incorporated into the Equality Commission). **The Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations NI 2009** identifies the specific needs of the Irish Traveller community as a group to be protected against unlawful racial discrimination and segregation on racial grounds and outlaws discrimination by employers and educational establishments. The Equality Commission has researched and produced guidelines for public bodies and will be discussed later in this review. **The Criminal Justice (No. 2 NI) Order 2004 – Hate Crime** is an important legislative change in Northern Ireland because it imposes penalties in relation to bullying and racial harassment crimes. Section 75 of the **Northern Ireland Act** outlines the statutory duty on public authorities to promote equality between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation. This Section specifies that, proceeding from the definition established in the **Race Relations Order**, Travellers are viewed as a distinct racial group.

In spite of these provisions, the past 10 years have seen an increase in reports of incidents of racial harassment in Northern Ireland (Jarman and Monaghan, 2003; Knox, 2011; McVeigh and Rolston, 2007, p. 12). For many commentators, this is evidence of the inadequacy of existing legislation and policy relating to racial equality. Indeed, many critics of Northern Irish domestic policies outline that existing provisions exacerbate existing divisions and prevent many BME community members from accessing basic social amenities (Mann-Klerr, 1997).

3.3 Northern Ireland policy relating to racial equality

A key policy development occurred in 2005 with the publication of the **Racial Equality Strategy** for Northern Ireland by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action from the UN World Conference against Racism, held in Durban

in 2001, influenced this policy development since it recommended that States establish and implement national policies and action plans to combat racism. The Racial Equality Strategy was developed in consultation with minority ethnic groups and has 6 shared aims:

- the elimination of racial inequality;
- equal protection;
- equality of service provision;
- to increase participation and a sense of belonging of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in public, economic, social and cultural life;
- dialogue: *'To promote dialogue between and mutual understanding of different faiths and cultural backgrounds, both long-standing within Northern Ireland, and for recent arrivals and society guided by overarching human rights norms';*
- capacity-building: *'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'.*

The success of the Racial Equality Strategy has been questioned in light of recent rises in levels of racism and racist incidents in Northern Ireland. Knox (2011), in an article that highlights the links between the sectarianism that divided Northern Irish society in its recent history and the rising levels of racist incidents, argues that the Racial Equality Strategy has been ineffective.

The Racial Equality Unit under the jurisdiction of the OFMDFM is currently holding consultations on a new Northern Ireland Race Equality Strategy. The consultation document outlines the objectives of this strategy as being:

- to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for people of different ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland;
- to increase equality of opportunity for minority ethnic people in accessing and benefiting from public services, including training, education and employment opportunities;
- to combat racism and provide protection against racist crime;
- to promote good relations and mutual respect between people of different ethnic backgrounds, including Irish Travellers;
- to increase awareness and understanding of and respect for the different minority ethnic groups within Northern Ireland and their cultures and traditions;
- to increase participation of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in social, public, economic and cultural life.

BELONG is currently involved in this consultation process, encouraging the use of 'belonging' as a core concept in the new Racial Equality Strategy.

BELONG is also currently involved in consultations on the Refugee Integration Strategy under development by the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership. This process will also feed into the new Race Equality Strategy.

3.4 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is the organisation responsible for the enforcement and promotion of the provisions of the **Race Relations (NI) Order 1997**. It also oversees the implementation of Section 75 of the **Northern Ireland Act 1998**. It is the Commission's job to work to eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of race and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups. The Commission was set up in 2000 (previously called the Commission of Racial Equality) and has worked to influence the programmes for Government, the resultant Budgets and the associated Public Service Agreements. The stated aim of the Equality Commission (2010) is to *'ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations is at the heart of public policy'. This is achieved through three strands of work: statutory advice to Government departments, especially by ensuring that Section 75 duties are complied with at a strategic level; response to Government policy development; and 'encouraging progress to be made to address persistent inequalities through identifying opportunities in policy-making and budgetary processes'.*

3.5 Northern Ireland Child Care Law

Policies relating specifically to the needs and experiences of BME children in Northern Ireland are in existence; however, a lack of cross-referencing between these policies results in the needs of many BME children remaining inadequately addressed. Recent initiatives have seen a move towards a higher level of integrated planning and development of policies relating to children (McTernan and Godfrey, 2006). However, further clarity and progress are needed to ensure that BME children and communities can adequately access social supports.

Within the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is responsible for children. Before 1995, there was a wide range of legislation applying to children. The **Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995** has '*reformed and brought together most of the public and private law relating to children into a single coherent statutory framework along the lines of the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales*' (DHSSPS, 2006). The Order contains more than 200 articles and introduced the central importance of parental responsibility and the significance of the child's welfare as being the primary factors in issues regarding the child's care. In addition, the Order places specific responsibilities regarding race relations on Health and Social Services (HSS) Trusts, voluntary organisations and private Children's Homes to give '*due consideration to the child's religion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background*' (Sections 26, 76 and 92).

However, an issue identified in the Early Implementation evaluation report for BELONG (Forkan *et al*, 2011) was the lack of cross-referencing between the various provisions affecting BME children in Northern Ireland. Policy and practice relating to BME children cuts across diverse sectors, including, among others, human rights, childcare law, racial equality law, law in relation to asylum-seekers and separated children, and immigration law. Despite current and continued lobbying, no statutory duty to collaborate across Northern Ireland Government departments exists. This has the effect that BME children's rights can often be seen in a fragmented way, which has the effect that disadvantaged BME children are 'just not at the party' unless they are specifically targeted with purposefully designed interventions (*ibid*, p. 5).

Some work has been implemented towards improving the extent of cross-referencing between policies and legislation relating to BME children and young people in recent years. The **Children's Services Planning Order** was instituted in 1998, charging the then HSS Trusts with producing a Children Services Plan, to be published and produced with interagency and stakeholder consultation. Following this Order, 4 Children and Young Peoples Committees were established to be hosted through the Health and Social Care Boards. However, as a result of a lack of focus on interagency working, these committees failed to become a driver of social change (McTernan and Godfrey, 2006).

Following on from this critical learning, the **Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership** (CYPSP) was established in the interest of enhancing interagency planning across children's services. It brings together a wide range of agencies, including representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The aim of the partnership is to plan and provide services for children and young people more efficiently by making joint decisions about the services needed and funding these services. The CYPSP published the *Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan* (CYPSP, 2011), whose central role is taking forward integrated planning and commissioning to improve the lives of all children and young people in Northern Ireland. The CYPSP oversees a number of Northern Ireland subgroups established to advance integrated planning on a Northern Ireland-wide basis. One of the subgroups is for BME children and young people, and its stated goals are:

- Planning what needs to change to address the rights and needs of BME children and young people and improve their outcomes, focusing on issues that need to change at Northern Ireland level.
- To produce an action plan that will set out what it will do to ensure that the outcomes for BME children and young people are improved.
- Decide on a set of indicators that will be used to measure how well BME children and young people are doing in Northern Ireland over time.
- Work closely with the outcomes group to ensure that outcomes for BME children are addressed at local level as well as at Northern Ireland level.

As a member of the BME subgroup, BELONG plays an active role in this interagency planning process. In particular, it played a central role conducting consultations with BME children to inform the Action Plan for 2011-2014. In addition to this, the current Programme Manager was invited to make a

presentation to a training seminar for the integrated-based outcomes planning to improve children's lives in Northern Ireland in September 2012. Her presentation was on the work of BELONG in the area of 'Enjoying, Learning and Achieving'.

3.6 Northern Ireland policy relating to BME children and families

As identified in BELONG's (2009) Service Plan, the **Northern Irish Programme for Government 2008-2011**, which underpins Government actions across all departments, outlines its key priorities. Priority 2 across all 23 of the nominated Public Service Agreements is '*to promote tolerance, inclusion, health and well-being*'. The Programme includes cross-departmental strategies that pertain to good relations, social inclusion, poverty and neighbourhood renewal. The overriding strategy in Northern Ireland relating to children is *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge. A Ten-Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, 2006-2010*, published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2006 (OFMDFM, 2006). This strategy was developed over 4 years in widespread consultation with children and other stakeholders. Relevant parts include:

- Section 15: 'Working to ensure a coordinated partnership approach to policy development across Government and coherent delivery of services ... for improved outcomes'.
- Section 17: 'In recognising that NI is emerging from a prolonged period of conflict, we will ensure that our children and young people are supported to grow together in a shared, inclusive society where they respect diversity and difference'.
- Section 20: 'In accordance with the UNCRC, we will be proactive in obtaining the views of the child on matters of significance to them'.
- Section 21: 'Needs-driven evidence-based practice will inform future practice'.

3.7 OFMDFM Draft Action Plan

The Draft Action Plan for 2010-2012 developed from the strategy *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge* (OFMDFM, 2006) identified key areas of work. These included **targeting social need assessment** to deliver improved outcomes for children, based on new performance indicators that are linked to outcomes and, as such, enable a more precise evaluation of the achievement of strategic targets.

In November 2012, the **Draft Action Plan for 2012-2014** was published by the OFMDFM in 2012. This document reasserts commitments to targeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in Northern Irish society and enhancing interagency working to achieve this. A target approach is outlined that involves 5 priority work programmes:

- Early Years and Early Intervention;
- Literacy and Numeracy;
- Transitions;
- Integrated Delivery;
- Joined-up Planning and Commissioning.

In addition to this, the recent development of the **Delivering Social Change Framework** is indicative of a growing determination to coordinate key actions across Government departments to take forward work on priority social policy areas (OFMDFM, 2012).

3.8 Education policies: Racial Policy in Education – Good Practice Guide 2001

The Racial Policy in Education, published by the Department of Education and the Equality Commission (2001), states that schools should '*develop and maintain an equality culture which promotes equality of opportunity, the development of good relations and the elimination of unlawful discrimination*'. It recommends that the following steps should be considered:

- the development of equal opportunities policies and procedures;
- a commitment and ownership of the process at a senior level;
- an audit of existing policies and procedures;
- the development of racial equality standards;

- implementation of a programme of action;
- monitoring, evaluation and review.

As part of the Government's **Neighbourhood and Renewal Strategy 2003**, schools are encouraged to act as a focal point to work with communities and voluntary agencies in their catchment area to create neighbourhood partnerships to provide additional services to disadvantaged children and their families. The OFMDFM have identified that supporting the aspirations of young people and improving their life chances through education is one way of contributing to community regeneration. The **Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2000** includes an anti-bullying policy, which has been implemented by the Education and Library Boards. The Equality Commission published **Every Child an Equal Child** in 2008, which sets out a number of priority groups that have either displayed consistent educational underachievement or for which there was insufficient information to make that assessment, namely:

- Protestant working-class boys;
- children and young people from the Irish Traveller community;
- gay, lesbian and bisexual children and young people;
- looked-after children and young people;
- children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds;
- young people with caring responsibilities for parents/others;
- children and young people with disabilities;
- children and young people of new residents and migrant workers.

Through the **Extended Schools Policy 2006**, funding is made available for additional services for children who need them. One-third of schools in Northern Ireland operating in the most disadvantaged areas avail of this funding stream. Selected schools collaborate with statutory, voluntary and community organisations operating in the local community to deliver targeted supports that include breakfast clubs, the Education and Learning Support intervention, adult and peer mentoring. Parental supports include parenting classes and ICT skills. In addition, referral to a range of specialist services, such as local social services, local or on-site nursing services, is available in some schools.

The Department of Education established the **Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS)** in April 2007 to provide support to schools that have newcomer children whose first language is not English. Diversity Coordinators, working as part of this service, provide direct help to cluster groups of schools. The **Good Relations Forum** was established in 2005 and is co-chaired by the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. Their recently published policy, *Ensuring the Good Relations Work in our Schools Counts 2010*, is available at www.equalityni.org.

