



My world outdoors

Sharing good practice in how early years services can provide play and learning wholly or partially outdoors

Foreword



There is significant and growing interest in how children and young people access the outdoors to play, learn, develop and have fun. The Care Inspectorate regulates and inspects over 9,000 care services for children and young people, one or more of which almost everyone in Scotland attends before they start school, or during their school years. These services include childminders, nurseries, playgroups, out-of-school clubs, and other forms of daycare for children.

There is a long historical tradition of outdoor experiences for children in Scotland, marked by innovation stretching back over two hundred years. There is significant evidence that playing outdoors is more than just fun: it can contribute positively to child development, child health, and early learning. That is why, in this resource, we have grouped together examples of effective practice around the recognised wellbeing indicators, where children are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included. With creativity and effective leadership, all types of care services in every part of Scotland can use outdoor play to support each of these wellbeing indicators for children.

This resource is designed for people who provide services, people who commission them, and parents of children who attend them. Our inspections help to identify effective ways of using outdoor play in every part of Scotland and in every type of care service. Where our inspectors have identified particularly effective or innovative practice in outdoor play and learning, we have asked some care services to describe what they are doing and why they are doing it. Their experiences, in their own words, are presented here. We believe this is an effective way of sharing good practice and can help to improve the overall quality of early learning and childcare across Scotland. Of course we know there are many excellent care services which we have not been able to feature here. At January 2016, over 90% of care services for children were considered to be operating at a good, very good or excellent level; you can find the current grades and most recent inspection report for all care services at www.careinspectorate.com.

Many childcare services have access to their own gardens and outdoor play areas; many are also close to outdoor parks, woods and fields which can help stimulate a love of the outdoors and allow children and young people to explore nature. Some such services provide an outdoors experience one day a week. Others have designed their provision in an even more innovative direction. There are almost twenty care services in Scotland – nurseries, playgroups and out-of-school care services – where the early learning and childcare is provided exclusively or almost exclusively outside, in woods, parks, forests and on beaches. This is a highly specialised form of service, but one which is growing in popularity.

This resource pack seeks to learn both from mainstream services who are providing innovative access to the outdoors, and care services provided entirely outside. I also hope it helps support a move away from a risk-averse approach to one where proportionate risk assessment supports children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities safely.

The Care Inspectorate’s role is not just to inspect care services, but to support improvement too. We share good practice to help all care services achieve the best possible quality of care. The reason we have chosen to publish this resource now is not just that it reflects the growing in interest across the sector – seven new outdoors nurseries were registered in the last year alone – but growing importance is being attached to early learning and childcare.

With the recent increase in funded childcare hours to 600 per year, and the future increase to 1140 hours per year, this is an important moment in the early learning and childcare sector. Because innovative and refreshed models of provision will be needed to deliver the planned increase to 1140 hours by 2020, that provides an opportunity for people providing and commissioning services to plan now for how access to the outdoors can be built into future provision.

Karen Reid
Chief Executive



Reflection on a past childhood 1960-1970: an inspector's personal story

"My earliest recollection of outdoor play was the sandpit in the corner of our garden; all my friends loved to come and play with traditional buckets and spades. At my gran's house, it was a patch of garden for mixing water with dirt and making mud pies; once to my mother's annoyance on a Sunday afternoon in a white pleated skirt!

Before I was seven years old I had progressed to whizzing down the local streets, on a steep hill, alone on my scooter to meet my mother from work. My favourite pastime, again alone, was exploring the 'gullies'; the dirt tracks between the garages at the bottoms of the gardens. I searched for bits of shiny, broken, coloured glass and pottery to add to my treasure box, which I would sort and arrange in patterns for hours. When I was eight we moved to the outskirts of the city and a school on the boundary of fields and farmland. At lunchtime, the head teacher swept through the playground encouraging all that were interested to accompany her on a countryside walk. I got to know the pathways, streams, fields and bogs like the back of my hand. The head teacher talked about the names of trees, crops, wild flowers and birds. She taught us to respect the countryside code. I developed a lifelong appreciation of, and respect for, nature. I got to know my local environment, vitally important in keeping myself safe as I grew increasingly independent. I spent all of my spare time out of school across the fields. The freedom we enjoyed down the gullies, paddling in streams and across the fields from dawn to dusk would be unacceptable to most parents in this day and age.

My husband went to the same school some years earlier and I discovered that he had had exactly the same experience. We had a shared yearning to live in the countryside and to give our children the same freedom, outdoor play experiences and introduction to nature.

This little story shows the importance of role models in children's lives, shaping our attitudes and values, building our knowledge and how education is not always what is formally taught in the classroom. You could ask the parents using your setting about their childhood outdoor experiences, suggestions and ideas for outdoor activities for their children."

Maureen Mathieson, early years inspector

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1. Introduction

Spending time outdoors and particularly in natural environments is good for all of us and especially for children. The Care Inspectorate recognises the benefits of accessing the great outdoors and this resource aims to make a positive contribution to the further development of outdoor play as part of early learning and childcare in Scotland. We have a specific role to play as the national regulator, providing direction and advice to registered services, including childminders, playgroups, nurseries and out-of-school provision. We can report on the development of outdoor play from our oversight of the 9739 early learning and childcare services we inspect. Through our inspection activity we support and report on a range of activities and outcomes that children experience, including access to outdoor play. As well as registered services, this resource would also be beneficial to anyone caring for children in a group or individual setting.

Under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, we have a statutory duty to support improvement in services as well as to regulate them. By reporting on how the use of outdoors is developing, sharing examples of good practice and reflecting on our experience as an inspectorate, we want this resource to act as a catalyst to encourage further development of high-quality outdoor play. Opportunities for children to play outdoors and explore their natural environment have generally become more limited within local communities. This was starkly illustrated by William Bird's 2007 research published by Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which shows that children have progressively lost the right to roam freely from their home within four generations. So increasingly the role of registered early learning and childcare services is to proactively ensure that children have a range of experiences outdoors, from the service's own outdoor play area, local parks and further afield. Children's experiences and their capacity to learn and develop are enhanced by being able to experience nature first hand. Simply being outside in fresh air is beneficial, but when children are helped to actively explore nature themselves the dividends for improving outcomes are exponential. If staff help children to develop their own free-flow play activities outdoors and learn through nature, then we are seeing children flourish. Many children become more confident, co-operative, calm and content. And for some children it can be transformative. For children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems or struggling in a traditional formal setting, immersion in a natural setting can be therapeutic and release their potential.



"There is a growing body of research that shows that young children's access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and disposition to learning."

(Davy, 2009 (57))⁽¹⁾

The growing international forest school movement to realise the benefits of children playing and learning in a natural setting has seen a significant number of outdoor-based nurseries being registered in Scotland in recent years. The regulator's approach to outdoor-based nurseries has changed over the years. The Care Inspectorate has been able to learn from the experience of the Care Commission (a predecessor body) when registering the first application to register a nursery running solely in a woodland (The Secret Garden in Fife) without traditional premises. Once the initial concerns regarding health and safety and infection control in this setting were overcome, the regulator has supported the development of a range of outdoors-only provision.

We are finding that the quality of children's experience is generally very positive. As well as the specialist outdoor-based provision, mainstream building-based services have improved children's outdoor play experience using both their own outdoor play areas and the natural environment locally. Some local authorities have developed an approach across all their nurseries to ensure that all children regularly experience being able to explore nature, such as Fife Council, which enables all children attending one of its nurseries to go to a forest or beach once a week. Some therapeutic outdoor services have also been created to support the education of school-age children, such as Fife Council's Woodland School at Falkland.

These new outdoor-based forest nurseries follow in the footsteps of the pioneers of Scottish early learning and childcare. In 1816 Robert Owen set up what many recognise now as the world's first nursery school in New Lanark. Like Friedrich Froebel, who went on to establish kindergartens in Germany, Owen understood the value of children spending time outdoors and gaining an understanding of nature. Speaking at the opening of 'the institution established for the formation of character', Robert Owen extolled the benefits of outdoor play and studying nature:

"to give children a vigorous constitution they ought to be kept as much as possible in the open air."⁽²⁾

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Scottish Froebel-trained pioneers Margaret and Rachel McMillan opened the Open-Air Nursery in Deptford, England. The nursery building comprised single-storey shelters where children were taught in classrooms which were partially or fully exposed to the outdoors:

“All the best apparatus is in the garden. The two-year-old works hard. He and she have so much to learn. It is hard to stop him.”

(‘What the Open-Air Nursery School Is’, Margaret McMillan, 1923)⁽³⁾

Froebel’s German ‘kinder gartens’ inspired the development of Scottish ‘child gardens’, which had a similar focus on outdoor play. For example, from 1903 a network of child gardens was established in Edinburgh, based in single-storey buildings with each nursery playroom opening onto its own large veranda and spacious garden. As described by a visitor to one of these child gardens:

“The crowning glory of the place is the garden, and the story of how that was made from waste ground used as a rubbish heap. A little plot has been made and a few seeds sown in the waste places of the Canongate, and it has become a garden for work and play...”

