



Free of Bullying

Findings from the third pilot survey



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
MENNTAVÍSINDASVIÐ



Barnaheill
Save the Children Iceland

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The third pilot survey was conducted for Save the Children (Barnaheill) in Iceland in collaboration with the Educational Research Institute, School of Education, University of Iceland.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Free of Bullying is a research based project developed as a preventive measure against bullying and for friendship in preschools. The original project named *Fri for mobberi* has been translated, localized, produced and published in collaboration with *Red Barnet-Save the Children* and *Mary Fonden* in Denmark. *Fri for mobberi* is also available for the early classes in primary schools in Denmark.

Free of Bullying was developed and adapted by Roskilde University. The project is based on findings from current research on bullying. The main aim of the project is to prevent bullying by inspiring or creating a good school atmosphere, by underlining good communication practice and positive attitude towards everyone in the school. Participation of all children, staff and parents is a necessary for the project to succeed. A special emphasis is made on reaching children and adults who witness bullying in their settings but are unresponsive to it.

It is presumed that participants comply with fundamental values in all work and communication in the preschool settings. The *Free of Bullying* theory is based on four pillars of values: **tolerance, respect, care and courage**.

The project has been widely accepted where it has been applied and research findings give promising results. *Free of Bullying* or *Fri for mobberi* is based on current research on bullying and a defined theoretical frame of values that should be integrated into all school activities and teaching along with realistic assignments for students, staff and parents.

Participant schools in the test application of *Free of Bullying* in Iceland during the winter 2014-16 are six preschools in six districts. Along with Iceland and Denmark the project material has been tested in Greenland and Estonia and many other countries have expressed their interest in participation (Save the children Iceland (Barnaheill), 2015).

There are three questionnaires linked to the *Free of Bullying* pilot project, each of which is designed to be applied at different stages of the pilot phase. The three questionnaires are designed to evaluate and adapt the *Free of Bullying* project. They are aimed at various parties involved in the project, as a tool for reflecting on expectations and experiences of the practices used in connection with the program. The first questionnaire was designed to identify expectations and opinions of bullying and *Free of Bullying*. The findings from the first pilot survey were summarized in a report in February 2015 (Lára Rún Sigurvinsdóttir, Sigrún Sif Jóelsdóttir og Kristín E. Harðardóttir, 2015). The second questionnaire aimed to explore the work on introducing *Free of Bullying* and staff's experiences of using the materials and tools that are provided by the project and kept in a suitcase. The findings from the second pilot survey were summarized in a report in September 2015 (Sigrún Sif Jóelsdóttir, Lára Rún Sigurvinsdóttir og Kristín E. Harðardóttir, 2015). The third questionnaire focuses on systematic collation and discussions the staff's experiences of the programme (as a group), and on how they will use the *Free of Bullying* materials in the future.

The third test survey was implemented in Iceland with 11 participants. The number of participants has reduced during the length of the project. Due to various reasons some of the original participants are not working at the kindergartens that are involved in the project anymore. It was conducted after the school employees had worked with *Free of Bullying* for an extended period of time. The following report contains detailed description and analysis of the answers given by participants to the third questionnaire. The report has eight chapters. A brief introduction of the Free of Bullying project is the first chapter. The second chapter reveals information about participants and the third chapter is about their experiences with materials and social practices. The fourth and fifth chapter focus on changes within the staff's group and changes within the children's group. The sixth chapter is about changes in the collaboration with parents. The seventh chapter focuses on the future of *Free of Bullying* and how the participants feel that the work with *Free of Bullying* should continue. In the eight chapter the main findings are summarized.

2 PARTICIPANTS

All 11 participants answered the question on occupation with 15 answers as the categories were not mutually exclusive and some participants hold more than one position. Looking at the participant's occupation reveals that six hold a qualified preschool teacher position or similar, four hold a management position and three hold an unqualified or assistant teacher position (see figure 1).

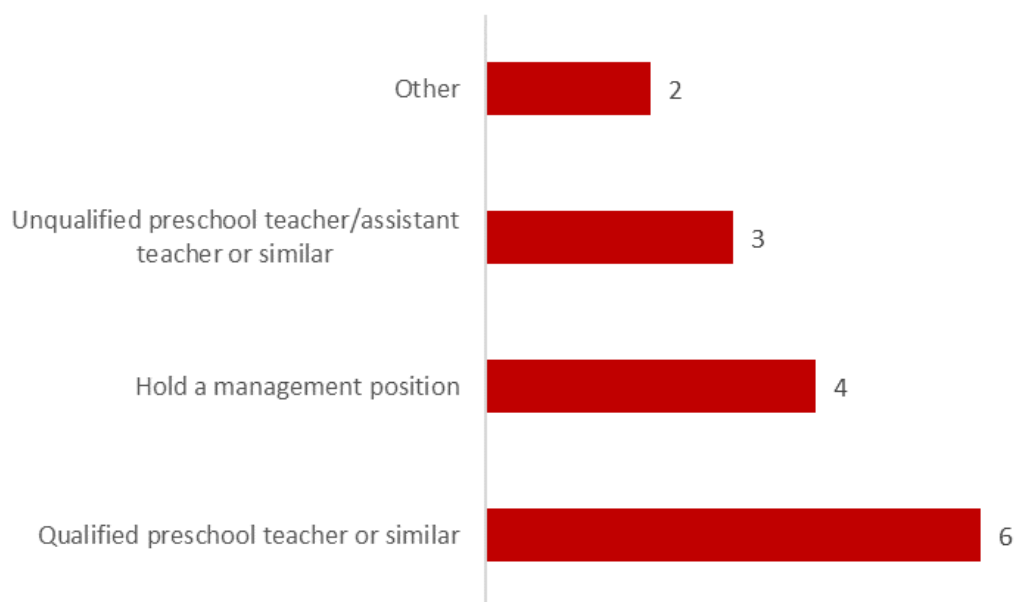


Figure 1: What is your occupation?

All participants answered the question about their age. Five of the participants are over 50 years old, two of the participants fall in the age group 41-50 years old, two are 31-40 years old and two participants are 20-30 years old. The qualified preschool teachers were all 41 years old or older (see figure 2).

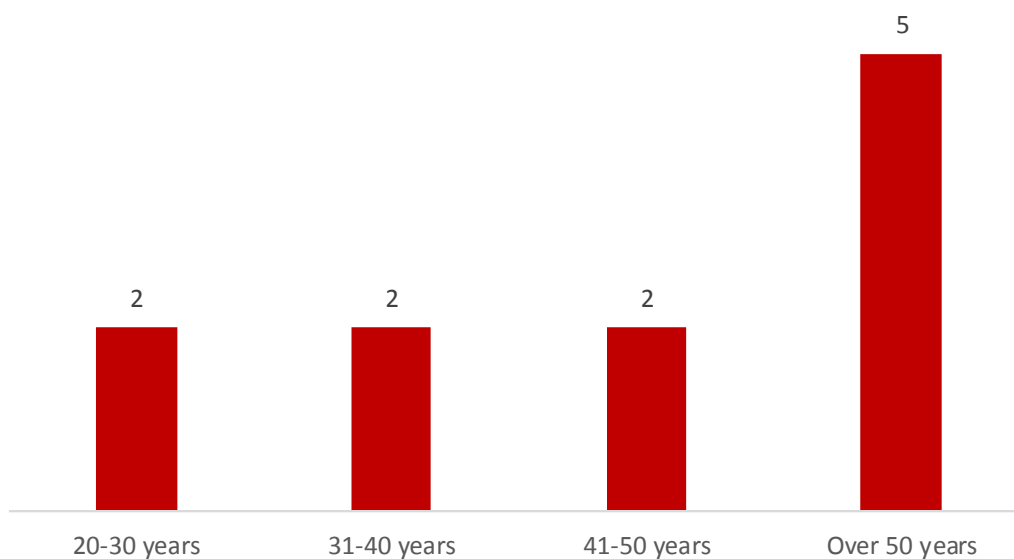


Figure 2: How old are you?