3.9 Restructuring the education sector

The Northern Irish education sector is currently being restructured. This re-organisation entailed a lengthy consultation process, which resulted in a more cohesive policy development approach and also aimed to benefit the development of equality and good relations. The Equality Commission (2008, p. 24) identified this process as providing '*an enormous opportunity for consistent practice and direction in Northern Ireland's education sector*'. This process is to culminate in the creation of the **Education and Skills Authority (ESA)** during 2015. Under the proposals, the ESA will be a single Authority and replace the 9 existing education statutory organisations. Currently, the public services are engaging in a review of public administration and as the Equality Commission (2008) identified, this '*provides an enormous opportunity for consistent practice and direction in Northern Ireland's education sector*'. It is planned to amalgamate into the ESA the range of education bodies that include the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the Irish medium education sector), the five Education and Library Boards and the Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessments (CCEA). This will enable the Department of Education to operate as the strategic policy formulation body for education and the ESA to concentrate on acting as the delivery arm of the Department. In addition, the Department of Education will become a designated body under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and thus subject to its stipulations.

Traveller education has been designated a priority area for change by the Department of Education. *Every School a Good School – A policy for school improvement*, the Department's overarching strategy for raising standards in education and for reducing inequality and underachievement, recognised Travellers as being one of the groups that require a particular focus to close the gap in achievement and inequality. In accordance with this policy, a **Traveller Education Action Framework** is currently in preparation. BELONG has fed into the report compiled by the Taskforce on Education, which was presented to the Minister for Education in December 2011. More recently, BELONG has spear-headed the consultative process with Traveller families on the Action Framework for Traveller Education (Department of Education, 2011). This framework outlines a flexible, consistent and effective approach towards inclusion of Travellers across all areas of education. As well as playing an active role in the consultative process leading to the publication of this Draft Action Framework, BELONG has been involved in the design and the implementation of the new delivery mechanism called **Traveller Support Services (TESS)**, whose core aims are:

- to develop the capacity of schools to support the learning outcomes of Traveller children and young people;
- to develop the capacity of schools to work together on a cluster basis to maximise their delivery of effective education for all Traveller children and young people in their area;
- to maximise the involvement of key stakeholders, including Traveller parents and partner agencies.

3.10 Policy and practice relating to healthcare

According to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY, 2003), Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the routine collection of data on health services provided to ethnic minority groups. Unfortunately, planning as a result of gathering such data is not in evidence in service commissioning. No regional statistics across all regions are routinely kept in relation to the health needs of ethnic minority and Traveller children. This results in a gap matching provision to need and the consequent inequality of outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families. Connolly (2002) noted a number of difficulties experienced by Black and Minority Ethnic people, which, he suggests, are repeated across a wide range of public services (including health and social services). These include language barriers, lack of awareness as to what services are available, low take-up of GP registration and the need for staff training and cultural awareness. To address these issues, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety devised the **Racial Equality in Health and Social Care: Good Practice Guidelines** (DHSSPS, 2003) in consultation with the Equality Commission. The guidelines include the employment of interpreters to work with link workers and health workers, the addressing of appropriate dietary needs in hospitals, the addressing of appropriate cultural and religious beliefs, and consultation with ethnic minorities in planning processes and through user surveys.

A public consultative process on Special Educational Needs among children in Northern Ireland commenced in February 2013. BELONG is represented in this process. Issues identified by BELONG as needing attention are the lack of data collected on BME children with special needs, the difficulty in diagnosing special educational needs among BME children, lack of understanding of the supports available among BME parents and the stigma attached to special educational needs in some minority communities. These issues culminate in placing some BME children in a triple bind of disadvantage in their everyday lives.

3.11 Health needs of the Traveller community

Local and regional health strategies include the **New Targeting Social Need (TSN) Initiative**, which aims to ensure that Government programmes are more effective in helping those in greatest need by directing resources and efforts towards tackling social exclusion. The New TSN specifies that: *'Some groups have additional needs which, if not catered for, could place their most vulnerable members at risk due to social exclusion. Examples of such groups ... are Travellers and members of other ethnic minority communities.'* The Northern Ireland Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Travellers has set three detailed recommendations in its report, including interdepartmental recommendations and recommendations relevant to the DHSSPS and other statutory health and social service providers.

It is notable that some work has already been carried out in order to address these recommendations. The publication of the *Racial Equality in Health and Social Care: Good Practice Guidelines* (DHSSPS, 2003), the commissioning by the DHSSPS of a Traveller Community Health Care Programme, and participation in the **All Ireland Traveller Health Study** (in partnership with the Department of Health and Children in the Republic of Ireland) are some examples of work in this area. The *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, published in 2010, is the first study of Traveller health status and health needs that involves all Travellers living on the island of Ireland, North and South, and arose from a recommendation in the Irish Department of Health and Children's National Traveller Health Strategy, 2002-2005. The study was a large-scale and ambitious undertaking, and represents a major commitment by the sponsoring stakeholders to Travellers' health. The census of families North and South marks the completion of the first stage of this exercise. Following on from this report is the Vital Statistics Report and the consultative process with both Travellers and service providers, employing both qualitative and quantitative interview methodologies. The birth cohort study is still in follow-up stage and is a major prospective issue for the future. The 2010 final report, *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, assimilates findings from all stages of the project, together with recommendations.

McVeigh (2002) noted a lack of specific services for refugees and asylum-seekers in the statutory sector and recommended that appropriate services need to be put in place. Numbers of refugee and asylum-seekers in Northern Ireland remain fairly small, although the diversity of background has increased since 2000. Over 30 different countries are now represented and include Sri Lanka, Russia, Macedonia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Romania. The DHSSPS has published policy guidance for these groups, entitled **Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Policy Guidelines 2003**.

3.12 Upcoming legislation and policies in process of consultation

The draft policy **Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education** (CRED) concerns community relations and racial equality, and proposes a new racial equality strategy for educating children and young people to develop self-respect, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination. The CRED will also contribute to the development of an enhanced anti-bullying strategy. BELONG has fed into the policy's consultation process, which finished in November 2010, and identified the need for schools to have mandatory reporting of bullying and racial harassment incidents.

On a fact-finding visit to Northern Ireland in 2011, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2008, p. 14) stated that '*It is a particular concern in Northern Ireland, where over 20 per cent of children reportedly live in persistent poverty. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the Government's strategy is not sufficiently targeted at those groups of children in most severe poverty and that the standard of living of Traveller children is particularly poor*'. The **Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration** (CSI) carried out a consultation in 2010 to which BELONG contributed. In a response to the consultation, the CSI reasserted an interagency approach that would work in conjunction with the *Racial Equality Strategy for NI* and the 10-year strategy *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*. It proposed in particular a framework identifying a more cohesive way to deliver some aspects of the strategy (Todd, 2010).

BELONG also contributed to the consultation process on the draft Child Poverty Strategy in 2010. The strategic priorities outlined in its **Child Poverty Strategy Action Plan 2011** (OFMDFM, 2011, pp. 12-14) include:

- to ensure, as far as possible, that poverty in childhood does not translate into poor outcomes for children as they move into adult life;
- to support more parents to access reasonably paid work;
- to ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive;
- to target financial support to be responsive to family situations.

A delivery plan incorporating the key initiatives and priorities as outlined in the Action Plan is currently under development.

Children's rights

This section looks at three key aspects relating to disadvantaged BME children in Northern Ireland – their rights; their empowerment and their participation. In 2008, the Northern Ireland Assembly established the **All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities**, with Northern Ireland's Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) acting as its secretariat. This group was established as a mechanism for representatives of ethnic minority communities to discuss and lobby with politicians on issues of specific concern.

On a recent fact-finding visit to Northern Ireland, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2008, p. 6) noted that it was *'concerned that in practice certain groups of children, such as Roma and Irish Travellers' children; migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children; lesbian, bisexual, gay, and Transgender children (LGBT); and children belonging to minority groups, continue to experience discrimination and social stigmatisation'*. The Committee is also *'concerned at the general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children, especially adolescents, which appears to exist in the State Party, including in the media, and may be often the underlying cause of further infringements of their rights'*. Because legislation and policy cut across a range of socio-political factors concerning disadvantaged children, it has the effect that children's rights are seen in a fragmented way. Therefore, in the absence of much-needed cross-referencing, new policies may not be positively impacting on overall children's rights. Other issues of concern regard the sometimes conflicting rights of the parent vis à vis the child:

- Parental rights regarding corporal punishment *versus* the rights of the child not to be chastised using corporal punishment.
- Parental rights regarding the right to limit the right of the child to mix with others of a different cultural background *versus* the right of the child to choose to do so.

Under the UNCRC, the UK Government is required to provide a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, setting out the extent to which Government has complied with the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In preparation for the NI output to the next report in January 2014, the OFMDFM has been working with the Children and Youth Programme to measure performance on implementing children's rights as set out in the UNCRC. To this end, 8 special protection clusters have been created to draw up a framework of potential indicators around the 8 core themes of the UNCRC. BELONG is represented in the 'Special Protections Measures' cluster. As a member of this cluster, BELONG contributes to:

- stakeholder engagement via workshops and one-to-one discussions;
- development of a policy briefing summarising emergent issues.

The UK is currently preparing to bring the provisions of the UNCRC into domestic law. In line with developments elsewhere in the UK, the **Children's Rights Implementation Group** (CRIG) has been established. The CRIG acts as an advisory board to the NICCY to promote the implementation of children's rights through the use of domestic legislative powers. BELONG has been invited to contribute to this process as a member of this working group. With a focus on the UNCRC, the specific goals of the CRIG are:

- to undertake a comprehensive review of the obligations of the Northern Irish government under the UNCRC;
- to conduct a review of the literature relating to this issue;
- to promote stakeholder engagement via workshops and one-to-one discussions;
- to develop a policy briefing summarising emergent issues.

Empowerment

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was established in 2003 and identified weaknesses in the delivery of services to children through its published research *Rhetoric or Reality – A Review of Children's Rights in Northern Ireland, 2007/2008*. In addition to carrying out research, another of NICCY's functions is to act in an advocacy role with young people where their parents or guardians are not able to do so. This is particularly relevant for looked-after children. NICCY can advocate where, for example, children have complaints regarding health or social services. NICCY also has taken legal cases on behalf of children in relation to their rights. These functions serve to empower vulnerable children. Interventions to empower children include those that recognise and support the child experience of their own culture. As Murray and Doherty

(2001, p. 42) state: '*Children exposed to negative images about their home culture, language, background or ability, however subtle or unintentional, will be affected to the detriment of their self-image and group identity, with resulting conflicts of loyalty between home and the education setting*'. Empowering children includes making their culture visible and recognised, and public service personnel should be trained in cultural competence (A. Godfrey, personal communication, December 2010). At the universal level, this would include simple things like posters depicting children like them – black or minority ethnic children seeing themselves reflected in what they see on the walls, hear read to them in stories and poems.

As suggested by one of BELONG's Board members in the Interim evaluation report (Forkan *et al*, 2012): '*They shouldn't see themselves as not there ... it's about making sure there is proper training and proper development in relation to awareness of children's ethnic heritage for staff within basic services like speech and language service, mental health. That the person has a knowledge and a way of being and knowing about the child whose heritage is somewhere else may need to be addressed in a specific way. It's not easily laid down*'. The BELONG Showcase Event in April 2013 provided a forum for young people to make their concerns heard by NICCY. It also provided a platform for other advocacy and stakeholders in youth provision to address each other and to state their intentions to act in the interest of children.