(‘Diary of A Free Kindergarten’, Lileen Hardy, 1913)⁽⁴⁾

Many of the original child gardens continue to this day, still run by Froebel-trained headteachers. These nurseries consistently achieve high grades from the Care Inspectorate and were recently highlighted as examples of best practice by Professor Siraj’s recent Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Workforce and Out of School Care (OSC) Workforce ⁽⁵⁾.

The resurgence of forest nurseries took off in Scandinavia and Germany, with 300 operating in Denmark alone by 2008. Forest nurseries were relatively slow to develop in the UK and The Secret Garden in Fife was the first full-time outdoor-based nursery in the UK when it was registered in 2008.

Of course, these specialist services provide an inspiration and good practice examples, but this resource is also aimed at encouraging all early learning and childcare services to make the most of the natural environment. Scotland possesses an outstanding natural environment, but not all services can access this equally. This resource is as much for urban as rural services and is for all age ranges of children and different service types. We want this resource to complement the work of voluntary organisations such as Grounds for Learning and Nature Nurture in actively promoting environmental and outdoor play. This resource can support a range of early learning and childcare professionals to enrich children’s experiences and outcomes through playing outdoors and in a natural environment.

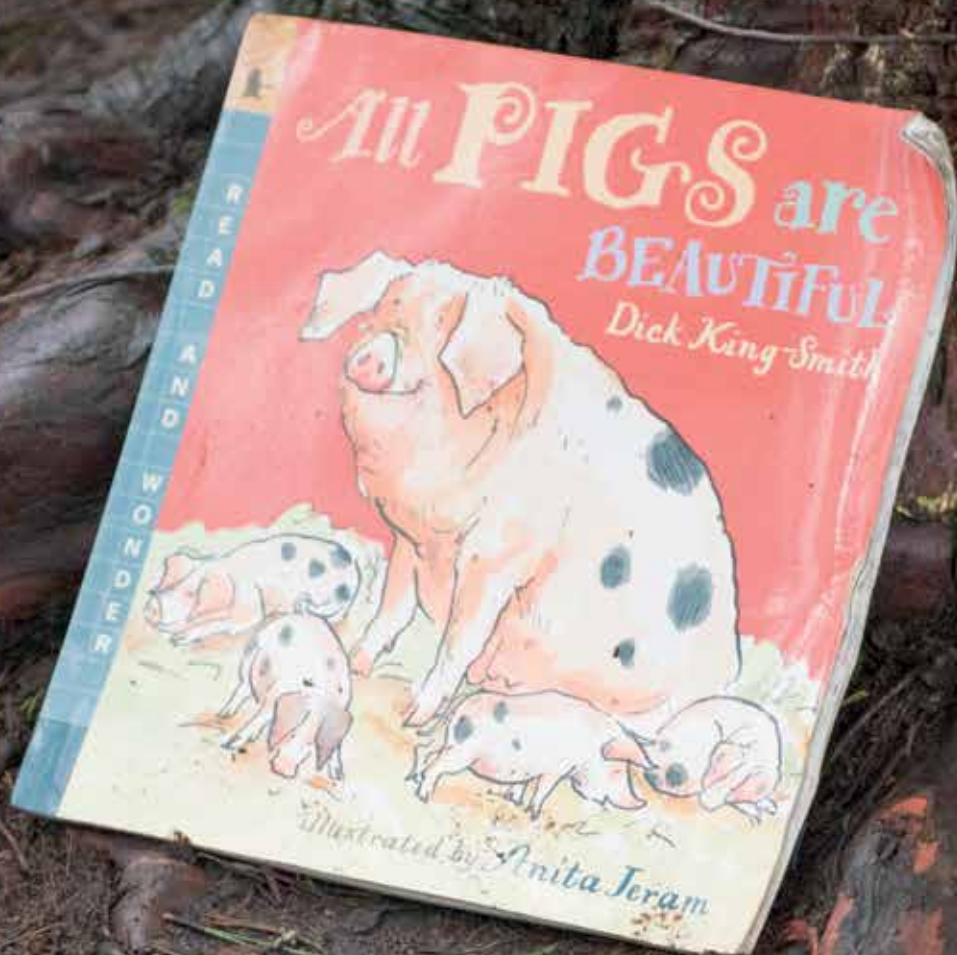
With the focus increasingly on assessing children’s outcomes rather measuring a provider’s compliance with inputs, this resource is structured using the SHANARRI indicators: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. The SHANARRI outcome indicators, which were developed for all children under the Scottish Government’s GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) key policy initiative, are an effective way of understanding and improving how services are making a difference to children in their care. These indicators support providers to help children grow and reach their developmental milestones and are a key tool in achieving the stretch aims of the Early Years Collaborative and realising the Scottish Government’s vision to make Scotland ‘the best place to grow up’.

For practitioners providing services, we hope that you find this resource helpful in promoting outdoor and natural play, whether the service is wholly or just partly delivered outdoors. The SHANARRI framework used in this resource also provides a good model for assessing and reporting your impact on children’s outcomes.

Looking through the SHANARRI lens also reflects changes to how we inspect services, moving from measuring inputs such as whether an outdoor play area is safe and adequately equipped, to assessing outcomes and how children actually experience outdoor and environmental play in all weathers. This resource is also intended to be helpful to specialist early-years practitioners within the Care Inspectorate and local authority managers planning and commissioning services, as well as people providing services.







2. National overview

The Care Inspectorate is finding ongoing and widespread improvement in the quantity and quality of outdoor play experiences for children attending all registered early-years services. The significant increase of interest in outdoor play and exploring the natural environment is shared by all registered settings, whether the service is based in an urban or rural setting or whether it is provided by the private, voluntary or statutory sector. The recent growth of specialist outdoor-based services is just one indication of this general trend.

In 2009, one of our predecessor bodies, the Care Commission, carried out a national review of active play in children's daycare services⁽⁶⁾. A simple definition of 'active play' was used – active play referred to play that included physical activity. The review concluded that most settings were providing good quality, appropriate active play opportunities for the children, indoors and outdoors. The Care Inspectorate is finding general baseline progress in the expectations of early-years practitioners and the outcomes experienced by the children they look after with regard to active play. Significant improvement has been achieved in meeting the recommendations from the Care Commission's review:

- ensure all children have regular opportunities for active play, indoors and outdoors
- provide training for staff to support the provision of active play opportunities
- improve staff knowledge and understanding of the needs of children for active play
- provide an appropriate range of quality resources and equipment to support active play
- consult children, parents and carers about the importance of active play
- review risk assessments on a regular basis.

2.1 Outdoor play areas

In the Care Inspectorate Annual Return we ask all registered daycare of children services:

'Do you provide an outdoor play area? (Yes/No)

An outdoor play area is any area out of doors, that is available to the children attending the service. The area may be shared with others or available to the wider community.'

In each of the last four years, we have seen the number of services that provide outdoor play areas increase slightly year on year. In December 2014 almost 98% of services told us that they provide an outdoor play area.

The percentage of services offering an outdoor play area each year is outlined in the following table:

% of services with outdoor play area	
December 2011 Annual Returns	96.0%
December 2012 Annual Returns	96.9%
December 2013 Annual Returns	97.1%
December 2014 Annual Returns	97.6%

The Annual Return has been updated from 2016 to ask if a service uses any specific philosophy, which now better reflects the approach of outdoor-based services:

'Does your service operate using any of the following philosophies?'

(Drop down box - multiple select)

-Suzuki/Montessori

-Steiner

-Forest

-Other approach'

2.2 Outdoor-based daycare of children services

In 2008 The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery was set up in the Howe of Fife and was registered as Scotland and the UK's first specialist full-time outdoor-only service. The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery was conceived when Cathy Bache began providing a specialist outdoor play experience as a registered childminder in 2004. With the support of her Care Commission inspector, Cathy overcame the concerns of the statutory agencies regarding risks to children to establish a very successful and popular service. The Care Commission's experience of registering this innovative service helped the regulator to appreciate that the benefits outweighed the risks and delivered positive outcomes for children attending.

**"Supposing a tree fell down, Pooh, when we were underneath it?"
"Supposing it didn't!" said Pooh after careful thought.
Piglet was comforted by this."**

A A Milne

Since registering the UK's first full-time forest nursery, the Care Inspectorate has welcomed the increasing number of new outdoor-based services being registered (and existing services becoming outdoor-based), which have expanded to include voluntary sector playgroups, local authority nurseries and out-of-school clubs, as well as independent nurseries. We define an outdoor-based service as one that describes itself as a specialist outdoor service and where children spend the majority of time outdoors. See Appendix 1 for the current list of outdoor-based services, which confirms that this is a flourishing growth area for early years. For example, since 2008 when the Secret Garden was established, there are now 18 specialist outdoor-based services registered in Scotland.