Participants were asked how long their preschool had been working with the *Free of Bullying project*. Seven participants claimed their preschool had worked with the project for several years. Three participants said that their preschool had been working with it for over a year and one participant's preschool had been working with the project for approximately a year (see figure 3).

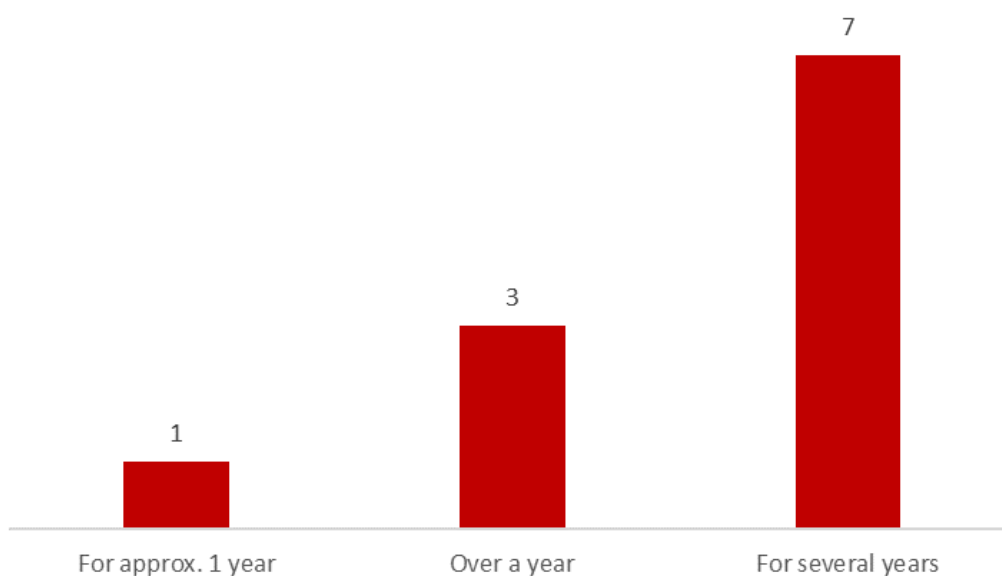


Figure 3: How long has your preschool been working with *Free of bullying*?

Participants were asked if they had been working with *Free of Bullying* since it was launched at their preschool. Nine of 11 participants have been working with *Free of Bullying* since it was launched at their preschool and two have not (see figure 4).

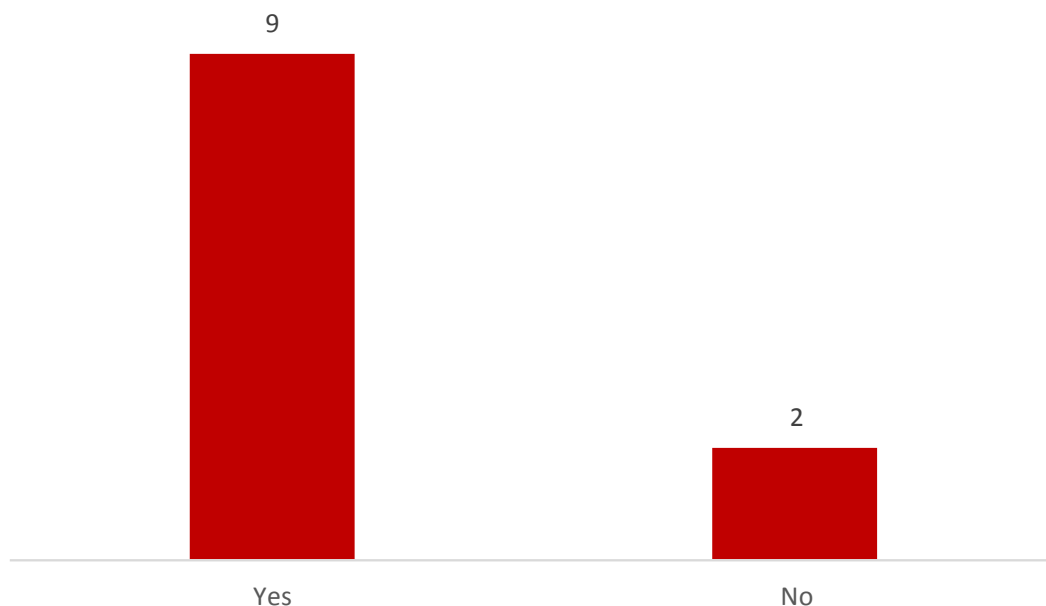


Figure 4: Have you been working with *Free of bullying* since it was launched at your preschool?

The participants that had been working with *Free of Bullying* since it was launched at their preschool were asked to elaborate on how they were introduced to the project. All of them had gotten an introduction about the project and a course on how to work with the materials, either with the organization *Save the Children Iceland* or at their preschool.

3 EXPERIENCES OF MATERIALS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

Four questions were asked in relation to the experience of the *Free of Bullying* materials and social practices. The aim was to find out how the material worked for the participants and if it could be adapted further. The first question was; “Which of the following materials and social practices have you found to be particularly beneficial to work with?” The second question; “Which of the following materials and social practices do you rarely or never use?” The third question; “Which of the following materials and social practices would you choose to keep using?” The fourth and last question was; “In your opinion, how should your preschool work with the materials and social practices in the future?” Participants were allowed to choose more than one answer option.

When participants were asked about what material and social practices had been particularly beneficial when working with *Free of Bullying*, they were able to choose more than one answer option. The conversation boards got most votes when participants were asked about which of the materials and social boards they found to be particularly beneficial to work with in the project. The second most beneficial material were the small teddy bears. They were selected eight times as being particularly beneficial. Seven participants found the massage (booklet), children’s meetings and the large teddy bear to be particularly beneficial. The professional booklet, the “tips for parents” leaflet and poster, were thought to be particularly beneficial by six participants. Four participants reported the music cd and two reported the music booklet as particularly beneficial (see figure 5).

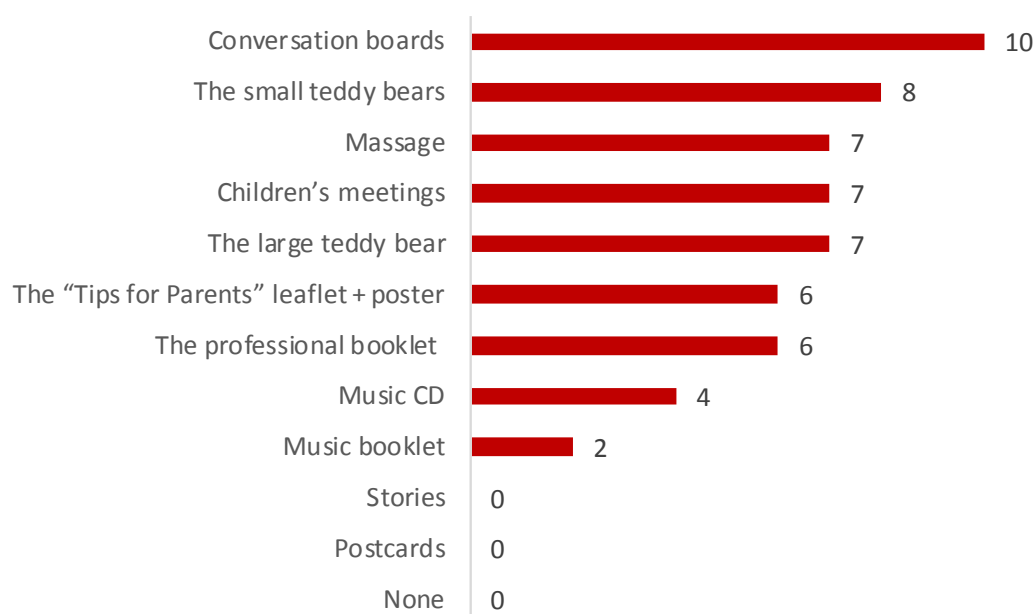


Figure 5: Which of the following materials and social practices have you found to be particularly beneficial to work with?

