



from the start

Peace
Northern Ireland - Ireland
European Regional Development Fund



The **Sharing from the Start (SfS)** project is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). SfS involves **2521 children** in the early years sector throughout Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Counties forming cross-community and/ or cross-border partnerships. The partnerships undertake Shared Education activities aimed at improving community cohesion, inclusion, diversity and educational outcomes for young children.

This is being achieved through the implementation of purposeful, direct and sustained curriculum-based contact between children of predominantly different religious backgrounds and different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds.

SfS is led by **Early Years – the organisation for young children**, working in partnership with the **National Childhood Network** and **Fermanagh Trust**.

The key components of the approach include baselining the partnership, the development of joint action plans, training for practitioners, ongoing mentoring and support, including peer learning for the delivery of shared curriculum based sessions. SfS is embedded across all curricular areas within the NI and ROI pre-school curriculum.

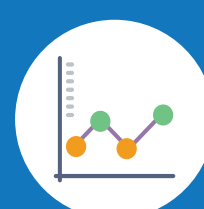
Underpinning Concepts

SfS draws on the conceptual framework of the child as informed and influenced by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Commitment to evidence informed practice and ongoing evaluation using a participative and action research approach was used throughout the first year of the project. The following results reflect the first year.



Evaluation Methodologies



Baselining and Review of partnership (NI) ETI Framework for Collaborative Partnerships Rol Partnerships ongoing using agreed selected Siolta Standards



Appraisal of Partnership Joint Action Plans for Shared Sessions Review of Practitioner Reflections and of evidence on Educational and Reconciliation Outcomes



Pre-school Educational Practitioners Survey quantitative analysis based on 60 completed returns, i.e. 90%



Review of Portfolio Evidence Voice of the Child and Parental Feedback



Baseline and Review of Educational Practitioners Knowledge, Skills, Confidence and Attitudes on - Facilitating Shared Education and Supporting Respect for Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom

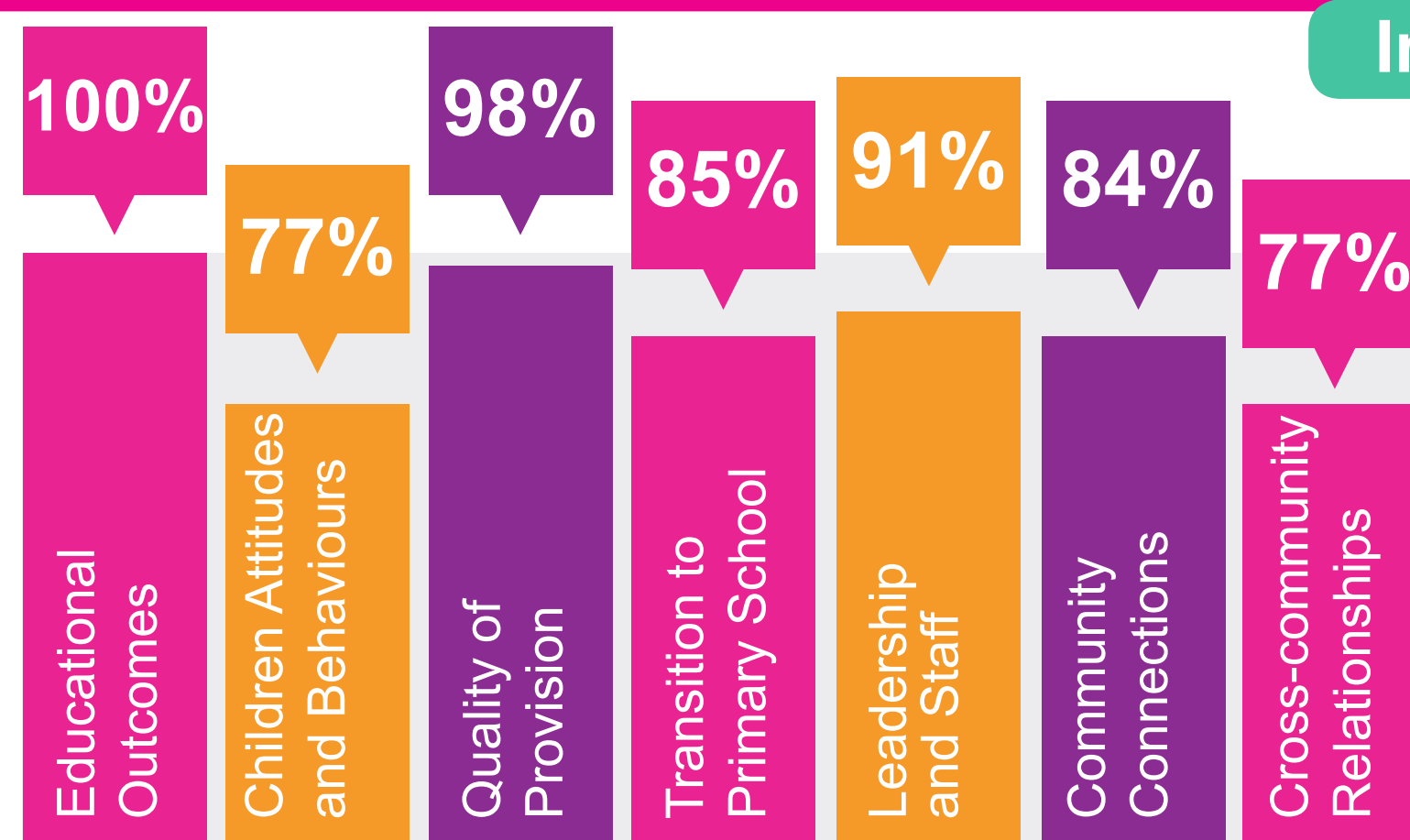


Monitoring Data on number of preschools and children; number of shared session hours per child



Participatory evaluation that links back to and engages with preschool practitioners and parent's in the research agenda.

Impact of SfS



This graph represents the percentage of pre-school settings reporting positive or very positive impact across a range of outcomes.

Number of Pre-schools and Children in Northern Ireland (NI) and Southern Border Counties (SBCs) participating in SfS