Participation

There are several forums, networks and bodies that have the role of ensuring that vulnerable groups have their views considered when policy and practice are being designed. The **Racial Equality Forum** was established in 2003 and has 'done much to guide the work of Government departments' (OFMDFM, 2005b). It has a key role in partnership working and influencing policy-making in this sphere. Membership of the Forum consists of 50 representatives from across statutory bodies, NGOs, and community, voluntary and ethnic groups, including Travellers.

The **Participation Network** was established in 2007 by the OFMDFM as part of the Government's commitment to implementing the requirements in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. The aim of the Participation Network is to support statutory agencies, local government and Government departments to engage effectively with children and young people in public decision-making.

In 2008, the Northern Ireland Assembly established the **All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities**, with Northern Ireland's Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) acting as its secretariat. This group was established as a mechanism for representatives of ethnic minority communities to discuss and lobby with politicians on issues of specific concern. In addition, BELONG has developed a facilitated process that directly involves BME children and parents in the consultation process for relevant legislation, strategy and policy impacting on them. This forum proceeds on a locality basis and has opportunities to engage further at regional level.

4. Contribution of BELONG to policy development

This review has provided a discussion of the primary policies and legislative provisions affecting BME children in Northern Ireland. They are affected by a number of policies at governmental and international level. While there are many policy and legislative provisions relating to BME children in Northern Ireland, the efficacy of these provisions has been called into question in recent studies. Recent critiques have highlighted that the Northern Irish Racial Equality Strategy has failed to prevent the rise of racism and racist violence (Knox, 2011). Other commentators have documented widespread institutional racism in key public services such as health, education and social services (Mann-Klerr, 1997). The fragmented nature and absence of cross-referencing between policies has been documented as undermining their ability to provide effective support and protection for BME children (Forkan *et al*, 2011). There is a need, therefore, to address these systemic shortcomings in order to create conditions conducive to the creation of a cohesive inclusive pluralist society.

According to the BELONG's Programme Manager, in recent months BELONG has been gaining more acknowledgement for its unique position in being able to combine policy-level expertise and a robust practice base. BELONG's position within the Children's Services Structures of the CYPSP has been a

positive factor in enabling it to 'get their name out there' and to establish BELONG's relationship as a strategic stakeholder in the development of policy. In 2012, the current Programme Manager was invited to make a presentation to a training intervention run as part of a series of events aimed at high-level CYPSP members (e.g. CEOs, expert practitioners) through the **Improving Children's Lives Initiative** at Queen's University Belfast. Following this presentation, BELONG was invited to engage in a consultation on the Racial Equality Strategy and to contribute to the Children's Rights Implementation Group (CRIG), advising the Government on enhancing the implementation of children's rights.

In spite of the challenging political environment in which it operates, external stakeholders invited to comment on BELONG's strategic work through the Services Review survey (see *Appendix M*) in the development of policy indicated that BELONG is seen as having made a significant contribution to the development of policies concerning BME children and communities. While these initiatives have yet to see completion, BELONG's input into consultative forums and advisory groups across a range of fields relating to BME children can be seen as a successful outcome. Some of BELONG's most prominent contributions include:

- **CYPSP:** The BELONG Programme has been positioned within the new Children's Services Structures of CYPSP since its foundation. BELONG Partnership Board members are also represented across the various structures of CYPSP and Locality Workers sit on CYPSP Locality Planning Groups. BELONG has played a key role in the consultative process for the CYPSP's BME children and Young People's Draft Action Plan. The prevalence of the concept of belonging in this plan is an indication of the important role played by BELONG in this process.
- **Action Framework for Traveller Education:** BELONG has fed into the report compiled by the Taskforce on Education, presented to the Minister for Education in December 2011. More recently, BELONG has spear-headed the consultative process with Traveller families on the Action Framework for Traveller Education (Department of Education, 2011). This framework outlines a flexible, consistent and effective approach towards inclusion of Travellers across all areas of education. As part of this approach, the Traveller Support Services (TESS) will be established in 2013. As well as playing an active role in the consultative process leading to the publication of this Draft Action Framework, BELONG has been involved in the design and implementation of the new delivery mechanism. BELONG's involvement in the creation of TESS is underpinned by the SELB's membership of the BELONG Board as the education partner.
- **Special Educational Needs among children in Northern Ireland:** A public consultative process on special educational needs among children in Northern Ireland commenced in February 2013. BELONG is represented in this process and has been invited to wider resultant discussions and fora by NICCY.
- **Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education:** BELONG contributed to consultations on the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED) policy. One issue identified by BELONG is that there should be mandatory reporting by schools of bullying and racial harassment incidents. The CRED policy entails a new Racial Equality Strategy for educating children and young people to develop self-respect, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination. It also entails the development of an enhanced anti-bullying strategy. BELONG's work in providing guidance and tools to mainstream providers through interventions such as the Charter for Change⁶⁶ and the Diversity Awareness Training interventions⁶⁷ support the implementation of the CRED.
- **Cohesion, Sharing and Integration:** The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) carried out a consultation in 2010, to which BELONG contributed. In a response to the consultation, the CSI reasserted an interagency approach that would work in conjunction with the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland and the 10-year strategy *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge*.

⁶⁶ See [Appendix A: Charter for Change, p. A-1](#).

⁶⁷ See [Appendix F: Diversity Awareness Training, p. A-27](#).

- **Child Poverty Strategy:** BELONG also contributed to the consultation process on the draft Child Poverty Strategy in 2010. A delivery plan incorporating the key initiatives and priorities as outlined in the Action Plan was being developed at the time of this evaluation (OFMDFM, 2011, pp. 12-14).
- **Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:** BELONG is currently involved in the development of a framework of indicators for the forthcoming Northern Irish and UK report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child through its representation in the 'Special Protections Measures' cluster. As a member of this cluster, BELONG contributes to:
 - stakeholder engagement via workshops and one-to-one discussions;
 - development of a policy briefing summarising emergent issues.
- **Children's Rights Implementation Group:** In line with developments elsewhere in the UK, the Children's Rights Implementation Group (CRIG), of which BELONG is a member, has been established in order to inform the work of NICCY on enhancing the implementation of children's rights in Northern Ireland. The CRIG acts as an advisory board to the NICCY to promote the implementation of children's rights through the use of domestic legislative powers.

BELONG has successfully established itself as an advocate for the BME community in Northern Ireland. A chief strength of BELONG's strategic work is the role that it plays in empowering BME children and adults to contribute to the debates on, and development of, policies. This was remarked upon by respondents to the Services Review questionnaire (see *Appendix M*):

'BELONG staff have highlighted their own view of the shortcomings in existing policies, but parents as key contributors ... have highlighted a number of shortcomings in policy and practice.'

A notable aspect of BELONG's policy development strategy is the involvement of BME communities and children in consultative forums. BELONG has most recently engaged in consultations on the Draft Action Plan for Traveller Education and on the CYPSP. Previous consultations in which BELONG has involved BME children and parents include the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy. BELONG's involvement of children in consultations was noted by strategic stakeholders as a notable strength of the programme:

'This is an area of particular strength – many organisations pay lip-service to user involvement. BELONG delivers this as a key principle and methodology – to great effect.' (External stakeholder 1)

BELONG has developed the BME Consultative Forum, a process that directly involves BME children in the consultation process for relevant legislation, strategy and policy impacting on them and their families. This forum proceeds on a locality basis and has opportunities to engage further at regional level. BELONG has engaged members of BME communities in consultation processes as exemplified by the Draft Action Plan for Traveller Education and the CYPSP Draft Action Plan. BELONG has also supported the development of the regional BME Parents Reference Group for CYPSP. This work was contracted by Parenting NI, who have engaged BELONG to facilitate meetings with parents across the Southern Area and to attend regional meetings.

5. Summary

This review has provided an overview of the main legislative and policy provisions underpinning the BELONG Programme. It has accounted for developments relating to BME children at an international level, as well as providing a comprehensive discussion of the policy landscape in Northern Ireland. The role played by BELONG in contributing to the development of policies relating to BME children and their families has received consideration. In spite of the challenges associated with the political environment in which it operates, BELONG has made a notable contribution towards the development of a policy landscape that reflects the needs of BME children and communities.

Appendix M: Services Review

1. Overview

The ecological model underlines the influence of environments in which children participate regularly in their experiences and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In accordance with this theoretical model, increasing the levels of cultural competence among service providers in the region is a central goal of the BELONG Programme. As stated in the Service Plan (BELONG, 2009, p. 29): *'The programme will also aim to raise awareness and promote understanding of BME communities and their cultures and traditions among the organisations which provide services for children and young people and offer support to organisations in order to assist in the development of their cultural competence.'* To this end, BELONG has engaged in interagency work with the goal of increasing levels of cultural competence among existing service providers. The BELONG Programme also aims to influence the generation of policy and legislation relating to BME children by making links with relevant organisations with responsibility for the development of policy and legislation.

The aim of this Services Review is to generate an understanding of the impact of the BELONG Programme on the provision of services in the Southern Area and to the development of policy relating to BME children in Northern Ireland. Section 2 provides an overview of the evaluation objectives and methods informing this review. Section 3 consists of a discussion of BELONG's interagency work at delivery level; it addresses the interagency relationships that BELONG has developed with existing service providers and assesses the level of satisfaction among stakeholders with the programme. In Section 4, the focus is on interagency work with strategic-level stakeholders, with the nature of interagency relationships discussed. Section 5 present an overview of BELONG's work toward policy development and, finally, Section 6 reviews the perceived impact of the BELONG Programme on BME children and communities.

2. Evaluation outline

The specific research themes for this review are:

- the extent to which BELONG has fostered interagency working with external stakeholders in the region;
- the extent to which BELONG has added value to practice;
- the level of satisfaction with the work of BELONG among existing service providers in the region;
- a particular focus is placed on BELONG's contribution to policy and legislation relating to BME children.

External stakeholders from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors were invited to complete an online survey addressing their experiences of working with BELONG. Interviews were also conducted with members of the BELONG Board regarding their views on its success in interagency working. In order to investigate BELONG's impact on influencing cultural competence at both a delivery and strategic level, external stakeholders were divided into two samples: a *delivery-level sample* who engage in interagency work with BELONG providing services for BME children, and a *strategic-level sample* of stakeholders who work with BELONG towards the development of policy and legislation relating to BME children and communities. Table M-1 provides an overview of the research sample and the methodology informing this review.