Outdoor-based services are popular with parents and provide a uniquely positive nurturing and learning experience for children. Generally these services are achieving higher grades than the national average for children's daycare. This is illustrated by the relatively high rate of 'excellent' grades awarded to outdoor-based services in the table below.

Grades of 'excellent' by theme at 31 August 2015:

	Quality of Care and Support	Quality of Environment	Quality of Staffing	Quality of Management and Leadership
% of outdoor-based services with a grade of 6 in this theme	17%	17%	17%	8%
% of children's daycare services nationally with a grade of 6 in this theme	6%	3%	5%	4%

As part of supporting the expansion of outdoor-based services, the Care Inspectorate's registration team has produced guidance for our inspectors and applicants registering this type of service (see Appendix 2).

2.3 A child's right to outdoor play

The Care Inspectorate is committed to promoting and improving the quality of outdoor play for children in line with key national policy and guidance which set out national expectations. The most relevant are Getting it Right for Every Child (2008)⁽⁷⁾, Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 (2008)⁽⁸⁾, National Care Standards: Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16 (2009)⁽⁹⁾, the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013)⁽¹⁰⁾, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014⁽¹¹⁾ and the National Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare⁽¹²⁾.

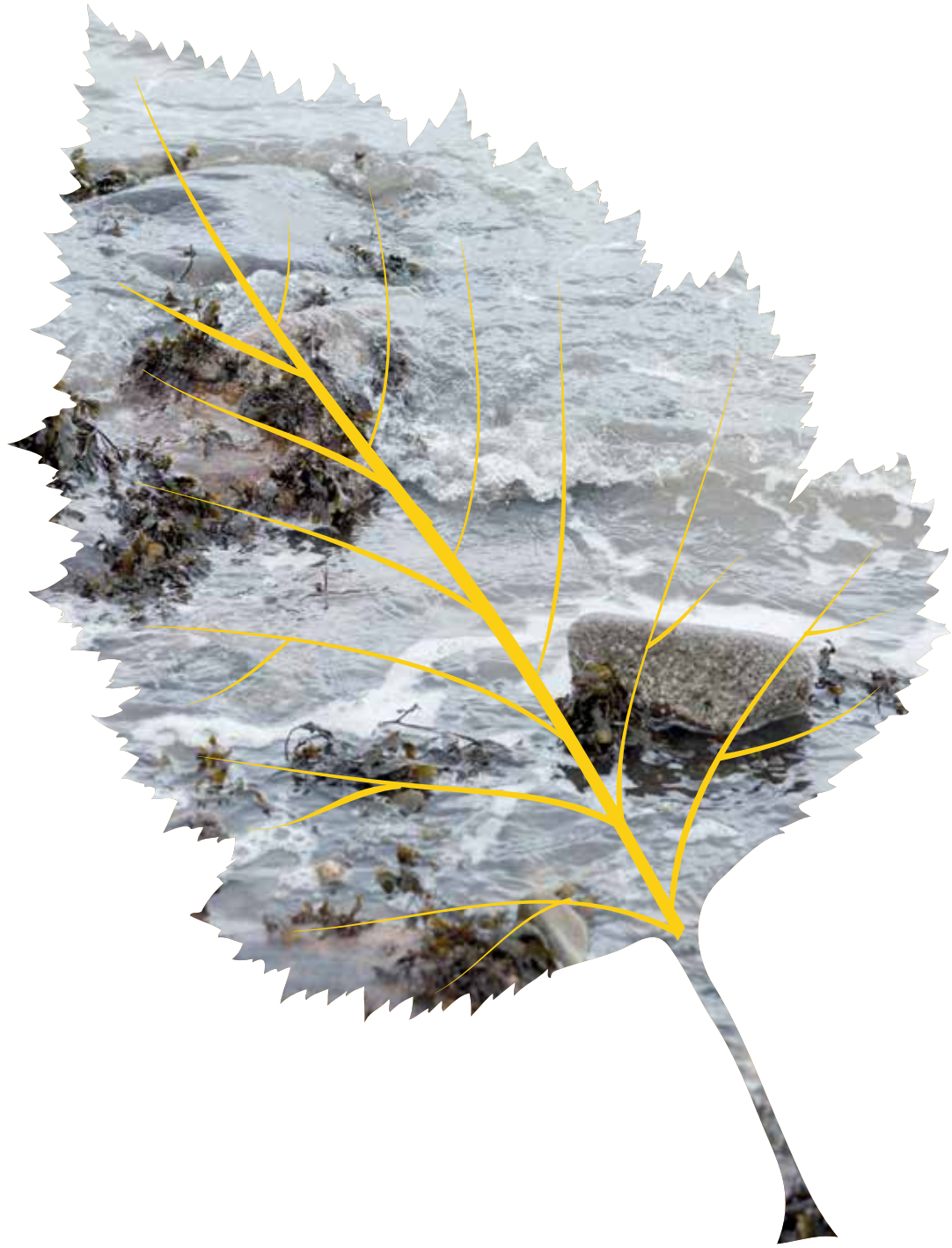
There is a wide range of early-years services that provide very different models and experiences for children and childcare for their parents. Services care for different age ranges of children and have a variety of opening times as well as being part and full-year provision during the day and during the year. While we acknowledge that every setting is individual, as a minimum we expect children and young people of all ages to experience:

- routine access to a stimulating outdoor play area including daily opportunities to spend time outdoors and, if children attend full-time, part of their day should be spent outdoors
- freedom of choice to move between the indoor and outdoor environments, whenever practicable
- the opportunity to explore the natural environment
- access to a range of high-quality outdoor play and learning opportunities throughout the year
- resources to support learning and development.

Through access to a range of outdoor activities we expect that children will:

- participate in a wide range of activities that will support a healthy lifestyle
- develop the skills to access and manage risk
- experience personal achievement and build confidence
- explore and make choices
- develop physical skills through movement and energetic play.







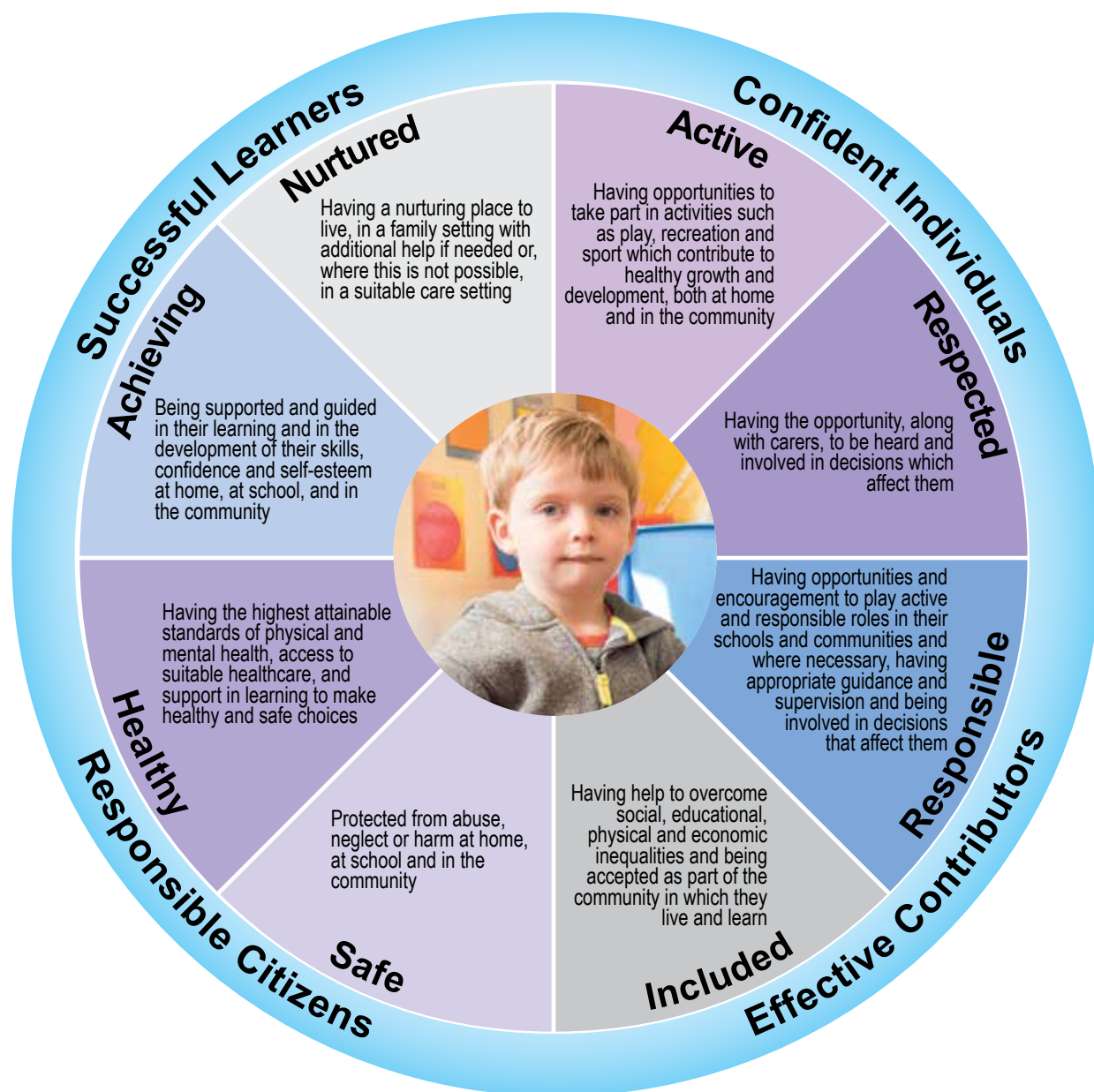
3. Looking through the SHANARRI lens

In this resource, we look at how the SHANARRI indicators of wellbeing (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, Included) included can apply to outdoor play and learning. Each indicator overlaps, interacts or impacts on the others. They all complement the experiences and outcomes in Curriculum for Excellence, Building the Ambition, the National Care Standards, Child at the Centre⁽¹³⁾ and Pre-Birth to Three – Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families⁽¹⁴⁾. For example, to be healthy it is important to be active; for children and young people to achieve their potential they need to be nurtured and included; and to become responsible they need to be respected.