Year One



Pre-schools



Children

Year Two



Pre-schools

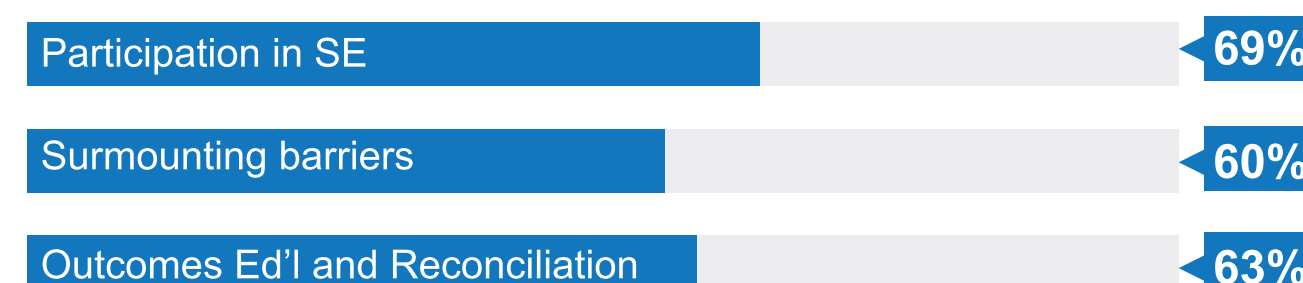


Children



Significant progress across the four pillars of quality Shared Education in NI

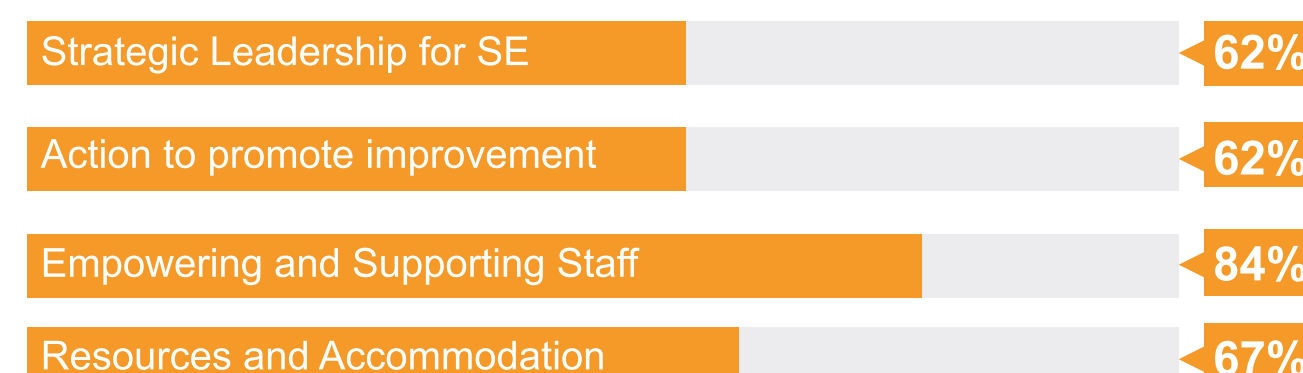
Learner Centred



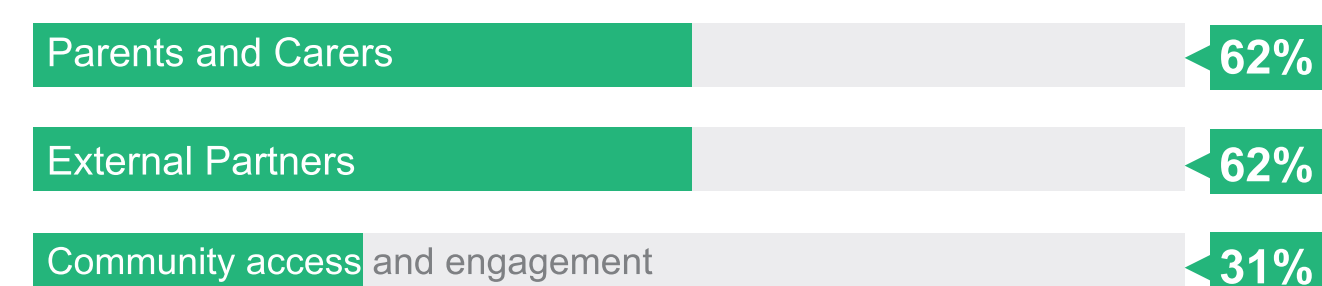
High Quality learning and teaching



Effective Leadership



Community Connections



The Siolta Standards are used for baselining pre-school settings progression against the **Rights of the child; Identity and belonging; Community involvement; Parents and families; Professional practice.**

SfS links with the home

Parents from a sample of 8 early years settings gave their feedback on the impact of SfS on their child, via one to one interviews and focus group discussions. In summary, **all parents reported that they and their children had benefited greatly from participating in the programme and engaged with their children on these issues;**

More Sociable

Developed friendships

Widened their horizons

Increased Confidence

Increased excitement & enjoyment

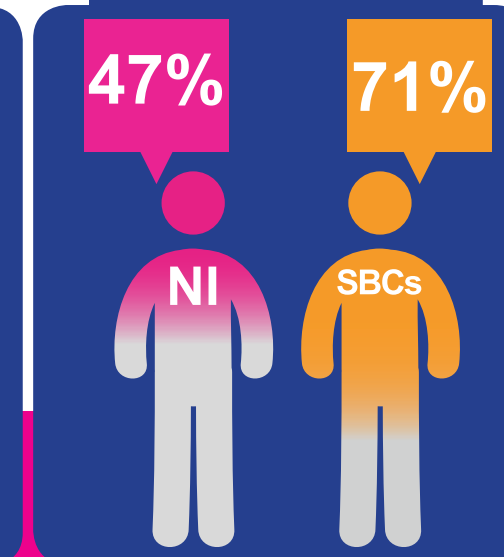
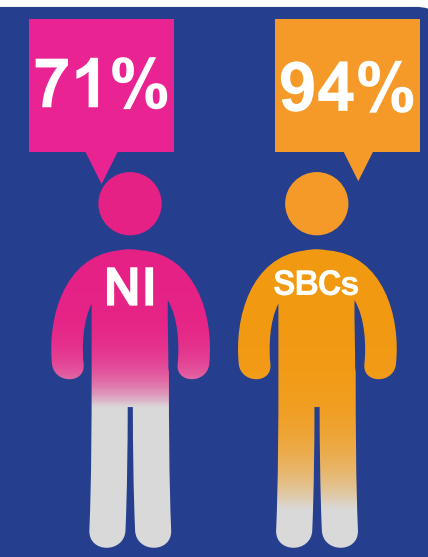
Increased communication

Challenged themselves to overcome barriers

Sessions with Parental and Management Attendance

Positive Transitioning to primary school

Settings with Parental and Management Involvement at Shared Sessions



Inclusion and Respect for Diversity Identity and Belonging

Majority of parents understood the aim to develop more positive relations between our two main communities with a particular focus on encouraging inclusion and respect for diversity among the participating children. To this end they were able to offer examples of how they feel that this has been achieved both directly and indirectly.

Learning about and respecting other cultures

Positive experiences of visiting across the divide

Familiarisation with different cultural backgrounds and names

Friendships across different backgrounds

Recognising and respecting difference

Conclusions

The SfS project;

Optimises and Sustains Shared Education in Preschool settings.
Demonstrates reconciliation outcomes for young children.
Demonstrates the need to mentor and support the professional development of practitioners.
Impacts the quality standards and educational outcomes for children.
Builds community connections and cohesion.
Supports cross-border collaboration.
Uses participatory evaluation and action research methodologies to fully maximise the potential of the project by influencing project design on an ongoing basis.