Table M-1: Overview of evaluation

Delivery level	
Participants	Local service providers (n=16)
Method	Online questionnaire
Themes	Level of interagency working with BELONG Extent to which BELONG has added value to practice Level of satisfaction with the work of BELONG
Strategic level	
Participants	Strategic-level stakeholders (n=7)
Method	Online questionnaire
Themes	Level of interagency working with BELONG Extent to which BELONG has added value to practice Level of satisfaction with the work of BELONG Role of BELONG in development of policy relating to BME children

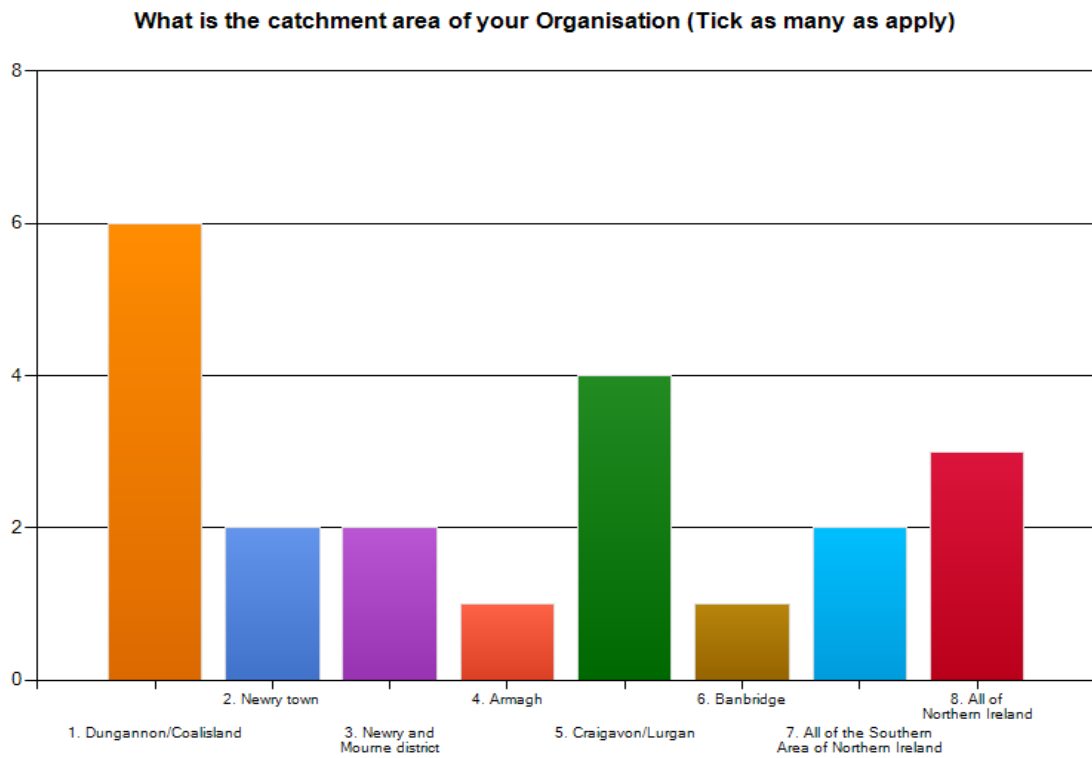
A total of 18 delivery-level stakeholders were invited to complete a survey that investigated the experience of engaging in interagency work with BELONG and the impact of this interagency work on their service; 16 representatives of these organisations completed the questionnaire. Similarly, a total of 13 strategic-level stakeholders were invited to complete a survey addressing the role of BELONG in forwarding the interests of BME children at a strategic, policy-oriented level; 7 external stakeholders completed the questionnaire.

3. Delivery-level responses

3.1 Interagency relationships

BELONG has been successful in forging interagency links with a diverse range of organisations that provide services for BME children throughout Northern Ireland. Of the 16 delivery-level survey respondents, 5 represented statutory organisations, 7 represented community organisations and 4 represented voluntary organisations. Respondents represented different levels of their respective organisations: 7 were managers, 6 were front-line practitioners and 3 were administrators, while 4 registered as 'other'. Respondents also represented a wide geographical base, with Dungannon and Coalisland being the most heavily represented and Banbridge having the fewest respondents (see *Figure M-1*).

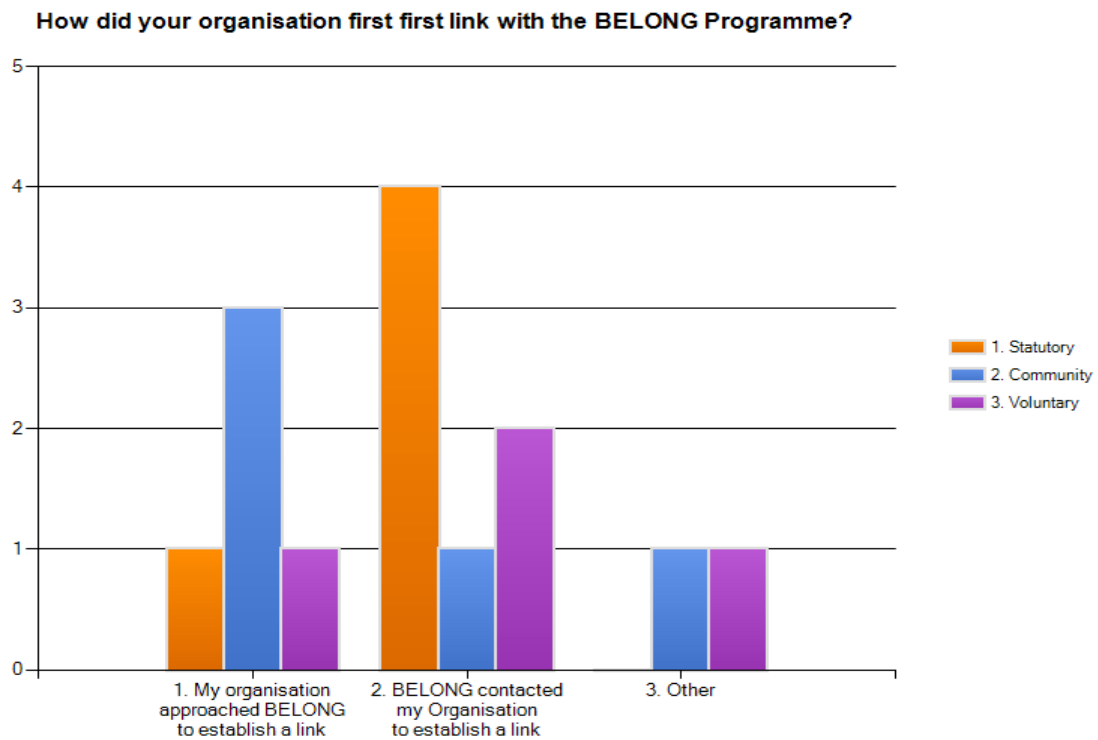
Figure M-1: Catchment area of respondents



The survey set out to explore how links with BELONG had been established. Of the 14 respondents who addressed this question, 5 of these organisations contacted BELONG to establish a link, while 7 indicated that BELONG had initiated the contact with their organisation (see *Figure M-2*).

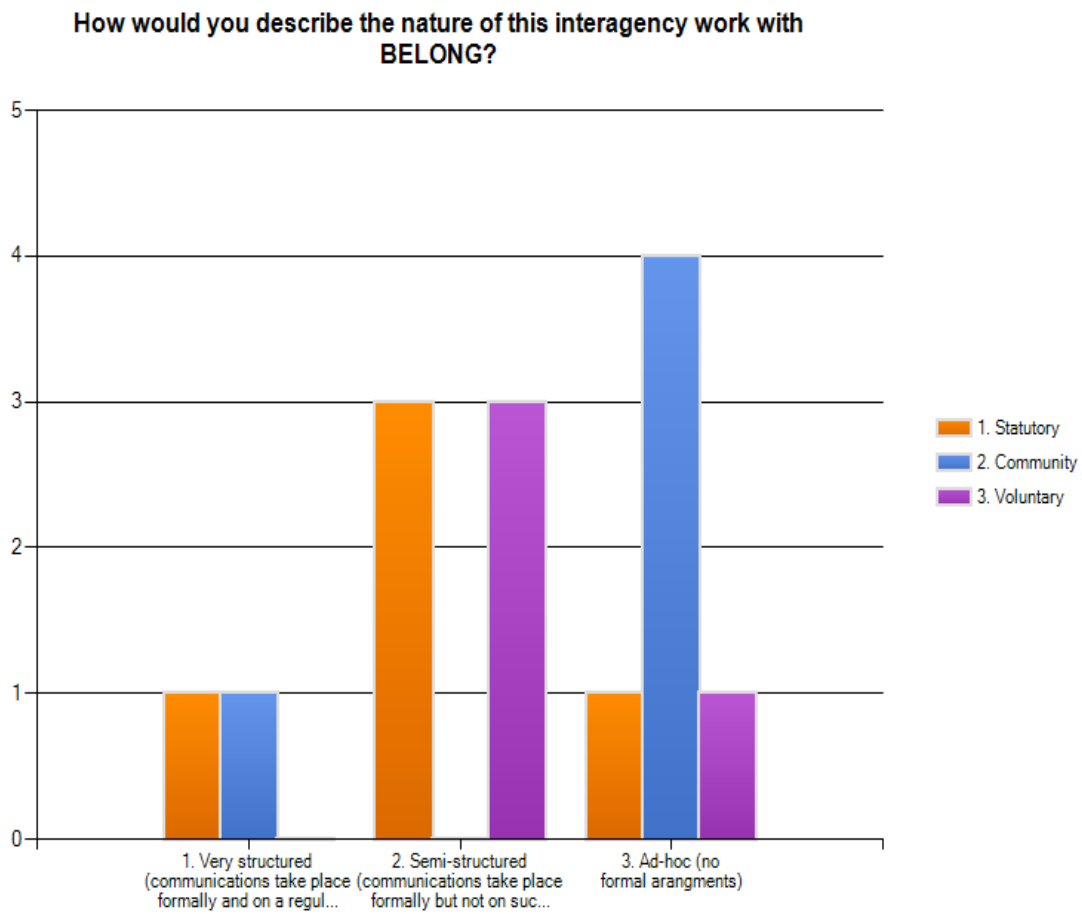
Cross-tabulations on the responses to this question revealed that BELONG has been particularly proactive in establishing links with statutory organisations, while the majority of linkages with community sector stakeholders arose from their having approached BELONG.

Figure M-2: Initial contact with BELONG



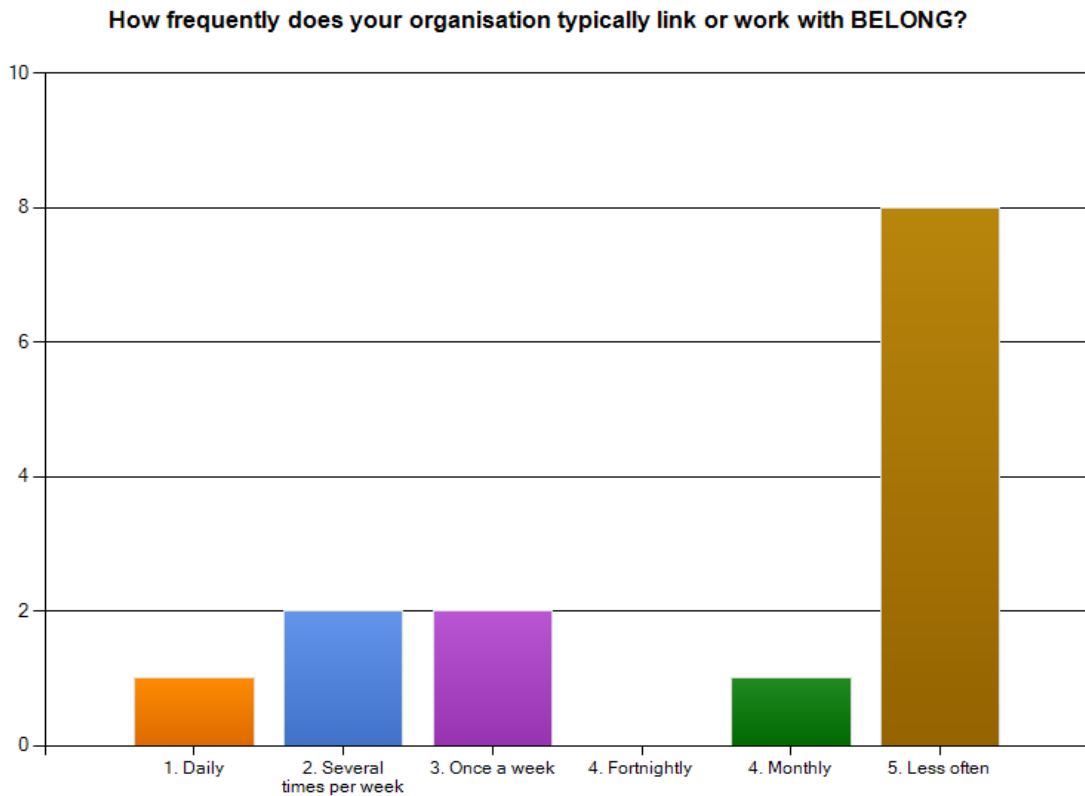
The survey addressed the nature of interagency links with BELONG. Interagency work at delivery level was shown to be largely carried out through semi-formal or informal arrangements (see *Figure M-3*). Only 2 organisations reported having a very structured relationship with BELONG. 7 organisations reported that they had a semi-structured relationship with BELONG, meeting formally but not on a regular basis. 6 organisations indicated that their meetings took place on an ad hoc basis.

