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# PlayBoard's OUR Generation *Spaces to Be* Information Pack



A project supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the  
Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

## **PlayBoard NI**

PlayBoard NI is the lead organisation for the development and promotion of children and young people's play. We believe in a world where everyone can freely play and we work every day to achieve this.

Established in 1985, PlayBoard supports thousands of children and young people every year, through a combination of:

- Campaigning and lobbying
- Promoting best practice in play and playwork
- Service delivery and development
- Research, evaluation and awareness raising
- Working in partnership with others to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers

## **OUR Generation**

OUR Generation is a project supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and represents a funding partnership between the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive.

OUR Generation is a partnership led by Action Mental Health, which aims to empower and invest in our children and young people. Bringing together the expertise of nine partner organisations, the project is committed to delivering impactful initiatives under the specific objective of "Mental health and well-being".

The cross-border partnership consists of: Action Mental Health, Playboard NI, Donegal Youth Service, Co-operation Ireland, Youth Action NI, Youth Work Ireland, Boys & Girls Clubs NI, Include Youth and Ulster University.

The partnership builds on the highly successful PEACE IV OUR Generation project (which ran until September 2023) and will run in education, youth, and community settings across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The programme aims to compliment and add value to the range of community-led mental health and emotional well-being initiatives already being delivered within communities. It will reach 33,000 children and young people (aged 9 to 25 years) as well as adults who support them, during the life of the project. Available support will include accessible, age-appropriate prevention, early intervention and recovery activities delivered on a cross-border and cross-community basis to support the mental and emotional well-being of children and young people within local communities.

## OUR Generation: Spaces to Be Programme

The OUR Generation programme delivered by PlayBoard NI will look at, and build on, cross-community development which strives to further improve relations between communities using a play methodology.

PlayBoard's OUR Generation: Spaces to Be Programme is based on the Space's to Be – Mapping Identity and Belonging toolkit. The toolkit was developed by PlayBoard through its Peace III Diversity in Play initiative and builds on PlayBoard's many years of playwork and peace building experience and practice working with children, young people and communities across Northern Ireland. Our focus is on the critical role of play as a means of supporting both the development of childhood resilience and as a mechanism for positively addressing differences at individual, familial and cross-community level. Through a range of practical and playful exercises the Spaces to Be programme will focus on breaking down barriers caused by transgenerational traumas and adverse experiences such as those caused by the Troubles. Using play, we will build resilience in children and young people by recognising and celebrating difference, in turn supporting their positive mental health and well-being.

In terms of **resilience**, research has highlighted the importance of play in offering children access to opportunities to build characteristics closely associated with high levels of resilience. These include the ability to adapt to distinct or changing circumstances or set-backs and recover from same; the ability to learn and grow from mistakes, challenges and difficult situations enhancing both mental and physical capacity to cope with stress and adversity; the capacity to develop positive self-concept and high self-esteem.

From a **cross-community** perspective, despite perceived differences, the one uniting factor for all children and young people throughout childhood is PLAY. Children and young people's lives are full of play opportunities and it is through these play opportunities that children learn about others, explore difference and better understand the world around them. Through play, they are able to develop the skills required for competence in cognitive, creative and social spheres. Critically, in play all children are equal, and it is through the act of play that children and young people's learning in cooperation and conflict resolution begins.

Spaces to Be is a unique project as it recognises that learning is more effective and is more likely to be embedded into beliefs and approaches, for both children and adults, when they enjoy it. Throughout delivery of the programme, PlayBoard has successfully used play to effectively address hard hitting and complex topics with children and practitioners. This has made learning accessible to children and less intense for the participants taking part in the training.

Spaces to Be is available for Primary Schools, School-Age Childcare settings and community groups who work with children aged 9 to 11 years.

## Benefits

All training and resources are funded by the PEACEPLUS Programme and therefore will have **NO FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS** to individual settings/schools. At PlayBoard we strive to support the improvement of quality and delivery of play services across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland as well as support staff with continuous professional development. We are therefore excited to bring this fantastic opportunity to your setting/school.

Benefits for setting/school	Benefits for children	Benefits to community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous Professional Development for staff</li> <li>• Increased knowledge and skills in cross-community work</li> <li>• Practical activities to increase resilience and positive mental well-being in children and young people</li> <li>• Practical ideas on how to manage challenging conversations and address controversy</li> <li>• Free toolkit &amp; additional resources</li> <li>• Increased reputation for your setting</li> <li>• Enhance/reflect on your trauma sensitive approach to practice</li> <li>• Opportunity to continue working with or develop Shared Education Partner</li> <li>• Links to the NI Curriculum: WAU, PDMU, The Arts, PE, Personal Skills and Thinking Capabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun and exciting play opportunities</li> <li>• Increased positive mental health and well-being</li> <li>• Increased knowledge on emotions and mental health awareness</li> <li>• Increased skills and knowledge to develop self-help skills, coping strategies</li> <li>• Increased resilience</li> <li>• Increased knowledge and understanding of their own community, other communities</li> <li>• Increased confidence and self image</li> <li>• Opportunities to explore who they are</li> <li>• Opportunities to explore differences</li> <li>• Opportunities to meet and make new friends</li> <li>• Opportunities to develop conflict resolution skills</li> <li>• Support in managing life transitions e.g. primary to post primary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A peaceful and welcoming community that values equality and diversity</li> <li>• A cohesive community that is tolerant and understanding</li> <li>• Access to diverse cultures</li> <li>• Breakdown of communication barriers.</li> </ul>

## Spaces to Be Programme

- Three-hour staff training session (This is available as CPD for full staff complement).
- One staff reflective session following the children's play sessions.
- Five children's play sessions which staff also attend.

## Children's play sessions

- Where possible, four children's play sessions will take place within the setting/school. We will endeavor to use outdoor spaces if available. In the event the setting/school does not have appropriate space, an outdoor space or venue close to the setting will be sourced.
- The final children's session is a cross-community event and will take place in a shared space close to the settings/school.

## Considerations

We are looking for schools/settings with a cross section of Catholic, Protestant and other cultural backgrounds to take part in our Spaces to Be programme. Please bear in mind that there is limited spaces and it is integral to the programme that both sides of the community are equally represented. Therefore, we regretfully cannot accept all interested settings, however there may be potential for your setting to participate in the wider OUR Generation project through our partner organisations.

## Get in touch

If you would like to join this exciting new project and you think your setting can commit to all aspects of the programme, please fill in the Expression of Interest Form and return to: [OurGeneration@playboard.co.uk](mailto:OurGeneration@playboard.co.uk)

For further information or to discuss any of the aspects of the programme, please contact Roberta Johnson,  
E: [Roberta.Johnson@playboard.co.uk](mailto:Roberta.Johnson@playboard.co.uk) or T: 028 9080 3380.

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