Participants were also given the opportunity to write their thoughts on the material. One participant thought it was important that the material was visual, it made it easier for children to remember and images facilitated the children's expression. The participants agreed that the material supported the aim of the project and presented many options.

Participants were asked which of the following materials and social practices they rarely or never used. The participants were able to choose more than one material. The materials mentioned most frequently, as rarely or never used, were the stories. Nine participants rarely or never used them. The postcards were mentioned six times as rarely or never used, the music booklet was selected five times and the music CD was selected four times as rarely or never used. The professional booklet, the big teddy bear, massage and "tips for parents" leaflet + poster was mentioned two times each as rarely or never used. The children's meetings and the conversation boards were mentioned once each as rarely or never used. The small teddy bears were never reported as rarely or never used (see figure 6).

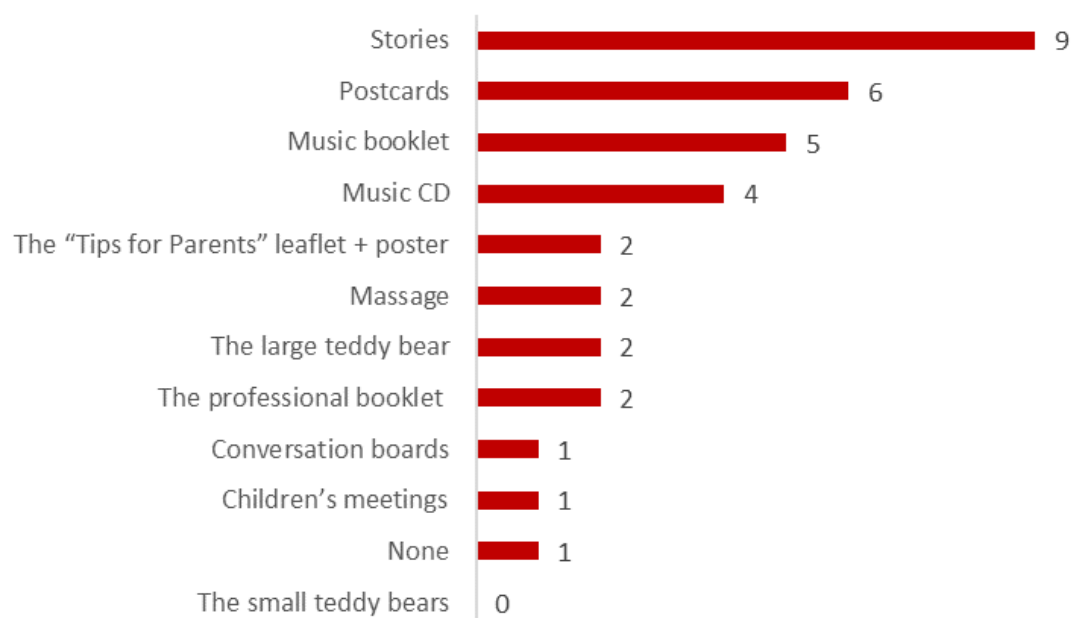


Figure 6: Which of the following materials and social practices do you rarely or never use?

The participants were given the opportunity to further elaborate on the material that they rarely or never used. Three respondents said that the music CD was often forgotten and one participant said that they used all the materials provided by the project.

Participants were asked which of the following materials and social practices they would choose to keep using. They were asked to mark all of the materials they would like to keep using. All the participants would like to keep using the conversation boards and almost everyone or ten participants wanted to keep using the small teddy bears, children's meetings and the massage. Nine respondents reported that they would want to keep using the big teddy bear, the music CD and the music booklet. Seven participants wanted to keep using the poster. Six participants wanted to keep using the professional booklet and four the stories and postcards. Only one did not want to keep using any of the materials or social practices (see figure 7).

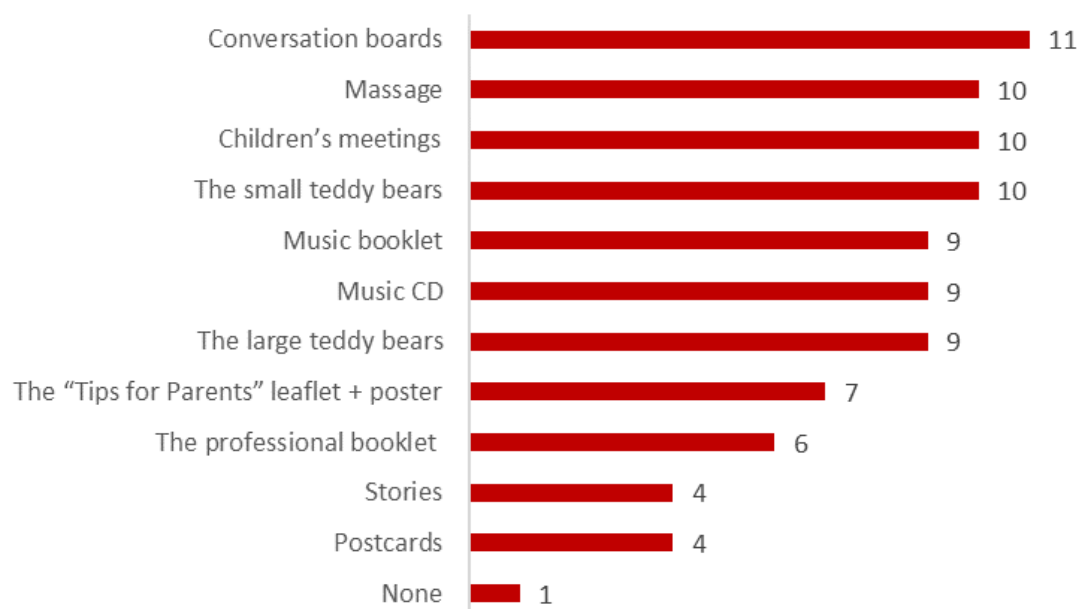


Figure 7: Which of the following materials and social practices would you choose to keep using?

The participants were able to briefly elaborate on their response. Two out of the four participants that did so claimed that they would like to continue using all of the materials. One participant said that it was good to introduce the teddy bears to kids when they reach the age of three, while other participant said that the older children in the preschool had no interest in the small teddy bears.

The participants were asked about their opinion on how their preschool should work with the materials and social practices in the future. The participants were able to choose more than one answer option. The option "develop our own new social practices" was selected eight times. The option "continue without making any changes" was selected six times, while the option "continue working with only a few materials from the suitcase" was selected two times (see figure 8).