Figure M-3: Nature of interagency working relationships



As seen in Figure M-4, the majority of organisations (8) met infrequently, typically less often than on a monthly basis. 5 organisations met with BELONG once a week or more frequently.

Figure M-4: Regularity of meeting with BELONG



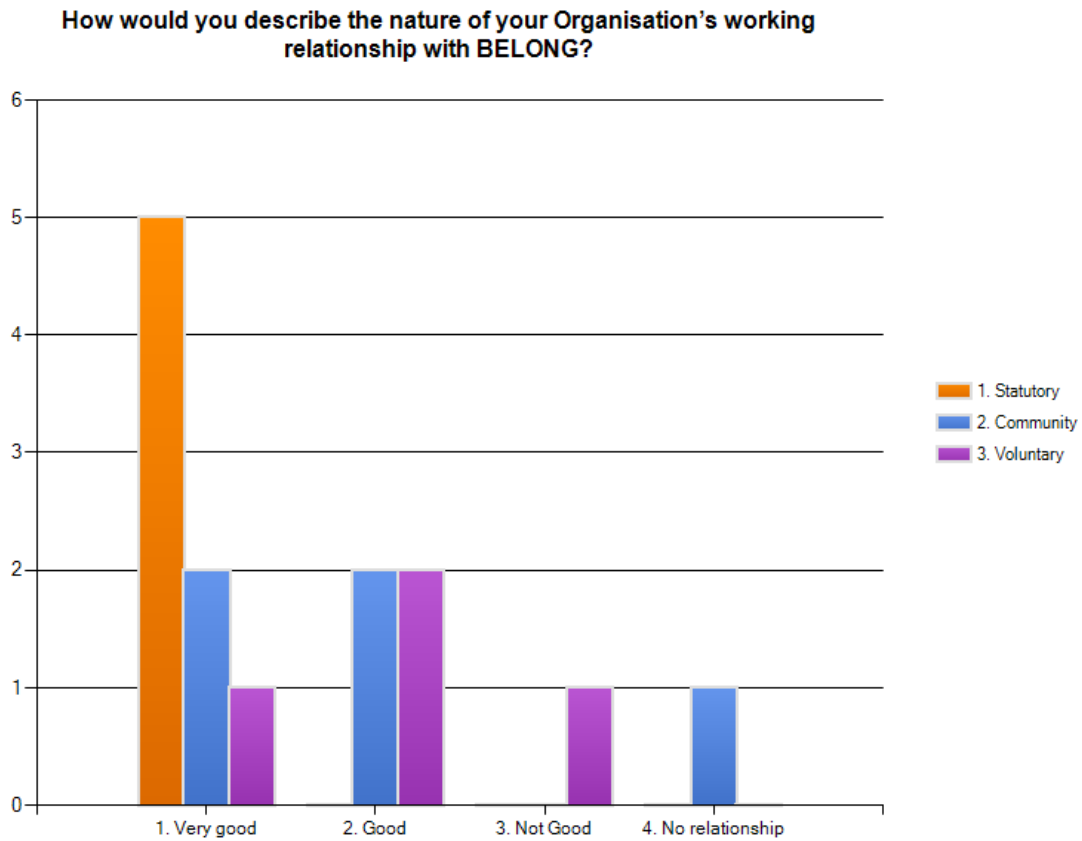
Attitudes to working relationships with BELONG were largely positive. 8 respondents described their working relationship with BELONG as 'very good', with 7 respondents describing it as 'good'. Only one respondent expressed dissatisfaction with the working relationship. As seen in Figure M-5, the most positive working relationships were recorded by representatives of statutory organisations, with all of these respondents classifying their working relationships as 'very good'.

Positive impressions of the experience of conducting interagency work were further underlined by summaries of joint work conducted with BELONG:

'Good working relationship.'

'From BELONG working for over 3 years [sic]. We were able to organise a lot of workshops. Multicultural workshops and meetings ... Thank you for your support ...'

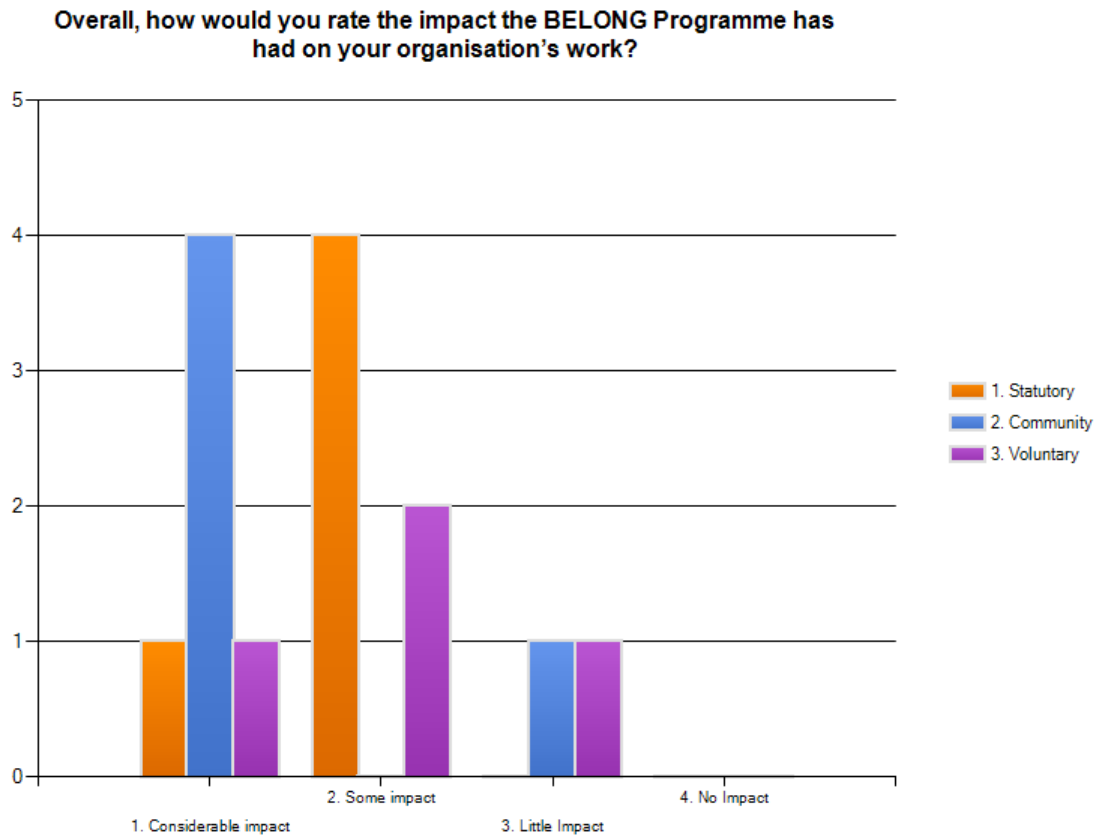
Figure M-5: Working relationships with BELONG



There was positive feedback on the impact of BELONG's interagency work (see *Figure M-6*). While only 13 respondents completed this question, 4 recorded that they were 'very satisfied' with the help they have received from BELONG, with a further 9 indicating that they were 'satisfied'.

Similarly, 6 organisations believed that BELONG had had a 'considerable impact' on their work, with 6 indicating that BELONG had had 'some impact' and 2 reporting 'little impact' on their work. None reported 'no impact'. As illustrated in *Figure M-6*, the highest level of impact was registered by statutory sector stakeholders.

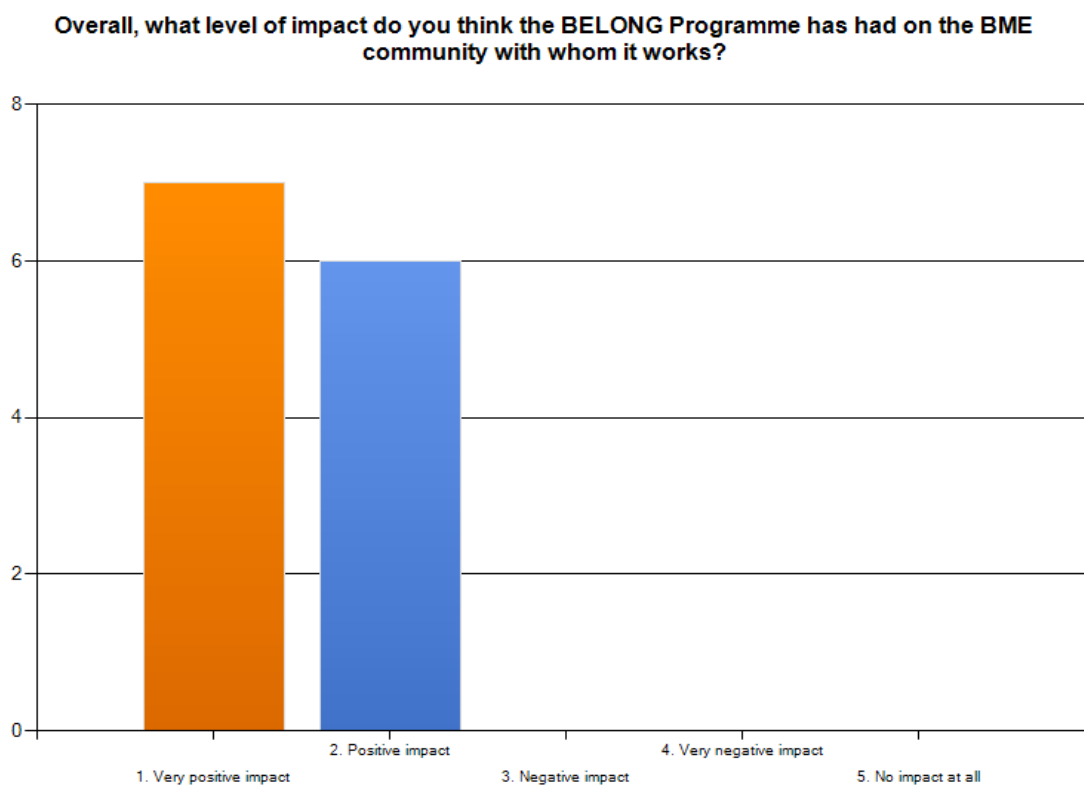
Figure M-6: Level of impact of BELONG



3.2 Impact of BELONG through interagency working at delivery level

Delivery-level respondents were asked to provide feedback on the impact of BELONG on the BME communities with whom it works. While only 13 respondents completed this section of the questionnaire, feedback was again positive, with 7 respondents indicating that it has had a 'very positive impact' and 6 respondents reporting a 'positive impact' (see *Figure M-7*).