This resource pulls together research findings, good practice examples, further reading and other sources of information to help your service enhance children’s wellbeing and outcomes in daycare of children and childminding services, through their outdoor play and learning experiences.

"All children and young people should enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare."

Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government⁽¹⁵⁾



3.1 Safe

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.

The value of outdoor play to children and young people cannot be over-emphasised and we want to see them have a multitude of experiences. The responsibility of caring for other people's children can be a challenge as you strive to balance letting children and young people explore outdoors with protecting them and keeping them safe.

Being outdoors has risks. The diversity of outdoor environments and the risks that come with them offer excitement and challenge for children and young people. They may cook on campfires, whittle sticks with knives, saw wood and construct dens with sticks, planks of wood, hammer and nails.

The types and levels of these risks depend on the environment you are working in; they will vary from inner Glasgow to rural Highlands and Islands. The risks and the benefits should be appropriate for the development stage and resilience factors of the children you are working with at the time.

Research shows that accidents have multiple factors but, when these factors are unpicked, major accidents to children who were simply at play in playgrounds are very low. For example, the Health and Safety Executive's report, *Playgrounds – Risks, Benefits and Choices*⁽¹⁶⁾, demonstrates that the risk to children from playing in playgrounds is not as high as many perceive and needs to be balanced against its benefits. In *No Fear Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society* (2007)⁽¹⁷⁾, Tim Gill talks about the evidence that the rubber safety surfacing most often used in the UK may lead to more broken arms than other types of surface. A paper by Professor David Eager for the International Play Association Conference in 2008 entitled *Impact Attenuation: The Case for Natural Materials*⁽¹⁸⁾ detailed the technical reasons why "the impact forces associated with falls onto rubber-based products can be 10 times greater than those associated with organic products such as woodchip and bark".

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (www.rosipa.com) has useful information to help services manage play areas and children's safety outdoors, including design ideas and consultancy, guidance on designing and maintaining sandpits, designing outdoor play areas and risk assessing children's play areas.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

The role of providers and staff is to work out the main physical and environmental risks and take steps to reduce them. You need to balance the risks against the benefits and make children the main focus of the risk-benefit assessment process.

- Know each child as individual. This means you can help enable them to access an environment safely, so that most activities are within their capabilities but some will challenge them to develop their physical skills and confidence further.
- Consider children's potential to learn and benefit by taking risks. As children and young people develop they need to try new things and learn new skills. They need to work out risks for themselves as part of their learning process.
- Involve children in the risk-benefit assessment process so they can develop their knowledge and self-awareness and contribute more of their ideas and learning. By including children in the risk assessment process, you can empower them to make safe decisions.

The Health and Safety Executive recognises the benefits of outdoor play:

"Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities; the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped up in cotton wool." Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach Health and Safety, 2012⁽¹⁹⁾

The Care Inspectorate is conscious of the importance of striking a balanced approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. For example, we have seen how the use of written risk assessments for everyday activities can become unnecessarily restrictive. While a written risk assessment may be necessary for a particular activity, if applied disproportionately to routine play activities, then this can result in unintended consequences, with staff spending so much time completing paperwork that it either takes them away from working directly with children or makes them decide that it is not worth planning the activity in the first place. We are therefore encouraging a reasonable and proportionate approach and actively countering any assumption that as a regulator we are expecting written risk assessments for routine play activities. A traditional approach to risk assessment tends to focus solely on eliminating negative aspects of risk rather than also embracing its benefits. We are therefore actively promoting a risk-benefit approach and produced the following statement on risk in play:

Care Inspectorate statement on risk in play

“The Care Inspectorate supports care service providers taking a positive approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. This means moving away from a traditional deficit model that takes a risk-averse approach, which can unnecessarily restrict children’s experiences attending registered services, to a more holistic risk-benefit model. For example, we encourage services to use risk assessment to support children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities such as woodwork using real tools, exploring nature and playing in the mud and rain. We do not expect written risk assessments to be carried out for daily play activities.”

30 October 2015

Minister’s supportive statement

“In June 2013 the Scottish Government published the Play Strategy for Scotland, which seeks to improve the play experiences of all children and young people, including those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Strategy aims to ensure all children and young people can access play opportunities in a range of settings which offer variety, adventure and challenge. They must be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, stage, ability and preference.

A huge part of this is giving regulated services the confidence to provide good quality, challenging play opportunities for children in their care. Real life experiences for children cannot be free of risk; from the very beginning children learn from trial and error, falling and getting up, testing their own boundaries and this enables them to develop their own coping strategies and resilience.

It is important too that children with additional support needs also have the chance to experience challenging play – and that quality play opportunities are offered to all children, according to their needs and preferences.

Myth busting in terms of what ‘safe care’ is for our children is also important. Scotland’s children deserve to be cared for in a loving, nurturing environment that includes hugs and the comfort of touch, which is even more important now that children are in care environments from a younger age and for longer periods of time.

I am delighted that the Care Inspectorate is supporting care service providers to adopt a more holistic risk-benefit model to help them achieve the best outcomes for children. This positive approach to risk emphasises confidence in providers using their professional judgement to support, nurture and challenge the children and young people in their care.”

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People

21 January 2016

"Access to active play in nature and outdoors – with its risks – is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children's opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings – at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature."

Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, Canadian Government 2015⁽²⁰⁾

Find out more

Go Outdoors; Guidance and Good Practice on Encouraging Outdoor Activities in Residential Child Care (2010) Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, SIRCC and the Scottish Government.⁽²¹⁾

Play Safety Advice and Information The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
www.rosipa.com/play-safety/advice/⁽²²⁾

Playgrounds – Risks, Benefits and Choices (2002) Middlesex University for the Health and Safety Executive.

Thoughts on Risk and Public Safety D J Ball davidjball.com/⁽²³⁾

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Little Stars, Craigforth, is a private nursery on the outskirts of Stirling. Little Stars is registered to provide full-time care for 113 children aged 0 to 5 years and 22 primary school age children. It achieved grades of 'good' when it was last inspected in February 2015 and we highlighted the service's good practice regarding outdoor play and how they involved children in organising this.

Getting ready for risky play

The manager of this service wanted children to make the most of the woods and craggy and grassy slopes within easy reach of this nursery, which was situated in a business park. Here is some of what she did to help children and their parents get ready for "risky play" outdoors.

At a circle time, in which children and staff gather round to share and talk, she asked the children things like "How high is too high when you are outside exploring the hills and trees?"

Children's answers included:

"When you can't see your friends anymore."

"Only really high up is too high!"

"When you get stuck."

"When you get scared."

"You can only go really high if you are really brave."

"Just the top."

The manager spoke with the children about how everyone has a different idea of what is too high and that everyone should set their own limits so that they always feel safe.

When they went outside, they had a code phrase "do you feel safe?" This became the guide for children as they set their own levels and managed their own risk.

Alongside this, staff asked parents to complete a feedback sheet, created to stimulate thoughts of their own childhood and how risky play had changed through time. They also invited parents to a hands-on outdoor session, experiencing for themselves risky play and outdoor learning. Parents fed back and showed their support for children learning outdoors with comments like:

"I am absolutely supportive of my child learning how to take risks. We have always tried to avoid being risk averse and allow them to find their own limits within safe environments, so these outdoor days support this".

"Children need to learn when they can and cannot take risks. Our child loves climbing, etc! Why stop them when they are having fun and learning!"

"(My child) loves Inside Out days! They seem to have a talent for climbing trees and teaching others their skills!"

"Great to see kids being left to make choices and decisions for their own safety; being outside and exploring!"

Fyvie Playgroup is a not-for-profit sector playgroup in rural Aberdeenshire. It is registered to provide part-time care for 21 children aged 2 years 6 months to 5 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in October 2014 and the inspection report reflects good practice, with children being encouraged to assess risk and develop skills to help them manage difficult situations.