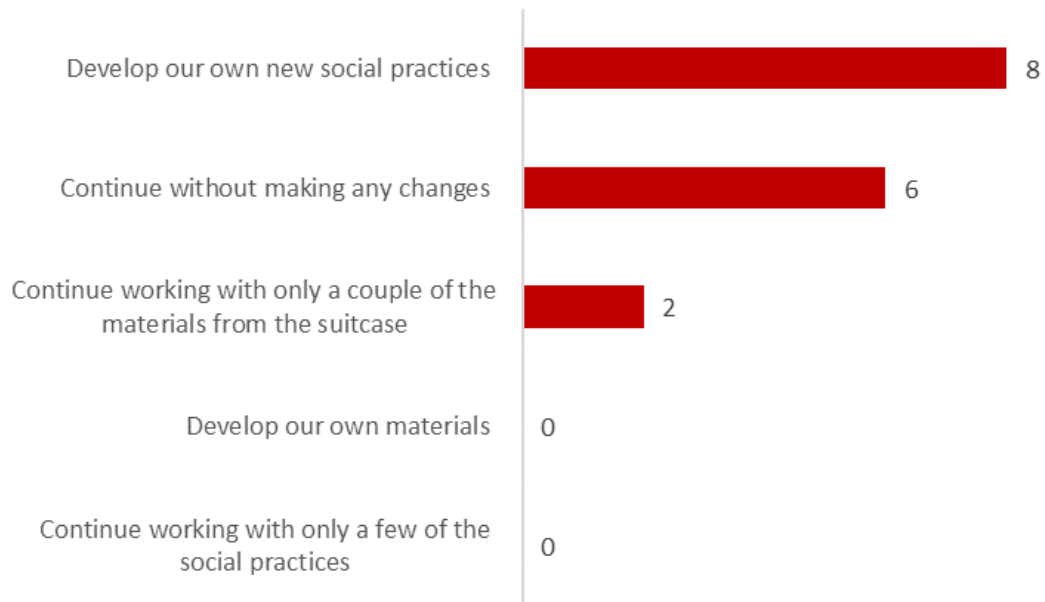


Figure 8: In your opinion, how should your preschool work with the materials and social practices in future?

4 CHANGES WITHIN THE STAFF GROUP

Five questions were put forward in relation to changes within the staff group as a result of working with *Free of Bullying*. These questions were; “What do you feel about the extent to which the staff actively participate in *Free of Bullying*?”, “How often do you discuss/talk about *Free of Bullying* in staff meetings?”, “To what extent are staff interested in *Free of Bullying* in general?”, “Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has influenced the way staff work together?” and “Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the way staff work with the children’s group?”

Participants were asked what they feel about the extent to which the staff actively participated in *Free of Bullying*. The majority of respondents reported that only a few staff members actively participated in the project. Three participants thought that not everyone were active, but most staff members actively participated in the project. Only two participants reported that everyone actively participates in the project (see figure 9).



Figure 9: What do you feel about the extent to which the staff actively participate in *Free of Bullying*?

Participants were asked how often they discussed/talked about *Free of Bullying* in staff meetings. Eight participants responded that they discussed or talked about *Free of Bullying* in staff meetings less often than monthly. Three participants reported that they had a monthly discussion about the project in staff meetings (see figure 10).

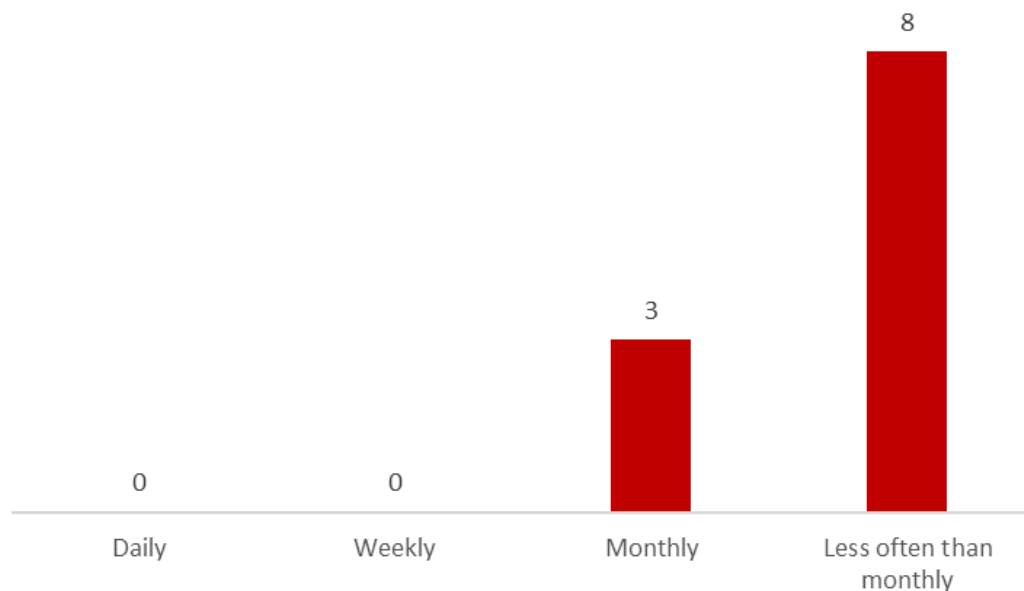


Figure 10: How often do you discuss/talk about *Free of Bullying* in staff meetings?

Respondents were asked to what extent staff members were interested in the *Free of Bullying* project in general. No respondent thought that interest in the project was declining. Most of the participants or eight, claimed that interest in the project had more or less remained consistent throughout the project. Three participants felt that interest in the project was increasing (see figure 11).

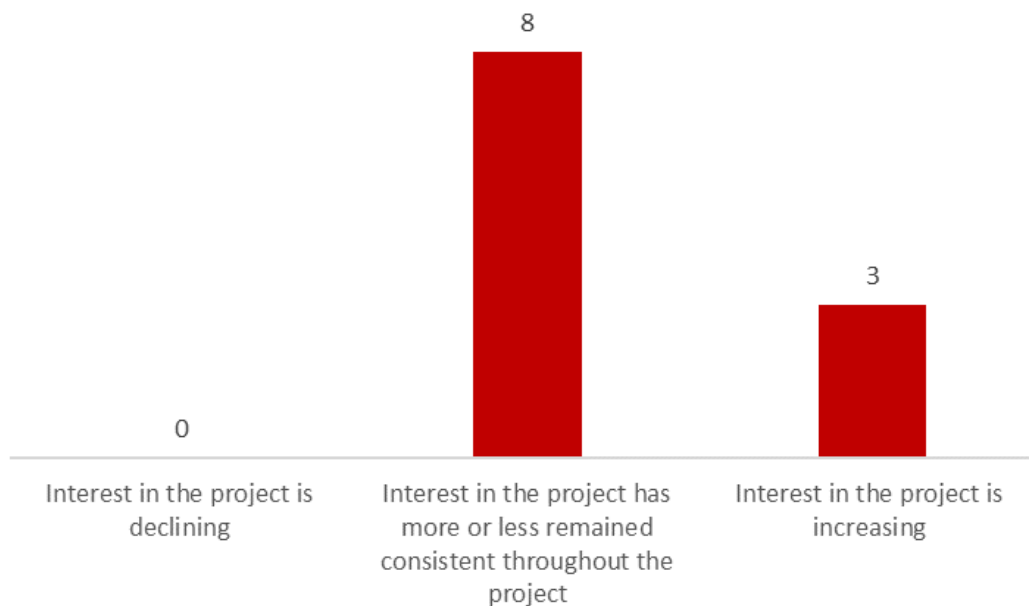


Figure 11: To what extent are staff interested in *Free of Bullying* in general?