Figure M-7: Level of impact of BELONG on BME communities



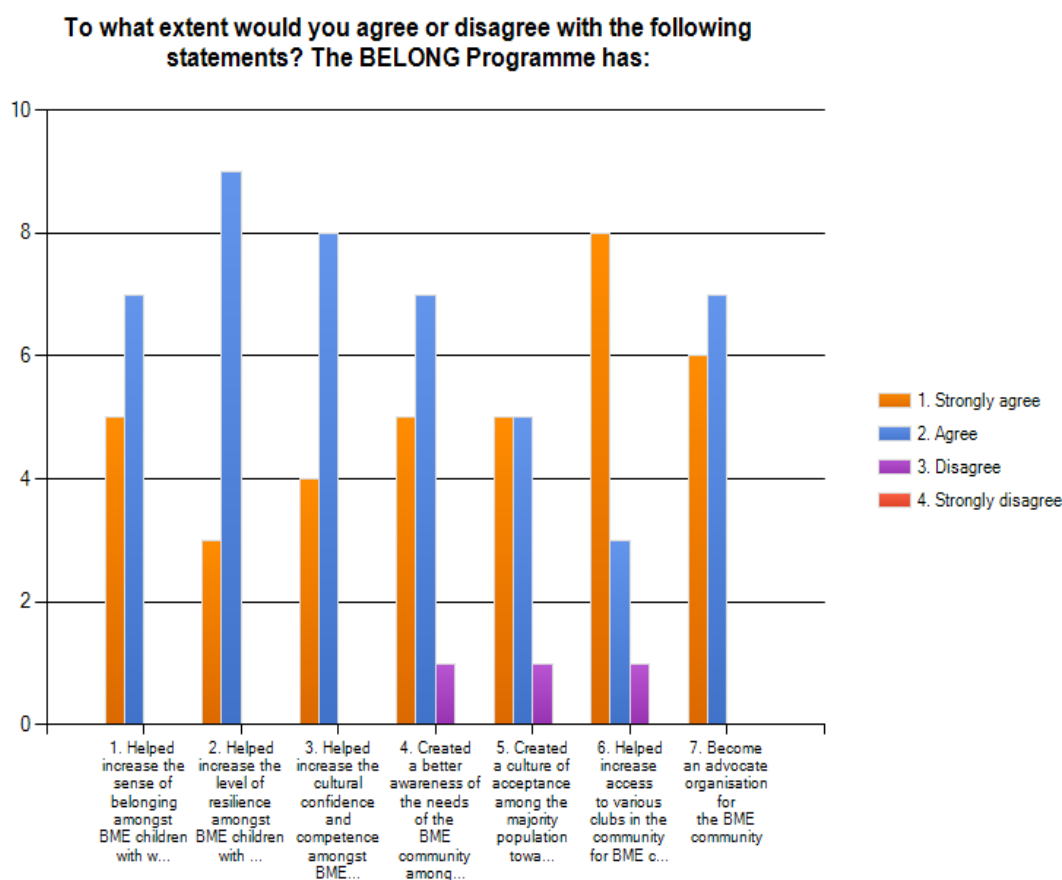
In order to establish more detail on the potential areas of BELONG's impact, respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they believed it:

- helped increase the sense of belonging among BME children with whom it works;
- helped increase the level of resilience among BME children with whom it works;
- helped increase cultural confidence and competence among BME children with whom it works;
- created a better awareness of the needs of the BME communities among whom it works;
- created a culture of acceptance among the majority population towards BME children and communities;
- helped increase access to various clubs in the community for BME children;
- has become an advocate organisation for the BME community.

As illustrated in Figure M-8, of the 13 respondents who completed the questionnaire:

- 7 'agreed' and 5 'strongly agreed' that BELONG has helped to increase the *sense of belonging* among BME children with whom it has worked;
- 9 'agreed' and 3 'strongly agreed' that BELONG has been successful in *increasing levels of resilience* among BME children;
- 8 'agreed' and 4 'strongly agreed' that BELONG's work has been instrumental in *increasing cultural confidence* among BME children;
- similarly, positive attitudes were recorded towards BELONG's work in *creating a better awareness* of the needs of the BME community among other service providers in the region; in *creating a culture of acceptance* among the majority population; and in *increasing access* to various clubs in the community for BME children;
- finally, 7 'agreed' and 6 'strongly agreed' that BELONG has become an *advocate organisation* for the BME community.

Figure M-8: Assessment of the impact of the BELONG Programme



3.3 Delivery-level overview

Overall, the delivery-level survey indicates that BELONG has been successful in engaging in interagency working with service providers. Arrangements with delivery-level stakeholders are predominantly on an informal basis. Respondents largely reported their interagency working relationships with BELONG as positively impacting on their work. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents outlined that BELONG's work was positively influencing promoting resilience, cultural confidence and a sense of belonging among BME children.

4. Strategic-level responses

4.1 Strategic-level partnerships

BELONG has also been active in establishing interagency links with strategic stakeholders regarding the provision of services for BME children and communities. Of 13 strategic stakeholder organisations invited to complete an online survey on the experience of interagency working with BELONG, representatives from 7 organisations responded. While the low response rate limits the capacity to fully generalise from the findings, the results provide insight into the success of BELONG in establishing interagency links and the impact of BELONG on the work of these stakeholders at strategic level. In addition to the areas explored in the delivery-level survey (see Section 3 above), the strategic-level survey investigated the success of BELONG in influencing policy and legislation relating to BME children and communities.

Of the 7 respondents to this survey, 5 represented statutory organisations, while 2 represented organisations from the voluntary sector. As seen in Figure M-9, respondents represented organisations from a large catchment area.

Figure M-9: Catchment area for strategic level partnerships

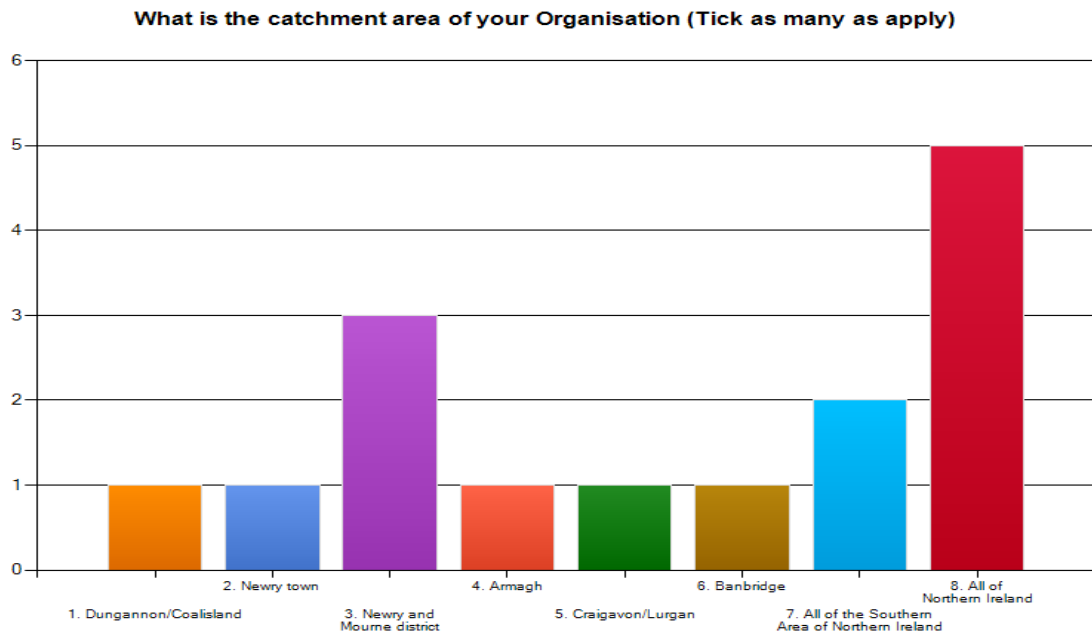
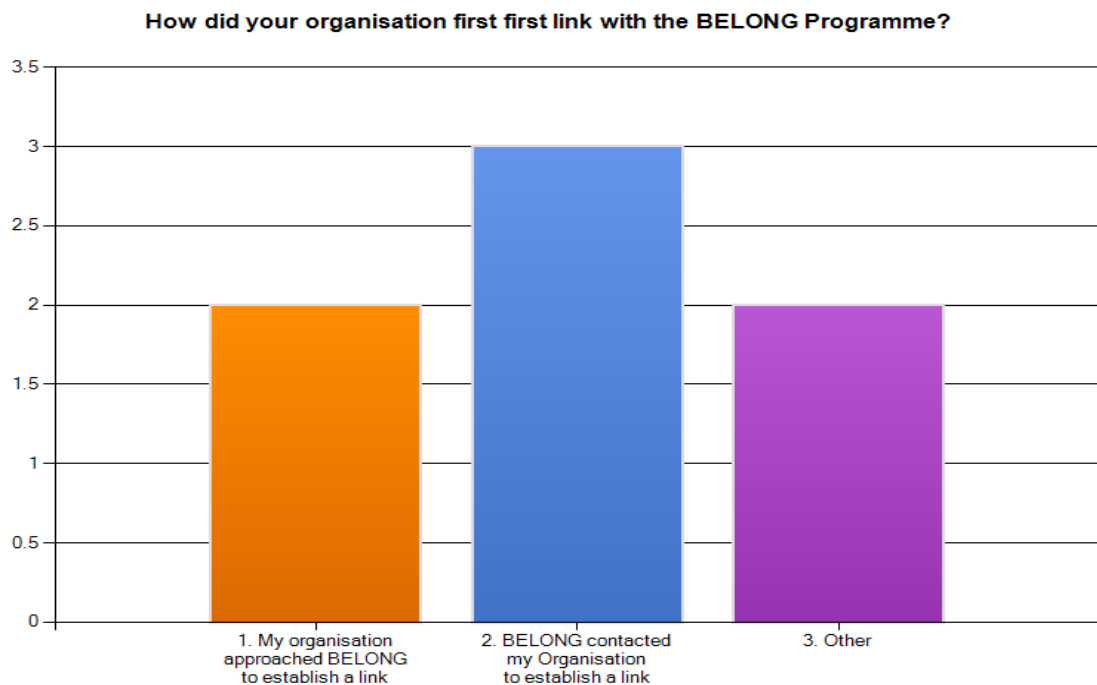


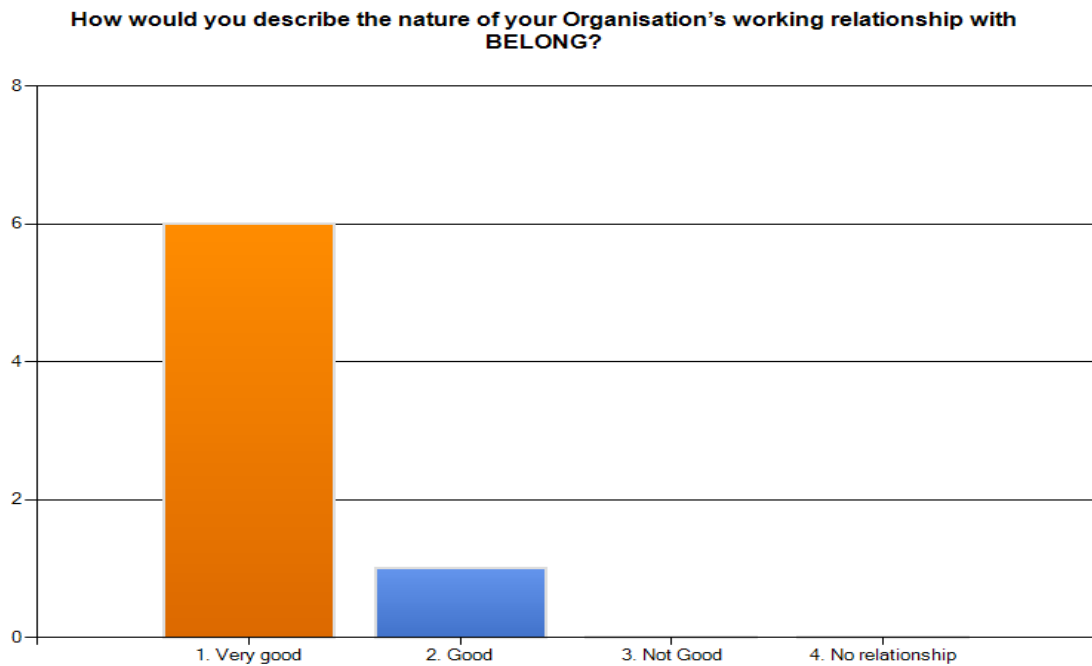
Figure M-10 outlines the manner in which interagency links were established with organisations. It illustrates that BELONG’s initiation of contact has been the most common means through which interagency relationships have been established.