In a ditch

Children at Fyvie Playgroup experience 'outdoor classrooms' twice every week, in all weathers. Each session starts with the children leading a meeting. They talk through safety rules like the importance of always being able to see the adults with them, not putting anything in their mouths except snacks and not picking the flowers. They then set the boundaries for their activity using sticks to do this indicating where to stop. A child described this, saying, "We tied the bag on a stick and had to stop to be safe. It was like a flag."

Here is the manager's description of one of the children's woodland adventures:

"The children lead fantastic teamwork, risk-assessing the challenges of a steep ditch in the wood. They lower each other in using sticks and low hanging branches. The sharing of roles, problem solving and marking of safety boundaries demonstrates the skills and confidence they have built over the past term. They use this knowledge to make a flag to indicate where to stop. They call for each other to reinforce rules and converse using positional language indicating where and how to achieve the task safely."

Children made comments about keeping safe when helping each other at the ditch like:

"I had to help with a big branch and had to pull up."

"We had to hold on tight and be careful."

"I was helping my friend with a stick – he's pulling me out."

"We had to be careful. We didn't want our friends to hurt. We jumped down and climb up something high and jump down it."

Parents' comments show they are pleased about how their children are benefiting from being outdoors and doing these things:

“Fabulous experience”.

“The kids sleep well when they come home – all that fresh air”.

“I couldn’t believe how capable the children are in this situation”.

Anna Clark is a childminder from rural central Scotland. Anna Clark is registered to provide full-time care for 8 children aged 0 to 16 years and achieved grades of ‘excellent’ when she was last inspected in October 2014. Our inspection found evidence of high-quality relationships between the childminder and parents and children. This allowed families to develop confidence in her service and the childminder to develop highly personal plans for children.

Paddling in the river

Anna and the children she cares for have been learning about safe fun and so much more by their local river.

She told us about one warm day when the river was low. They carefully made their way from rock to rock, splashing, throwing stones to make big splashes, squidding mud and throwing sticks for the dog, before settling at the water’s edge for a welcome picnic.

At the riverside the children have learned how to tell the difference between slippery rocks and ones where they can stand more easily. They have found out how to tell still areas of water, where they can stand easily, from faster running bits of water, and how to plan their route accordingly.

They have learned that bigger stones make bigger splashes and about things that float (leaves and sticks) and things that sink.

When they played with water squirters they learned about aiming and the arc of the spray. The childminder tells us they’ve even seen a rainbow in the spray, so they are learning how a droplet of water can split invisible (white) light into different colours of light. She has also seen that children who tend to be a bit more cautious see others enjoying an unusual experience and decide to try it for themselves. Their reward for taking this small risk is that they too join in and enjoy the activity.

Children know that warm weather isn’t all they need for their riverside adventures. They have learned that the river conditions have to be right too. Anna points out that if the children ask to go paddling but the conditions are not suitable they might instead go for a walk, look at the water rushing and discuss that it wouldn’t be safe to paddle.

Parents know about this, have given their written permission and often tell Anna they wish they could join in too.

Children remembered that the water was cold but they wanted to do it again.

Anna said that above all else from the things she took with her, the absolute musts were her water shoes. With these on she could get to children needing help in the water quickly and easily.

First Kidzone is a private outdoor-based out-of-school care service in Peterhead. First Kidzone is registered to provide part-time care for 15 children aged 4 to 16 years. It achieved grades of 'good' when it was last inspected in September 2014 and we reported on the service's good practice in involving children in assessing and managing risk.

Building campfires

"The local authority's countryside ranger service has given training on building campfires and staff and children now regularly enjoy this outdoor experience.

Proper preparation is highly important. Checks are made that staff are confident, the location they use is available and they have the right equipment ready, like firelighters, small pieces of wood, newspapers and campfire food.

The ranger service helps too, by providing logs, wire rakes, a fire bowl to have the fire in and plastic bottles that collect rainwater.

The children get involved in the campfire activities, from the set up to the tidying away, and they know the safety rules. They know how far they need to be away from the fire bowl and where the best place is to sit and not get all smoky. They know they must listen to staff, that the fire must always be attended, that you need big bottles of water to put the fire out and they know you still don't touch the bowl, even if it is put out with water.

Children thoroughly enjoy the campfires as shown in their comments:

"The food tastes better in the rain when you have a campfire."

"Can we have a fire every day? It's so cool."

"S'mores are the best."

"Can we try and make fire using a magnifying glass and the wood to make our campfire today?"

"I could just sit here all day and eat at the campfire and keep cosy."

"We need to watch the smoke to see which way it is going as I don't like the smoke in my eyes."

Parents have also commented on how much their children have enjoyed the campfires and that they tell them all about what they cook on the fire and the fun they have."

3.2 Healthy

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support to make healthy and safe choices.

In recent years, Scottish Government policy has changed its focus in order to emphasise the importance of good health as well as treating and preventing ill health. The rise in childhood obesity and an increase in sedentary indoor lifestyles are concerns that have been identified about children's and young people's health. A sedentary lifestyle not only contributes to obesity, but also disconnection from nature and poorer mental health and wellbeing. The impact of this disconnection with nature on mental health and wellbeing has been extensively written about and researched. For example, the 2009 research *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*⁽²⁴⁾ published by the University of Essex and William Bird's 2007 research *Natural Thinking: A Report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*⁽²⁵⁾ both provide evidence of this link.

Our early experiences help to form our habits of a lifetime so it is important that providers and practitioners work with children and their families to help them enjoy all that the outdoors offers to support children's health.

In 'Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways', published by the University of Essex, a 'healthy life pathway' is described as:

- active
- connected to people and society
- engaging with natural places
- eating healthy foods.

It examines outdoor experiences being used to support health and wellbeing and found they result in the following positive outcomes:

- sense of freedom
- independence
- inner strength
- self-discovery
- enhanced connectedness with nature
- increased environmental knowledge
- higher self-esteem
- better mood
- resilience to stress.

Creative STAR learning company's 2009 feasibility study for a forest kindergarten in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley⁽²⁶⁾ highlighted research demonstrating that contact with nature has a positive effect in reducing stress and the impact of attention deficit disorder.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

As a provider or practitioner, your role is to help children experience the highest standards of physical and mental health, and support them to make healthy, safe choices.

Playing and learning outdoors offers other benefits, such as development of the senses: hearing; vision; smell; and spatial awareness, as well as increasing capacity for learning.

All children's services will have unique aims and premises that may or may not lend themselves easily to outdoor experiences. Imagination and creativity are important. Within everyone's wider community there are environments where children's health can benefit from playing and learning outdoors. For example, parks, woodland, beaches, farmland and allotments can all be used to help support better health outcomes.

Find out more

Feasibility Study for a Forest Kindergarten: Glasgow and the Clyde Valley (2009) Creative STAR learning company.⁽²⁷⁾

Grow Well Choices Early Years (2015) NHS Grampian http://www.nhsgrampian.org/nhsgrampian/gra_display.jsp?pContentID=8966&p_applic=CCC&⁽²⁸⁾

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder (2005) R Louv.⁽²⁹⁾

Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways (2009) Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society; University of Essex.

Outdoor Recreation Health and Wellness: Understanding and Enhancing the Relationship (2009) G Godbey.⁽³⁰⁾

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Growing food is one of the ways children can learn about keeping their bodies healthy. Here are stories shared by some services doing this.

Cardenden Primary School Nursery is a local authority nursery class located in, rural Fife. Cardenden Primary School Nursery is registered to provide part-time care for 40 children aged 3 to 5 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in December 2014 and the inspection report highlighted how children were benefiting from the allotment.

Nursery allotment

"We have a nursery allotment next to our nursery playground with three raised beds and a shed. We started growing in our allotment over a year ago and had our first harvest in term one of this session. We are now at the stage of planting and caring for our new crop.

"The learning opportunities provided by the allotment are many and varied.

- Maths/numeracy – problem solving, matching, size, shape, sorting, counting, planning, money and time.
- Literacy – listening and talking, sharing ideas, reading and writing labels, seed information, recipes and shopping lists.
- Health and wellbeing – healthy eating, growing, living things, hygiene, safety, eco-friendly.
- Expressive arts – song, rhymes and games related to growing and planting.
- Science – growing, minibeasts, weather, seasons, senses, properties of food (for example, raw or cooked).
- Enterprise – buying and selling vegetables, planning, harvesting, preserving produce.

"Parents were involved through donating equipment, plants and seeds and caring for our allotment, particularly over weekends and holidays. Parents also bought soup bags from our children and shared recipes with staff.

"Children were very enthusiastic about the allotment. Some of our children were able to make links with home and share experiences".

Methilhill Nature Nursery is a not-for-profit sector outdoor-based nursery located in Leven, Fife. Methilhill Nature Nursery is registered to provide full-time care for 20 children aged 2 to 5 years. It achieved grades of 'good' and 'adequate' when it was last inspected in June 2015. The inspection report highlights how gardening is contributing positively to children's health.