Participants were asked if they found that *Free of Bullying* has influenced the way staff work together. Most participants, or eight, had not experienced any difference. Only one participant experienced a significant positive difference. Two participants did not answer the question (see figure 12).

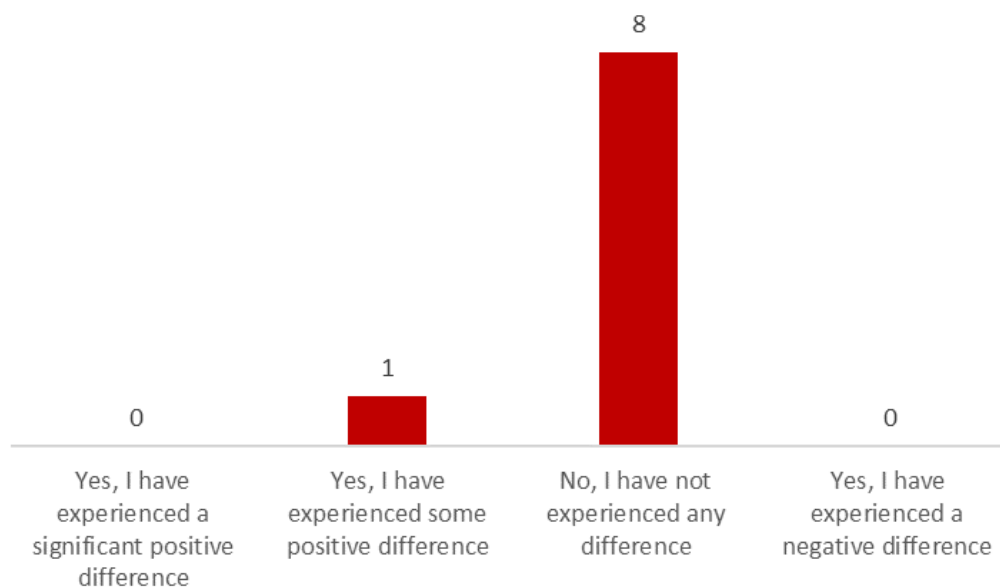


Figure 12: Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the way staff work together?

Five participants used the opportunity to briefly elaborate on their response. Two of them said that cooperation between staff members had always been good and there was no apparent change. One participant said that it was nice to be able to talk about the project with other staff members during breaks. Two respondents said that they felt that the project had influenced the cooperation among staff members that were actively working with the *Free of Bullying* project.

Majority of the participants thought that working with *Free of Bullying* had changed the way staff work with the children's group in a positive way. Six participants claimed they had experienced some positive difference and four reported significant positive difference. One participants did not answer the question (see figure 13).

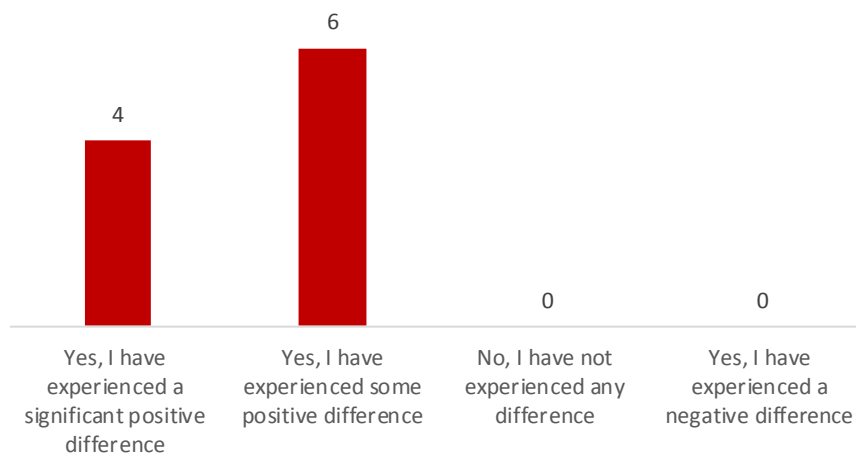


Figure 13: Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the way staff work with the children's group?

Some participants experienced increased consciousness when it came to negative behaviour and interaction among the children (e.g. someone did not want to hold hands). The staff members also experienced that preventive measures in relation to bullying had increased.

5 CHANGES WITHIN THE CHILDREN'S GROUP

Four questions pertain to changes within the children's group as a consequence of the work with the *Free of Bullying* project. These questions were "Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the way the children's group operates?", "Have you experienced changes in the way the children interact, and if so, what changes?", "Have you experienced any changes in the way the children talk about bullying, as a result of the work with *Free of Bullying*, if so, what changes?", "Do you find that the project has changed the staff's relationship with the children?"

Judging by the participants answers the project *Free of Bullying*, has had some positive effects on the way the children's group operates. Seven of the participants experienced some positive difference in the way the children's group operated and four participants experienced significant positive difference (see figure 14).

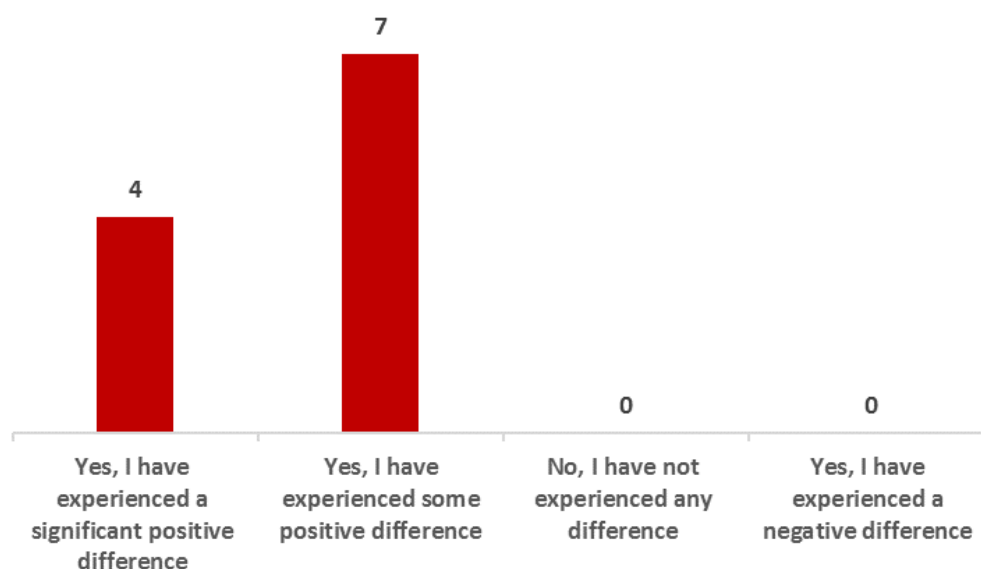


Figure 14: Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the way the children's group operates?

Participants were also asked if they had experienced changes in the way the children interacted. Participants were able to choose more than one answer option. All of the respondents had experienced some kind of changes in the interaction between the children. The most common change was that the children had become more

courageous in the way they defended their friends. That change was selected eight times. The change “the children interact in a more positive way” was selected seven times. The change “the children are kinder to each other”, “the children are better able to deal with teasing” and “the children play better together” were all selected six times each. In five cases the children were thought to be more aware of the preschools social rules. The change “Fewer social conflicts among the children” was selected three times and in two cases the respondents stated that they had experienced other changes (see figure 15).