Figure M-10: Establishing linkages with strategic partners



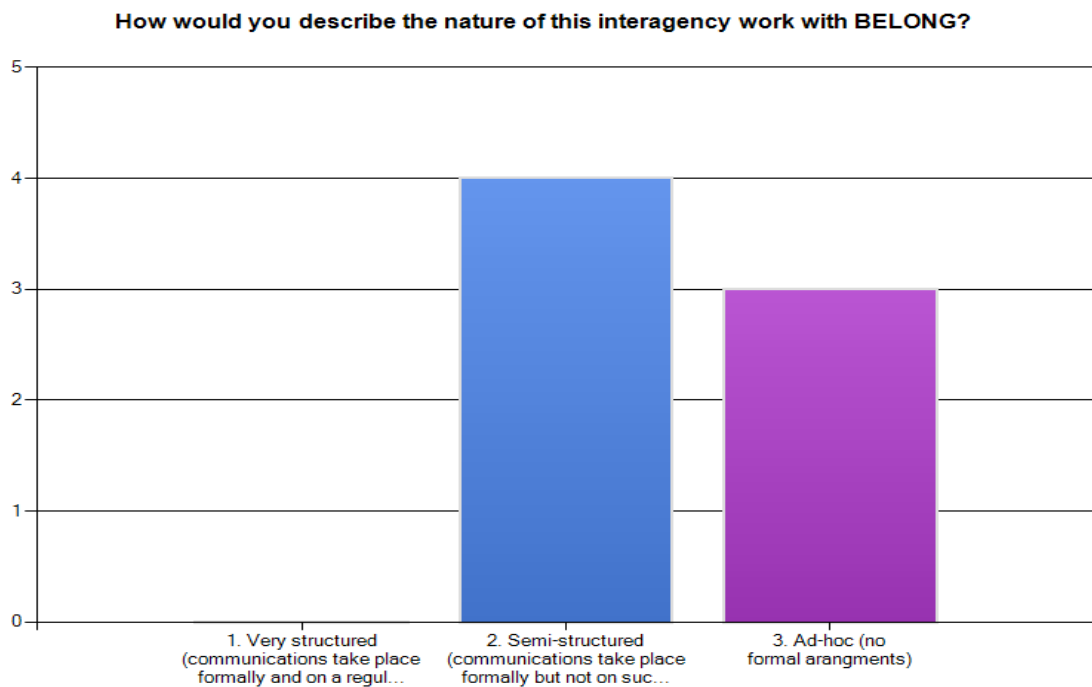
Positive results were recorded to questions addressing the working relationship with BELONG, with 6 of the 7 respondents describing this relationship as ‘very good’, while the remaining respondent described their relationship as ‘good’ (see Figure M-11).

Figure M-11: Nature of working relationship with BELONG



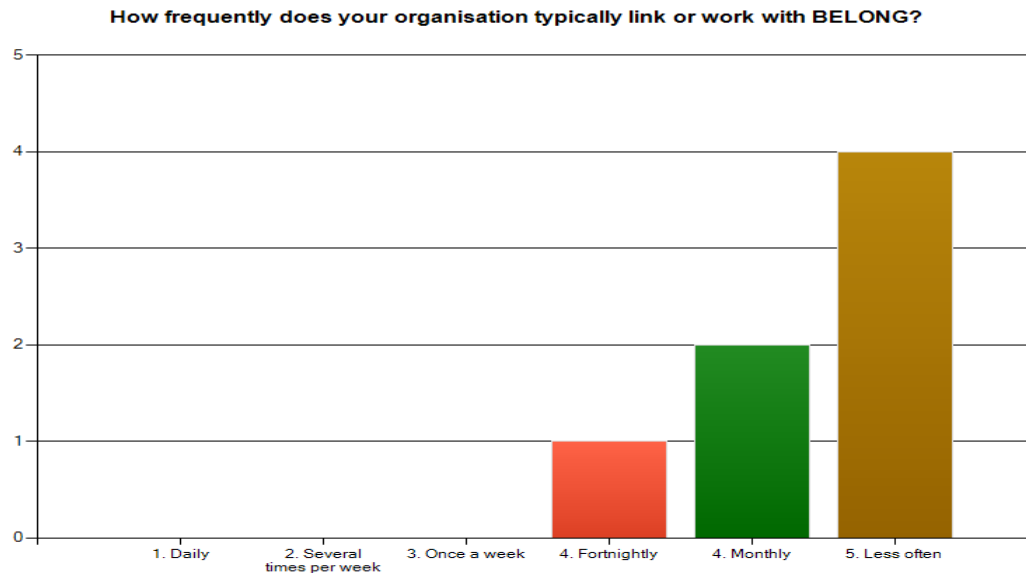
Questions relating to the nature of the working relationship between stakeholder and BELONG revealed the partnership arrangements were largely informal. Only 3 of the 7 respondents had signed a formal working agreement with BELONG. As seen in Figure M-12, 4 respondents described their working relationship with BELONG as 'semi-structured', with communications taking place formally but not on a regular basis.

Figure M-12: Nature of interagency work with BELONG



The informal arrangements of BELONG’s interagency work at strategic level are reflected in the infrequency of meetings. As seen in Figure M-13, only one organisation meets with BELONG on a fortnightly basis, with all other respondents indicating that they meet with BELONG on a monthly basis or less frequently.

Figure M-13: Frequency of engagement

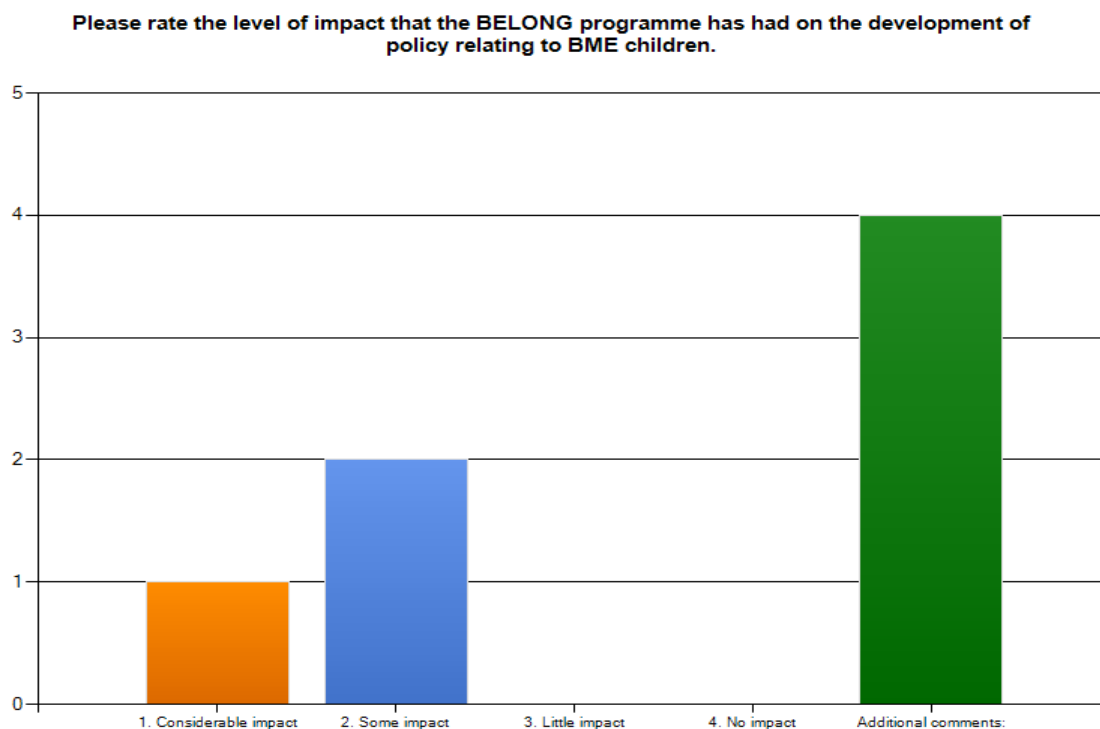


5. Policy development

In order to investigate the extent to which BELONG has contributed to the development of policy and legislation relating to BME children and communities, strategic-level external stakeholders were invited to respond to a series of questions relating to this theme.

BELONG was described as successfully impacting on the development of policy relating to BME children. This issue received a response from a total of 4 respondents. While 2 indicated that they were not qualified to comment on this aspect of BELONG, other respondents responded positively to this question: one respondent described the impact of BELONG as ‘considerable’ and 2 respondents stated that BELONG had had ‘some impact’ in the area (see *Figure M-14*).

Figure M-14: Level of impact that the BELONG Programme has had on the development of policy relating to BME children



Additional comments on this issue were similarly positive, highlighting the success of the programme in involving BME community members in the process of policy development:

'BELONG punches way above its weight in this respect.'

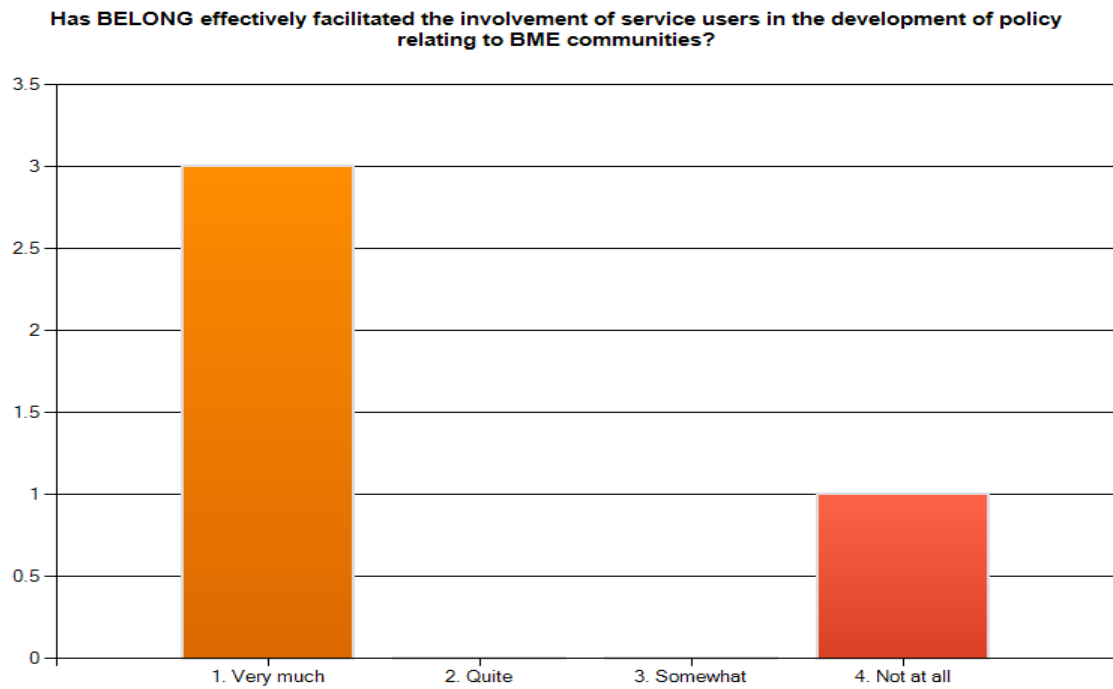
BELONG was also considered as being successful in highlighting shortcomings in existing policies and in facilitating BME community members and parents in doing so:

'They are thorough and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their analysis.'