Growing up

"We work with our younger children (in the nursery) to try to inspire a love of all things natural and that involves growing food.

The children might be involved in anything from planting seeds, weeding, caring for the plants, helping harvest. We try to promote an understanding of where our food comes from.

In the learning garden we have a dedicated growing space and polytunnel and the children can help grow anything from fruit trees, to berries, to salad crops and potatoes. Crops are labelled, introducing literacy, and numeracy comes in many forms, from counting seeds or seedlings to exploring the different shapes and sizes of seeds. Ultimately our aim is to nurture a curiosity for where our food comes from and how we can grow and use our own produce."

Fyvie Playgroup

Constant gardening

"The sessions are once a week, based at Fyvie Castle walled garden, where we work alongside the team of gardeners. We are involved in various jobs, everything from the sowing of seeds, planting of bulbs and shrubs, raking of leaves and general tidying to the harvesting and then clearing of spent vegetables. The children are out for the whole three hours and 10 minutes session and in all weathers, learning about the life of the garden through the seasons."

Other services have found being outdoors supports children's good emotional health.

Amber Kindergarten is a not-for-profit sector nursery on the outskirts of Aberdeen. Amber Kindergarten is registered to provide full-time care for 31 children aged 1 to 7 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in December 2013 and the service's positive approach to playing outside is reflected in the inspection report.

Magic moment

Children are outside every day, in the playground or in the nearby forest, which is a five-minute walk away. Here are some of the benefits for children being outside that the service identifies:

“In our experience, children benefit enormously by being outdoors – a different mood comes over the whole group and each individual child seems to instantaneously relax. The contact with natural materials and textures feeds the sensory being of the child and brings them to instinctively experiment, investigate and elaborate. The children spontaneously share their experiences, and the imagination and creativity are given free rein. Social skills and language can be greatly improved in these situations.

“The learning that happens outdoors touches all areas of child development and deeply nourishes the growing child. It is interesting to see how shy and withdrawn children can gradually open up when playing outside and come to feel more confident and strong.

“An important aspect of outdoor time is the possibility to observe the changes in nature, the transformation of the elements and the interdependence of all living beings. Besides the obvious element of ‘scientific’ learning, these experiences, in my opinion, give the child a deep sense of belonging, allowing them to feel part of a wonderful, ever-changing world. Ultimately, these are the seeds of resilience.

“One such magic moment happened a few years ago on a crisp, cold, winter morning. We were walking on the road to go back to the kindergarten when the sun came out and it was warm and strong. After a while, from the roofs and from the meadow, a thin film of mist started to rise. We were singing and from our mouths, the same was happening. The children started to laugh and were excited that they could do the same and make mist, just like the Earth. And not in a million years, as a teacher, could I have hoped to teach them that; that we are all part of the world and we belong together.”



3.3 Achieving

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people are supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem at home, at school and in the community.

Direct links can be made between the development of motor skills and cognitive ability.

The outdoors offers children and young people an ideal environment for active, open-ended learning, exploration, investigation and creativity.

From an early age, children are inspired by their experiences of the world around them.

- Babies and toddlers develop balance through trial and error over varying terrains and falling over, climbing uphill and sliding down.
- Moving stones and other natural materials for constructing gives children a real understanding of the properties of materials, including weight and size.
- Seeing flowers growing, the leaves on trees changing colour and feeling the weather getting colder are meaningful experiences of the seasons.
- Children experience satisfaction and learning from planting, growing and tending vegetables and fruit and eating the produce.
- Finding insects under a stone or seeing a rabbit disappearing down a hole teaches children about habitats.
- Investigating the science of plant, animal and insect life-cycles

As children develop, their play becomes more symbolic and imaginative. Natural and open-ended materials and loose parts offer endless possibilities:

- for construction and den-building
- for weaving, pattern-making and transitory art
- for sorting; categorising by type, colour, size or weight contributing to learning not only of nature and science but also of mathematics
- as open-ended props for imaginative play.

As an enabler, you can introduce resources and concepts to extend children's play interests and their learning and development.

Research highlights the benefits of outdoor learning as:

- increasing concentration
- stimulating creativity
- developing problem-solving skills
- enhancing critical thinking and decision making.

For example, Creative STAR learning company's feasibility study also highlighted Swedish research showing that children at outdoor preschools have twice the concentration capacity as children at normal pre-schools.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

It is important that you find ways to provide children with opportunities for outdoor learning. Any outdoor area whether it be beach, forest or well-resourced, adapted tarmac playground can provide a rich environment to excite exploration, investigation and open-ended play to help develop children's thinking and creativity skills.

To help you reflect on your service's outdoor practice, ask yourself:

- Have we planned for and provided resources for a range of rich outdoor learning experiences across the curriculum?
- Do we need advice from a specialist agency such as Grounds for Learning to help us develop our outdoor play area or programme of activities?
- Do we have high expectations of what children might learn outdoors?
- What is the best way to ask children what they want to do or learn outdoors?

Find out more

Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare (2014) Scottish Government.

Building Your Curriculum: Outside and In (2011) Education Scotland.⁽³¹⁾

Creative STAR Learning Company <http://creativestarning.co.uk/c/early-years-outdoors/>

Developing Learning in Early Childhood (2004) T Bruce.⁽³²⁾

Observing Young Children (2015) T Bruce, S Louis and G McCall.⁽³³⁾

Outdoor Learning: Practical Guidance, Ideas and Support for Teachers and Practitioners in Scotland (2011) Education Scotland.⁽³⁴⁾

To Achieve Cognitive Development Children Must First Develop Motor Skills (2012) S Goddard Blythe.⁽³⁵⁾

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Doodlebugs Day Nursery is a private nursery located in rural central Scotland. Doodlebugs Day Nursery is registered to provide full-time care for 46 children aged 0 to 8 years and achieved grades of 'good' and 'very good' when it was last inspected in October 2014. In the report the positive impact from developing the nursery's chalet on the children's learning is featured.

Our chalet

"Our nursery is an Old Church Manse and we are really fortunate to have a large mature garden for our children. Last year we decided to focus on creating an outdoor learning space with what we already had. The idea came from wanting to offer something different from our existing provision in the garden, so it was a bit of an experiment in creating something that was going to get the children involved in playing with different items and ultimately creating their own play resources. It's been a great project for staff, and it's been wonderful to watch the children enjoy this space so much too.

"The chalet was originally an empty playhouse which, as with most unused spaces at nursery, slowly became a storage area. Our staff used their imaginations and developed this unused empty space from items that were around nursery, their homes and the garden. They brought in unused items and recycled lots of tyres, logs and other natural resources. Watching the area develop was very enjoyable for staff and watching the children enjoy the space encouraged staff to experiment with lots of different products. "Oh, look, I found this in my garage, wouldn't it be great for the chalet!" is a typical comment.

"Cost is minimal if you have a shed or area already in your outdoor space. The chalet is made from wood and we have tried to keep the majority of the resources natural or recycled: pots of moss, clay, sticks, stones, logs, leaves, shells, acorns, and so on. The children make their own resources and enjoy den-building, making bows and arrows, feeding birds, clay-making activities, hanging mobiles, bird-watching and lots and lots of inventing!

"We watched a group of children make a hammock for the treehouse with bark and string. They then added a pulley so the hammock moved upstairs and downstairs. We have a trough full of sawdust on the floor, the children added tubes for the sawdust to be poured into. They then attached string to the tube and added a stone for weight at the other end and wow! A child made a weighing device! The children have learned so much from this natural play and it is wonderful to see them extending and taking ownership of their own environment.

“The chalet has become an extension to our space indoors. Often, we bring items back in from the chalet at the request of our children. It has developed into a rich learning space and, because of this space we have greatly developed our resources of natural items, which the children enjoy making things with. For example, moss has become a great resource. Gathering it, discussing where it grows, finding it, watering it and then the endless ways in which it can be used; as a roof in the small-world treehouse. Our children will string together little sticks, making swings for the little treehouse, or make furniture from a collection of little sawn-off discs from a branch.

“Problem solving, creating and inventing, building and making, and lots of opportunities to play with natural items with different textures – our children have learned how to respect their environment and play while taking risk. For example, using tools safely while building; keeping others safe while using the natural environment; caring for living things, birds and plants.

“In the chalet, they have learned how to weigh and measure using natural products, for example, sticks, string and sawdust. The decay of vegetation is also explored and now their play is less inhibited while outside. Counting natural resources and exploring new textures is also a big part of their learning. A few of our children learn best through active movement, sensory and physical experiences. There is immense pleasure for staff in watching the children deeply focused on their play.”