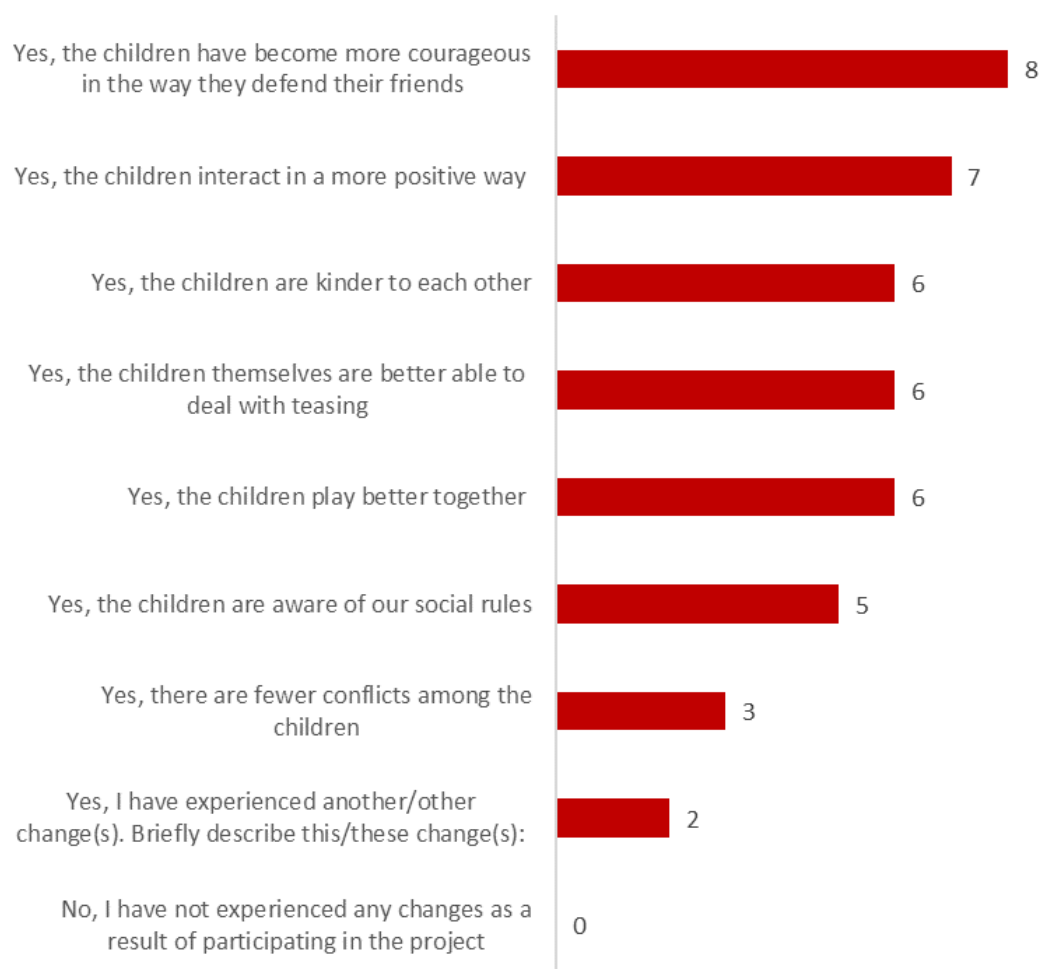


Figure 15: Have you experienced changes in the way children interact? And if so, what changes?

The respondents were also asked if they had experienced changes in the way the children talked about bullying, as a result of the work with *Free of Bullying*. The answer option “Yes, I have noticed on a couple of occasions that the children have talked about teasing in a different way” was selected five times. In four cases participants selected the answer option “Yes, I have noticed on a couple of occasions that they have talked about bullying in a different way”. The answer option “Yes, I have definitely seen a change” was selected three times. The answer options “They talk about teasing in the same way as they did before the project” and “They don’t talk about teasing at all” were selected two times each. Finally, the answer options “They talk about bullying in the same way as they did before the project” and “They don’t talk about bullying at all” were both selected one time each (see figure 16).

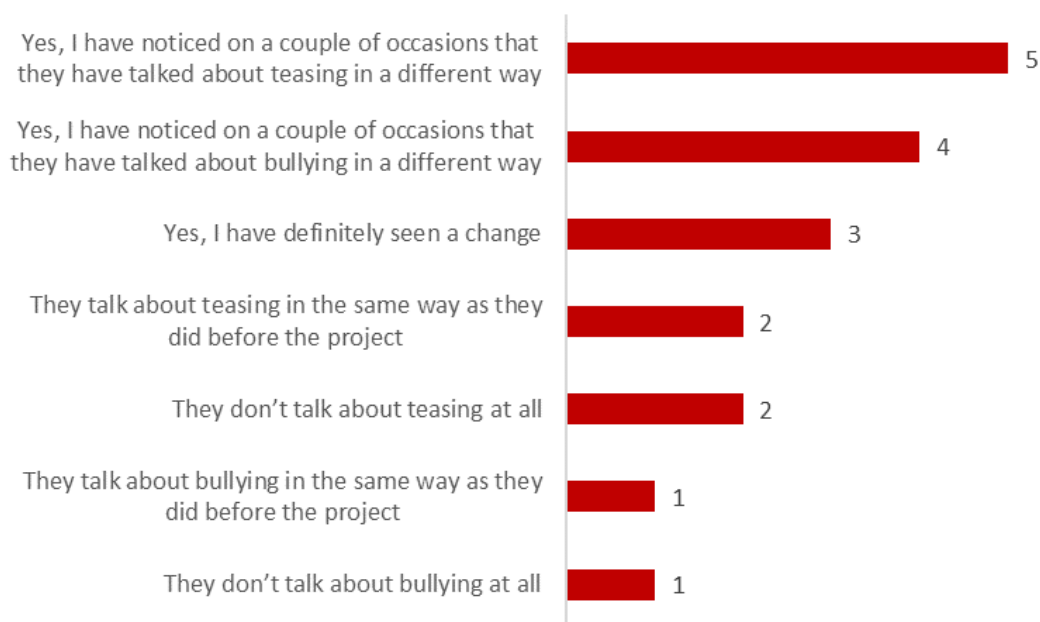


Figure 16: Have you experienced any changes in the way the children talk about bullying, as a result of the work with *Free of Bullying*? If so, which changes?

Some participants used the opportunity to elaborate further on the changes they had noticed within the children's group. One respondent claimed the children are now more aware about how to react when someone is teased, even if they need assistance when they are themselves the victim of teasing. One participant said that the children are now more aware of the connection they have with other children and the nature of that connection. Another respondent claimed that the children are more conscious about what is right and what is wrong in social interaction. The last respondent claimed that the children are now abler to talk and settle their issues as a result of working with the *Free of Bullying* project.

The participants were asked if they thought the project had changed the staff's relationship with the children. One respondent experienced a significant difference in a positive way. Nine participants experienced a positive difference and one participant didn't experience any difference. No respondent experienced negative changes in the staff's relationship with the children due to participation in the project (see figure 17).



Figure 17: Do you find that the project has changed the staff's relationship with the children?

6 CHANGES IN THE COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS

Three questions pertain to changes in the collaboration with parents as a consequence of the work with *Free of Bullying* project. These questions were “Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the parents conduct?”, “Do you find that the project has changed the nature of collaboration between staff and parents?” and “How would you describe the parent’s involvement in *Free of Bullying*?”