'BELONG staff have highlighted their own view of the shortcomings in existing policies, but parents as key contributors ... have highlighted a number of shortcomings in policy and practice.'

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they believed BELONG had been successful in facilitating members of BME communities towards contributing to policy development, which was highlighted as being a particular strength of the organisation. A total of 4 responded to this question (with 2 indicating they were not equipped to comment on this issue): 3 respondents believed that BELONG had 'very much' facilitated this issue, while the remaining respondent indicated that they did not believe this to be the case at all (see *Figure M-15*).

Figure M-15: Facilitation of involvement of services users in the development of policy relating to BME communities

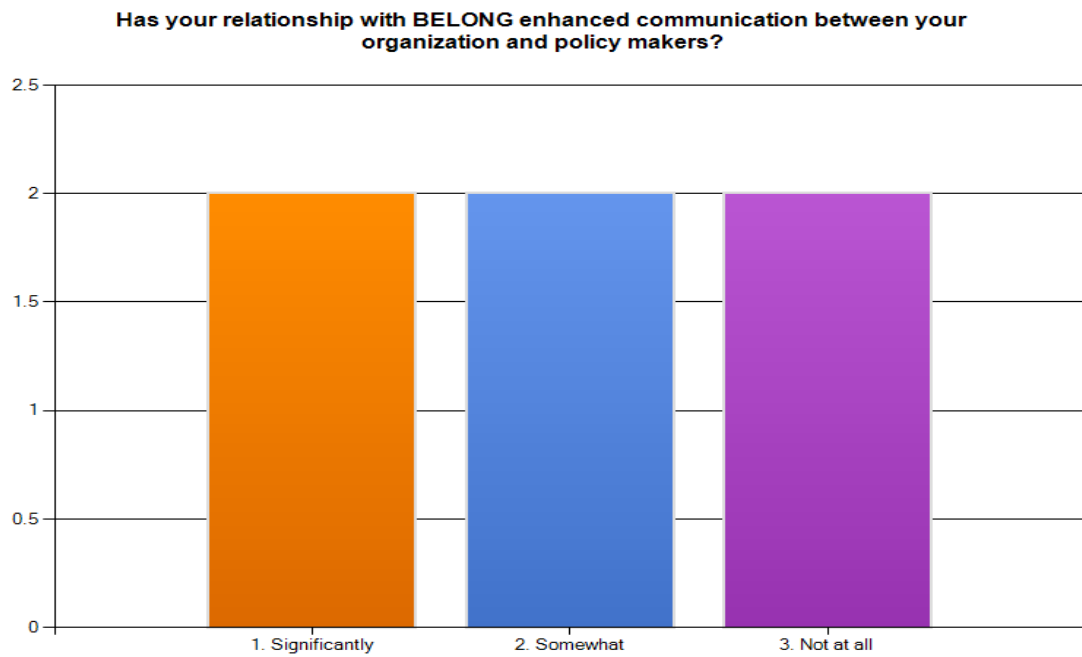


One participant further endorsed this aspect of BELONG's work through an additional comment:

'This is an area of particular strength – many organisations pay lip-service to user involvement. BELONG delivers this as a key principle and methodology – to great effect.'

Respondents were also invited to comment on whether their relationship with BELONG has facilitated links with policy-makers (see *Figure M-16*). For 2 respondents, this was 'significantly' the case, while 2 considered it 'somewhat' the case and a further 2 reckoned there had been no impact on policy linkages.

Figure M-16: Impact on communication with policy-makers

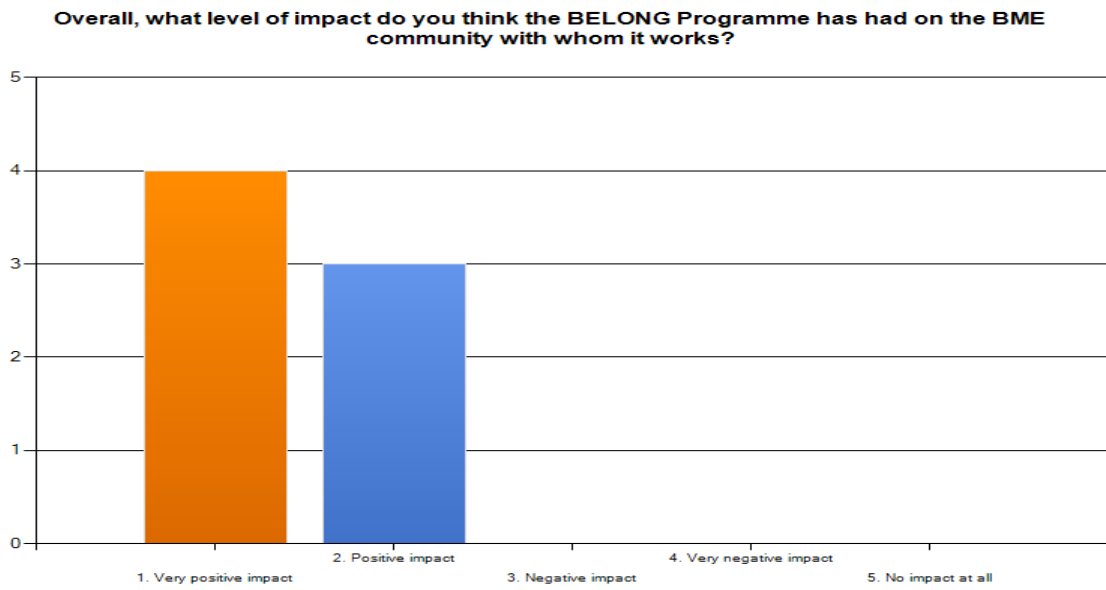


The results of this aspect of the survey indicate that BELONG is perceived as having impacted on the development of policy relating to BME children and communities. Of particular note are the positive reactions of external stakeholders to BELONG's involvement of BME children and communities in the development of policy and legislation.

6. Overall impact of the BELONG Programme

Strategic-level stakeholders indicated a high level of satisfaction with the impact of the BELONG Programme. As outlined in Figure M-17, 4 respondents indicated that they believed that BELONG has had a 'very positive impact' on the BME community with whom it works, while 3 reflected that they believe BELONG to have had a 'positive impact'.

Figure M-17: Level of impact on the BME community



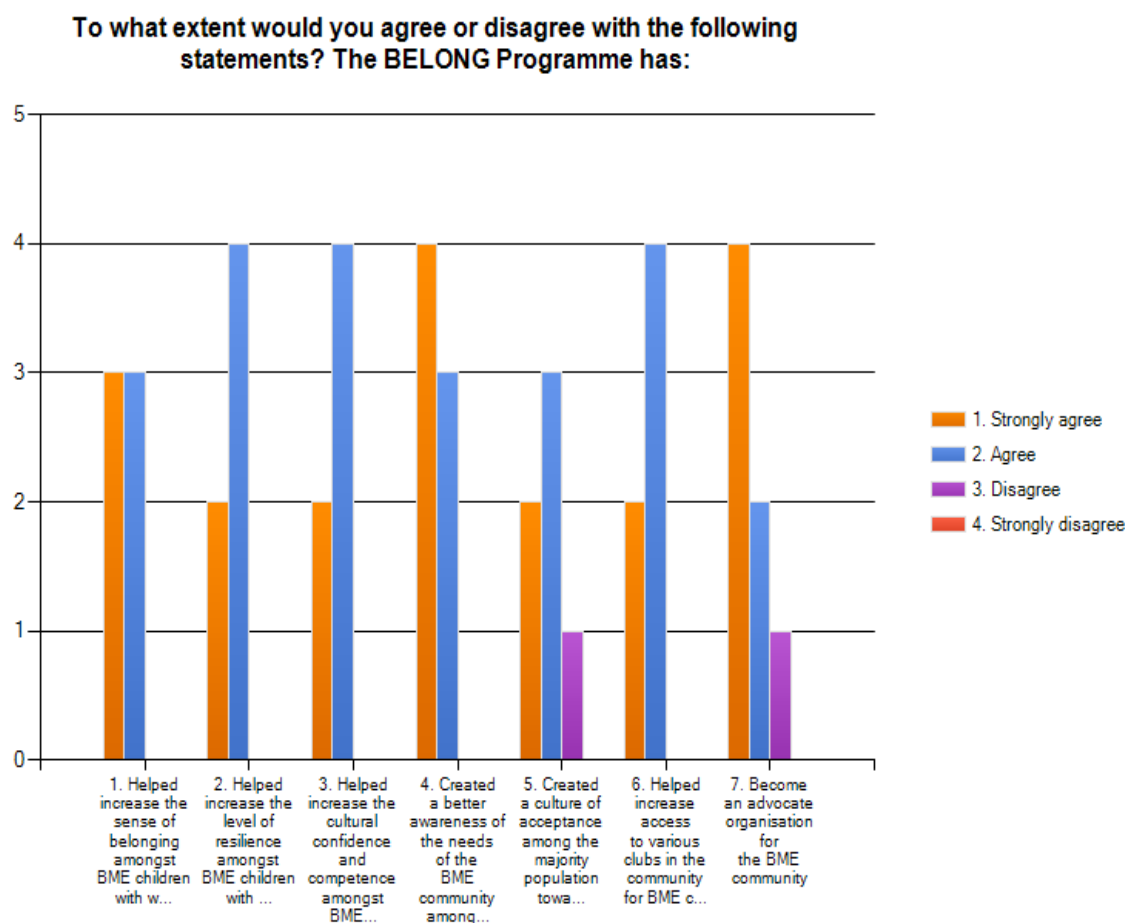
Further insight into this issue is provided by respondents' comments on the main strengths of the BELONG Programme. The success of BELONG on effectively applying learning generated through engagement with BME communities at a delivery level for strategic development was cited as a particular strength:

'Evidence-based practice, model of excellence in relation to services for BME children.'

'Their effective community development approach ... user engagement ... authoritative voice ... value-driven work.'

A more detailed appraisal of the strengths of the BELONG Programme is illustrated in Figure M-18.

Figure M-18: Impact of the BELONG Programme in achieving stated goals



As seen in Figure M-18, perceptions among strategic-level external stakeholders of the impact of BELONG’s work are largely positive, with 6 of the 7 respondents indicating that they believed BELONG to have helped increase levels of belonging, resilience and cultural confidence and competence among BME children, as well as increasing access to mainstream clubs and activities. All respondents indicated that they believed BELONG has created a better awareness of the needs of the BME community among the majority population. While 2 respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and 3 ‘agreed’ that BELONG has created a culture of acceptance among the majority population, one respondent disagreed with this statement. Similarly, 4 respondents asserted that BELONG has become an advocate for the BME community, with 2 further respondents agreeing with this statement; however, one respondent recorded that they disagreed with this view.

7. Summary

External stakeholders reported that BELONG has been largely successful in establishing interagency working relationships at both a delivery level and a strategic level. While the low numbers of strategic-level respondents completing the questionnaire impose some restrictions to the conclusions drawn for analysis of the data, they nonetheless provide a positive indication of BELONG’s success in interagency working. Interagency relationships at both delivery and strategic level were predominantly informal and took place on a semi-structured basis, with respondents generally indicating that these arrangements were successful. Overall, respondents at both levels indicated that BELONG has had a positive impact on the lives and experiences of BME children.

Strategic-level respondents indicated that BELONG has been successful in making a contribution to the development of policy relating to BME children. In particular, respondents highlighted the role of BELONG in facilitating service users in engaging in the policy development process as a particular strength of the programme.