Amber Kindergarten

Snow story, as told by the manager:

“One child on the autistic spectrum had a phobia for snow and refused to put their feet down on the ground when there was snow. We solved this problem by carrying the child in a sledge when we went for walks, and from their safe position they observed the other children playing and making snowmen. After a few days, the child came out of the sledge and accepted to be on the paved path (free of snow) that leads to the kindergarten. After another few days, they went closer to the snow on the side of the path. As I was getting cold and needed to move, I started walking in the snow making deep holes. To my amazement, the child tentatively stepped into the holes made by my feet, ever so careful not to touch the snow. Two days later their mum told me she found the child in the garden, jumping on the trampoline, tongue out, licking the falling snowflakes and laughing.”

Dunblane Nature Kindergarten is a private outdoor-based nursery and out-of-school care in Dunblane. Dunblane Nature Kindergarten is registered to provide full-time care for 95 children aged 0 to 5 years and 30 children aged 5 to 12 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in April 2014 and the inspection report highlighted how the service has encouraged children of all ages to work together and develop their skills and confidence through outdoor play.

"All children under the age of three at Dunblane Nature Kindergarten are offered the same experiences outdoors as older children, with an adaptation in the amount of support that they require. We believe that young children should be involved in risk-assessing from a young age and have the opportunity to be aware of the same hazards as older children in a controlled way. Recently, we had three cable drums added to our garden, in a range of sizes. They had been intentionally placed in a row to enable children to experience height and climbing and experimentation and progression.

"Some of the one- and two-year olds were playing and trying to climb up when a four-year-old shouted, "No, no, he is too little – he might fall". The educator explained that the child is very capable and wants to try things out for themselves – then asked the older child what we should do to make them safe. Carefully the younger children managed to climb up from one cable drum to another with intense concentration and balance, problem-solving in a physical sense their way over the small gap.

"Children showed a great deal of excitement and sense of achievement at the top, with staff there to engage with them and encourage – and keep them safe and concentrated.

"The children were then able to explore height and basic measuring tools.

"This fits with our ethos in the following ways.

- An enabling approach to children's experiences and seeing them as capable individuals with a need to experience controlled and appropriate risks.
- A child-centred and intensive level of support and recognition of when children are focused, engaged and engrossed in their own learning and experiences.
- Integration of learning experiences in play and exploration, in this case with the chance to measure heights and be aware of space and distance using the measuring stick.
- Reusing materials and Nicholson's theory of Loose Parts – we obtained these resources from the neighbouring work yard, as they were no longer required.

"For these experiences in particular, this meshed well with each child's personal plan, which is based upon the SHANARRI indicators."

Fife Council’s Woodland School at Falkland is not registered with the Care Inspectorate and provides a specialist support service to schools.

The Clan – a storyline approach to learning outdoors

“Pupil Support Levenmouth (Kennoway) have completed an exciting new initiative using a Storyline Approach to Outdoor Learning. They have made use of the Falkland site to engage ‘hard to reach’ pupils in learning. The pupils have a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and often disengage with more traditional class-based teaching.

On visiting the Falkland Tipi site, staff were inspired by the tranquil, secure surroundings and acknowledged that these would provide the pupils with a meaningful context, motivating them to make connections between their experiences and the world around them. We knew that Falkland Estate would provide us with the resources and experiences that couldn’t be replicated in the classroom setting.

It was important to us that the children had ownership for their learning at Falkland and on observing them at play in the setting, the idea of replicating and learning about Scottish clans during the Highland Clearances was generated.

On returning to the centre the children were full of enthusiasm for the possible experiences that lay ahead. They were engaged from the beginning due to the potential for them to learn in a new, exciting context. We discussed what the children already knew about that time in history and then generated questions that they would like to be answered over the course of the project. From these discussions the staff, led by Wendy McKay, were able to create a six-week programme of cross-curricular lessons that would take place in our forest and classroom settings. Using information gathered during planning meetings with the children’s mainstream teachers, we aimed to cover the outcomes that the children were most reluctant to participate in within their schools, often due to a fear of failure. The experiences were planned to allow flexibility and would evolve naturally throughout the course of the topic. The children themselves would be involved in taking the story in the direction that best met their needs; this again would allow for the adults to learn alongside, and from, the children.

Staff and pupils all created a character and took on that role; this allowed staff to facilitate the learning using multi-sensory approaches. Staff modelled new skills in their roles as clan members so an ethos of shared learning and evaluation was developed in a supportive yet challenging way.

Over the course of the project staff observed many positive outcomes that surpassed those that had initially been planned. Relationships were developed between children who would not naturally choose to work together. Relationships were further developed between staff and children, children viewed staff as learners throughout the topic and trust was built up over the weeks. This had a positive impact back in the classroom setting. Risk-taking skills were developed in real-life contexts, enabling the children to transfer what they'd learned in school to a meaningful situation. The children tried different activities that they would possibly have disengaged from in a classroom setting; being part of a team (clan) and having others depending on their effort was a huge source of motivation for some pupils who previously were difficult to engage and motivate. Children who, in the classroom, can appear to be shy, withdrawn or seen as 'followers', showed different aspects to their personalities. Pupils were more relaxed, and under the guise of their 'character' they took on roles they perhaps wouldn't be as confident to do in the classroom setting. Children were able to remain focussed for longer periods of time whilst at Falkland, they appeared calmer at Falkland and were more tolerant of each other in the outdoor setting. Children who were reluctant readers and writers became more motivated to do so when in character and when faced with a real purpose for doing so.

The project culminated in a Clan Gathering in the form of a traditional Highland Games. Everybody participated fully and a great time was had by all. Six months on, the children still reminisce fondly of their time as part of their clan and often revert to affectionately addressing each other using their clan names.

Staff evaluated the impact of this project and went on to plan further outdoor learning experiences for different groups across our service."



3.4 Nurtured

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have a nurturing place to live, in a family setting, with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

Nurturing is a key concept in early learning and childcare: the act of caring for and encouraging the growth and development of children and young people. The concept of nurturing is underpinned by attachment theory and relies on adults fostering attachments and positive relationships with children and young people through:

- warm and supportive care giving – ‘professional love’
- positive interaction and recognition that supports children’s self-esteem
- consistency in care and routines
- understanding behaviours as communication
- recognising and supporting children and young people’s next steps in learning.

Nurturing, supportive and predictable care helps children to develop relationships, connections, self-confidence and self-esteem. It provides the ideal conditions for brain development in the early years, the critical period where babies and young children’s brains develop synapses (the connections that map children’s experiences and wire the foundations of the brain). Synapses also develop in response to stress, fear and negative experiences, such as anger and abuse. For this reason nurture is a name often given to a planned programme of intervention that emphasises positive, nurturing experiences that may compensate for other aspects in children’s lives.



"Increasingly, research shows that being outdoors supports this nurturing experience. Particularly the additional stimulation of a rich, natural or naturalised outdoor environment; the increased possibilities and opportunities for exploration, developing curiosity, investigation and creativity has 'profound benefits for children in terms of psychological wellbeing; buffering life stresses and boosting resilience."

(Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development and the Earth's Future. R White, 2004)⁽³⁶⁾

What the Care Inspectorate expects

You can create opportunities for babies, children and young people to connect with nature and the outdoors. Children who are dealing with negative issues in their lives often express themselves in behaviours that may cause disruption indoors: running and shouting; boisterous play; climbing and jumping. These types of behaviours can be expressed in the space and freedom of the outdoors with much less negative reactions from adults and less impact on the children's peers. Children may need the time and space of the outdoors to be alone, to work through scenarios in play, or to vent anger and frustration. The outdoors offers children the chance to come together with others in their own time, to play in parallel, to learn the rules of negotiation from the sidelines and gradually join in and become part of the team. Being able to make choices about where and how they spend their time can support children to develop self-regulation skills. With the right environment and equipment emotions can be expressed in positive skills and achievements; supporting children's resilience, self-esteem, health and wellbeing.

Responsive care giving from interested and engaged adults will enable children to get the best out of their outdoor experiences. For example:

- being sensitive to children’s emotional wellbeing
- respecting children’s interests and choices
- role modelling a positive attitude towards the outdoors in all weathers
- interacting to support children’s enjoyment and learning
- ensuring that children are dressed appropriately for the weather.

Find out more

Early Childhood Practice: Froebel Today (2012) T Bruce.⁽³⁷⁾

Nurture Through Nature: Working with Children Under Three in Outdoor Environments (2012), C Warden; Mindstretchers.⁽³⁸⁾

Pre-Birth to Three – Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families (2010) Scottish Government.

Young Children’s Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children’s Development and the Earth’s Future (2004) R White.

Good practice

Here’s what others have done. What can you do?

Langa Street Nursery School is a local authority nursery located in Glasgow. Langa Street Nursery School is registered to provide full-time care for 55 children aged 2 to 5 years. The last inspection in November 2014 awarded grades of ‘excellent’ and ‘very good’ and the inspection report talks about the difference that outdoor play makes to the children’s confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Urban outdoor play

“The majority of our children live in flats and do not have access to safe outdoor spaces for play when they are not in the nursery. We see their confidence soar when they are able to run, explore and investigate freely in our gardens. Some children have spoken for the first time in the outdoors. Others who need lots of extra encouragement to visit the writing area will investigate with mark-making on a large scale in the playground. Children who do not normally play together indoors have been drawn to each other in the outdoor spaces, for example, a child who has no spoken language in either Mandarin or English and who generally plays alone enjoys sharing laughter with another very quiet child on the seesaw or tandem trike.”