From the participant’s perspective, the *Free of bullying project* seems to have had little influence on the parent’s conduct. Nine participants had not experienced any difference in the parent’s conduct. One respondent reported that the parents now bring a more varied group of children home for play dates. One participant did not answer the question (see figure 18).

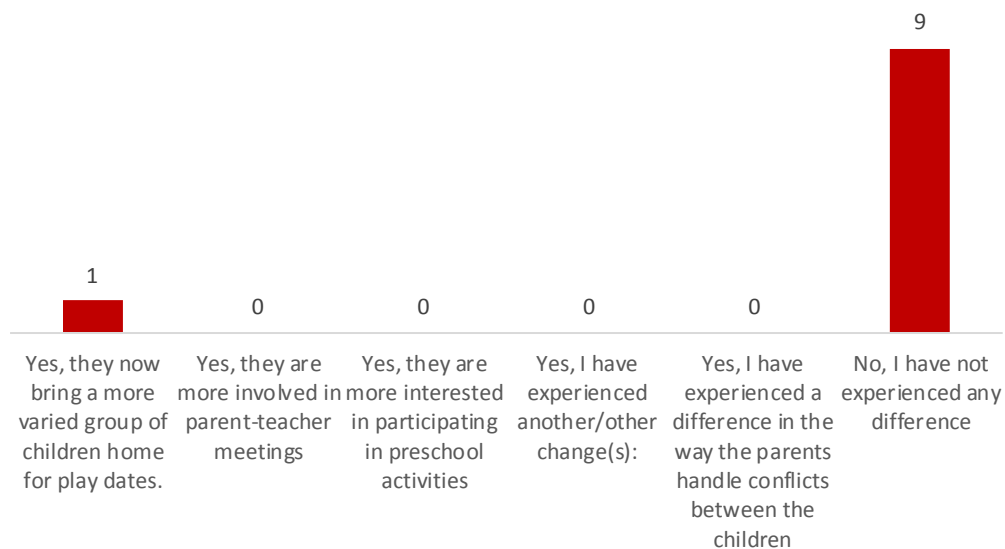


Figure 18: Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the parents’ conduct?

Four respondents felt that participation in the *Free of bullying project* resulted in some positive difference in the nature of the collaboration between staff and parents. Seven participants did not experience any difference in the collaboration between the preschools staff members and parents (see figure 19).

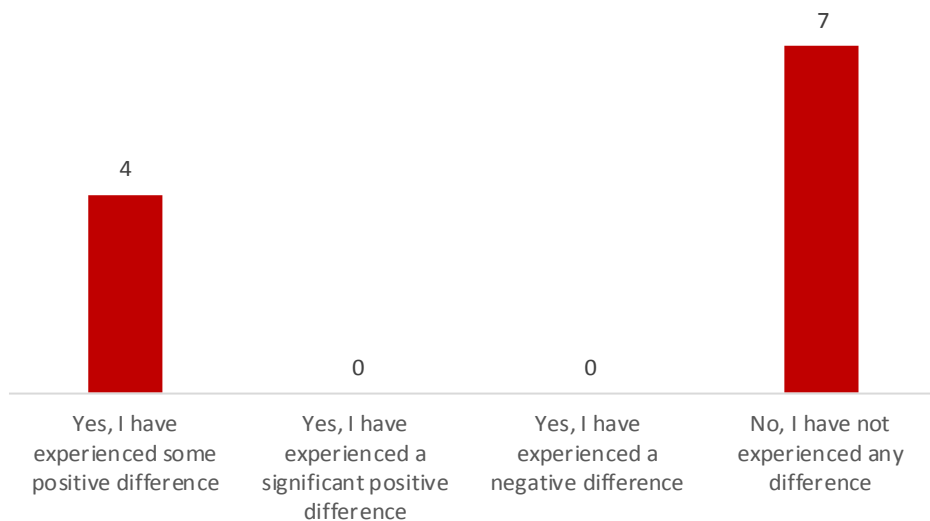


Figure 19: Do you find that *Free of Bullying* has changed the nature of the collaboration between staff and parents?

A vast majority of the participants feel that the parents should be more involved in the *Free of Bullying* project. Ten respondents felt that the parent's involvement was not enough and only one participant felt that they were suitably involved (see figure 20).

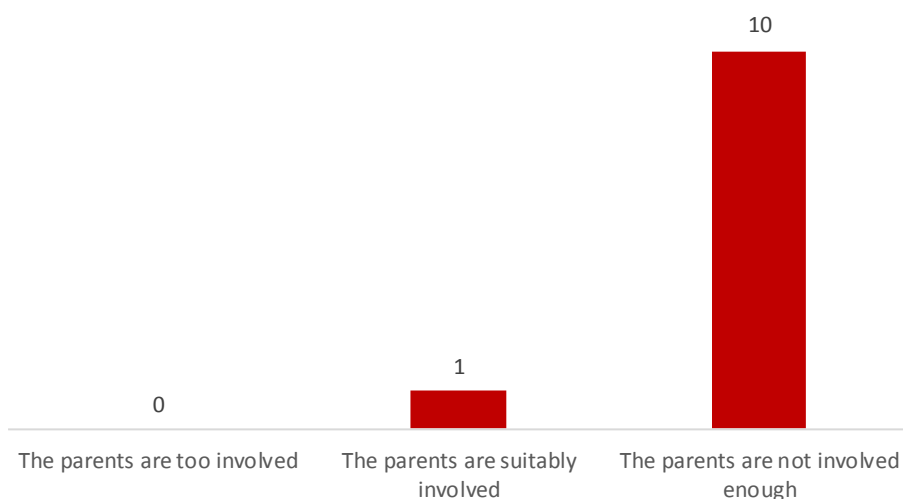


Figure 20: How would you describe the parents' involvement in *Free of Bullying*?

7 THE FUTURE OF FREE OF BULLYING

Three questions were asked in relation to the future of *Free of Bullying*. The aim was to find out how the participants felt the work with the *Free of Bullying* project should continue. The first question was; “Do you find that the work with *Free of Bullying* helps prevent bullying in your preschool?”. The second question was; “Do you feel that your preschool needs to put more effort into working with *Free of Bullying*?”, and finally; “Do you feel that you have a good structure in place to support your future work with *Free of Bullying*?”

All of the participants felt that the work with *Free of Bullying* project helped prevent bullying in their preschool. Five participants felt that it helped prevent bullying to a large extent while six felt that it helped prevent bullying to some degree (see figure 21).

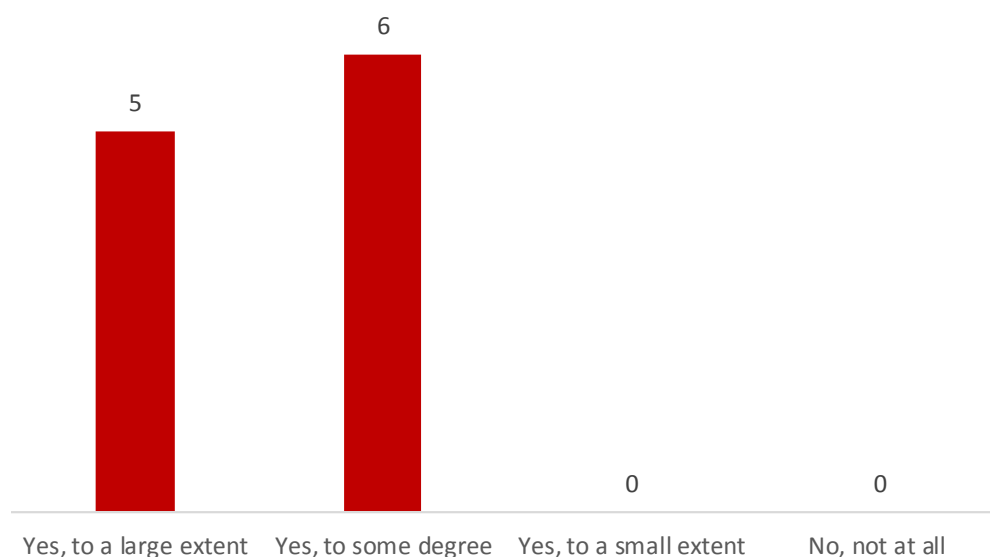


Figure 21: Do you find that the work with *Free of Bullying* helps prevent bullying in your preschool?

The participants were asked if they felt their preschool needed to put more effort into working with *Free of Bullying*. Out of those nine participants that answered the question two thought there was no need for added effort on behalf of the preschool. Three participants felt that there was a need for more effort, but they also thought it

was difficult to see how they would find the time for it. Four participants felt there was definitely a need for more effort on behalf of the preschool. Two participants did not answer the question (see figure 22).

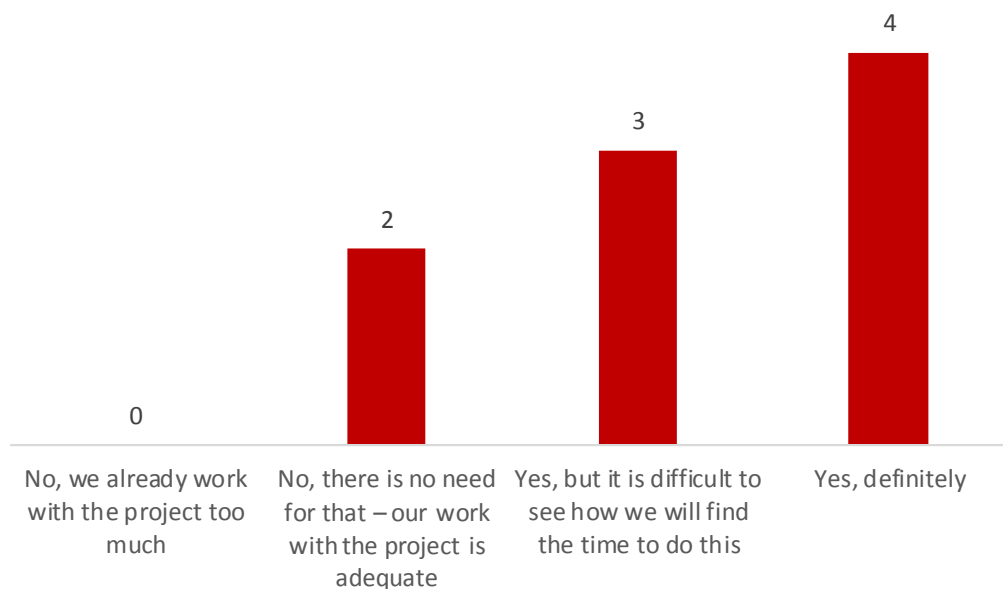


Figure 22: Do you feel that your preschool needs to put more effort into working with Free of Bullying?

Nine out of eleven participants felt there was a good structure in place at the preschool to support future work with *Free of Bullying*. One participant felt the structure for future work with *Free of Bullying* was not good and one participant did not to answer the question (see figure 23).

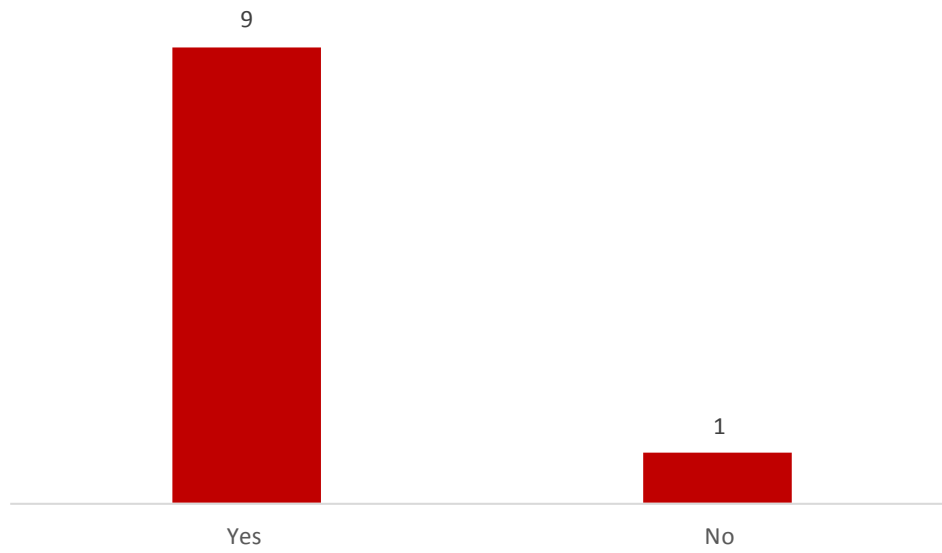


Figure 23: Do you feel that you have a good structure in place to support your future work with Free of Bullying?

8 SUMMARY

Six out of eleven participants in the survey are qualified preschool teachers or similar. The age of participants is from 20 years and older. Most of the participants have worked with the program for several years and only one participant had worked with it for approximately a year. Nine out of eleven have worked with the *Free of Bullying* project since it was launched at their preschool.

The participants think that the materials provided by the project are beneficial to its objectives. The conversation boards got the most votes as a particularly beneficial material, followed by the small teddy bears, the massage, the children's meetings and the large teddy bear. The "tips for parents" leaflet + poster and the professional booklet are also thought to be particularly beneficial to the project. On the other hand, the stories got the most votes as the material rarely or never used. The stories were followed by the Postcards, the music booklet and the music CD. These materials were most likely to be rarely or never used. Unsurprisingly, the conversation boards is the material that most staff members would like to keep on using, followed by the massage, the children's meetings and the small teddy bears.

Only two participants claim that everyone within their preschool are actively participating in the project. Six out of eleven respondents claim that only a few members of staff actively participate in the project. According to majority of participants the project is not discussed every month during staff meetings, even so they feel that interest in the project has either remained the same throughout the project or is increasing.

A vast majority of participants claims that they have not experienced any difference in the way staff members work together as a result of the *Free of Bullying* project, but all of them have experienced positive change in the way staff members work with the children in the preschool. In some cases, participants feel that they are more aware of negative behaviour within the children's group and that preventive measures in relation to bullying have increased in the preschool.

All of the participants feel that working with the Free of Bullying project has changed the way the children's group operates in a positive way. Among the changes that the participants have noticed in the children's group are increased courage and inclination to defend their friends, more positive interaction among the children, more kindness, increased skills to settle differences and fewer conflicts among the children. All of the participants feel that the project has had a positive effect on the staff's relationship with the children.

The participants have not experienced differences in the parent's conduct, although one participant reported that the parents now bring a more varied group of children home for play dates. Some of the participants have experienced positive effect on the collaboration between staff and parents but most have not experienced any change. According to the participants, the parents are not involved enough in the project *Free of Bullying*.

All of the participants, without exception, feel that the project Free of Bullying helps prevent bullying in their preschools. Many feel that their preschool needs to put more effort into working with the project, but have a hard time seeing how that can be accomplished. Even so, a vast majority of participants feel that they have a good structure in place to support future work with *Free of Bullying*.

9 REFERENCES

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