St Dominic's Nursery Class and Wrap Around Care is a local authority nursery and out-of-school care service located in Crieff. It is registered to provide part-time care for 35 children aged 2 to 5 years and 40 children aged 3 to 12 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in November 2014 and the inspection report highlights how the service uses nature to create a nurturing environment.

Thomas Wood

"We contacted our local factor at Drummond Estate to ask about having our forest school in Thomas Wood. They were delighted to say yes – our next move was to contact the people who manage the woodland and they were very helpful in helping us to organise a three-year woodland management plan and to ensure that our working area was safe for the children to use.

The children became involved with this, supporting their knowledge and understanding of the importance of putting something back and not taking away the habitat that is a vital resource for many living creatures, as well as the importance of trees in their world. This turned them into eco warriors as they became aware of the importance of protecting the woodlands for their future and future generations, learning about sustainability.

Three members of staff completed different levels of forest school training – an amazing opportunity that has enhanced the experiences of all stakeholders.

The different experiences on offer look at how the children can use the resources within the woodlands; recognising that we only use dead wood for fairy dens, dens and shelters, transient art and fires. The group understand that we would never simply cut a tree down to make a den. They recognise that if we were going to make our own tools from wood we would need to use green wood and look for a tree that was at the end of its life, or perhaps one that was not growing as it should. We would only use natural wastage – our 'gifts' from the woodlands – and an opportunity to clear the woodland floor to allow regrowth.

They are continually building on their skills through working co-operatively, as they grow in self-esteem and confidence.

Children are empowered to realise the importance of protecting living things as they develop a sense of wonder and awe about their planet and the natural beauty that surrounds them.

The empathy that has grown in the children has been a joy to observe as they become familiar with, and grow in, what could only be described as 'immense love' for Thomas Wood and an appreciation of what they can learn from this environment.

When looking back at where the children were in their awareness of having first-hand woodland experiences, it is amazing how far all of the children have come in their holistic development; their emotional intelligence, their self-esteem and confidence alongside their knowledge and understanding of woodland in our ever-fast-paced world.

Almost half of the group had never been in woodland before and the first session was their first experience of having their senses brought alive by Thomas Wood.

Now, almost all of the group have visited the woods to look at their dens, sit under the meeting tree and share their learning with their families during the holidays or at weekends, an amazing accolade to the forest school experience alone, without taking into account all of the individual learning and development that has taken place.

When we received feedback through questionnaires regarding their children's learning and experiences over the year, the forest school experience was highlighted by almost all parents, as a very positive experience that had a great impact on their child's learning.

Some parents explained that they had observed their children's behaviour improve; some said that meal times were more enjoyable, as they discussed their experiences at meal times; while others thought that their children were going to bed at a more appropriate time on the evening of the day they had accessed forest schools.

Before our programme begins, the children, as the main stakeholders, will work in groups to make mind-map risk assessments. This will be collated with the group and written into a formal benefit-risk assessment. The children are encouraged to risk-assess as they go, and to add this into their risk assessment after each visit.

Staff and parent helpers have an informal planning meeting and run through risk assessments and policy and procedures at the initial onset of each six-week programme for each class accessing forest school.

As the sessions take place, they will receive a copy of the outline planning and will be encouraged to observe and record any future responsive planning for individual children, using the camera and sticky labels that can inform individual learning targets for all learners.

Feedback from children and adults will be the key for planning for the next session incorporating responsive planning to include the children's interests.

After each session the children and adults will come together to reflect and evaluate our experience and discuss what we would like to happen on our next visit to Thomas Wood.

By just being outdoors in the woodland our mental health and wellbeing is enhanced as we breathe in fresh air and watch the sun shine through the trees and just 'be' with nature.

For many years, theorists have observed and assessed children's behaviour in many contexts. For me, the recognition that children learn best through first-hand experiences that stimulate and motivate the child's participation, while embracing the fact that each child is a unique individual who will benefit from a holistic approach to their learning, is by far the magic key. *"Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand."* (traditional proverb). This proverb is a good description of forest school as the children are completely involved from the onset."

The Free Range project is not required to be registered with the Care Inspectorate and is a referral-based project run by Fife Council's Play Development Team based within the Early Years & Partnership Support Team, Education & Children's Services Directorate. The project is in partnership with Falkland Centre for Stewardship.

Free-range kids

"It is an entirely outdoor play experience for children aged 4 to 9 years and is designed to promote children's health and wellbeing through outdoor play in a natural environment. The woodland environment provides challenge, adventure and fun opportunities for the children to develop their life skills and increase confidence and resilience as well as developing a strong connection with the natural environment.

The project takes place within a woodland site deep within the forest based at Chancefield, Falkland Estate. The site hosts 2 giant tipis, a wooden gazebo featuring a wood-burning stove, composting toilets and a campfire area.

The children attend each day for a week during school holiday periods and are referred to the project by social work, education, family and community support teams, NHS Fife, as well as other agencies.

Aim: to improve the quality of life for vulnerable children experiencing disadvantage in identified areas of Fife through outdoor play.

Outcomes:

- children experience increased physical activity and play opportunities
- children have greater confidence and have gained new skills
- children have a greater knowledge of the natural environment outdoors
- families feel more supported.

There have been over 450 children who have attended the Free Range project since it started in 2012.

The Free Range project is based in an outdoor setting. It is underpinned by the child's right to play and the playwork principles.

Staff at Free Range support the child in their play to ensure that the play spaces and environment affords the children attending the project opportunities to experience 'freely chosen, personally driven and intrinsically motivated' play. The staff role is to create and maintain spaces for children to play.

'Free play opportunities provide the biggest benefit in a child's development'
Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.

Free play is play where the child chooses how and why to do it. It can take place alone or with peers. Children are given the freedom to come up with their own ideas at their own speed and in turn develop their creativity and growth.

We recognise that outdoor play in natural spaces is very beneficial for children's development and provides experiences which cannot be replicated indoors. The benefits of outdoor play are well documented.

When children have access to natural spaces for play it fosters a sense of close connection with, and respect for, nature. Outdoor free-play offers a powerful way of providing some of these enriching outdoor experiences.

The nature of the outdoors makes it a more interesting, stimulating place to play, and allows children the sense of fun and freedom whilst promoting their physical, emotional and psychological health.

In addition, children and young people who play outdoors more often have better social networks, are more confident and are more involved in their local communities than those who are outside less often.

At Free Range we value the long-term benefits of play and exposure to risk – both in terms of physical health and in developing resilience and mental wellbeing.

When the children are engaging in risky play they are also developing skills in risk assessment and an ability to keep themselves safe which will support their resilience through life."

3.5 Active

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community.

Children need little encouragement to be active and being outdoors seems to promote children becoming more active.

"Have you ever been in an open space with young children? The first thing they want to do is to break away from your hand and run! They are born with the desire to move, and open space is exciting."

(Going Out to Play and Learn, from the Early Education: Learning Together Series, published by Early Education)⁽³⁹⁾

Obesity is a significant and growing issue and the lack of physical activity is one factor affecting this. Scottish Government statistics in 2013 showed one in six children were already obese and almost a third of children were at risk of becoming overweight or obese. In 2013 Scotland was ranked the fifth highest OECD country for rates of obesity. This was despite indications that 75% of children had met the Department of Health's UK Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Years⁽⁴⁰⁾ 2011 recommendation of being active for at least 60 minutes a day, as reported in the 2011 Scottish Health Survey. More needs to be done to make sure children lead more physically-active lives.

It is up to all of us to reverse this trend and you and your service can help.

The UK's Department of Health guidelines recommend:
for infants:

- floor-based play
- tummytime
- minimising restrained sitting

for children under five:

- three hours of physical activity each day
- walking, running, climbing
- minimising sedentary behaviour

for children aged five to 18 years:

- minimum of one hour of physical activity up to several hours every day
- moderate to vigorous intensity.

As well as helping to tackle obesity in children by burning energy and regulating weight, physical activity also:

- builds strong bones
- strengthens muscles, including the heart
- maintains flexibility
- promotes growth
- improves posture and balance
- elevates mood.

The 2014 research *School Gardens and Physical Activity: A Randomised Controlled Trial of Low-Income Elementary School*⁽⁴¹⁾ explored the relationship between physical activity and school gardens. It looked at six schools with a garden and six without. In each school, the researchers observed a target group of children aged between 8 and 12 years. They recorded observations of children's physical behaviours: lying, sitting, standing, walking and vigorous activity over one-hour lessons. They found that in the schools with a garden, children spent much more time walking and vigorous activity only took place outdoors.

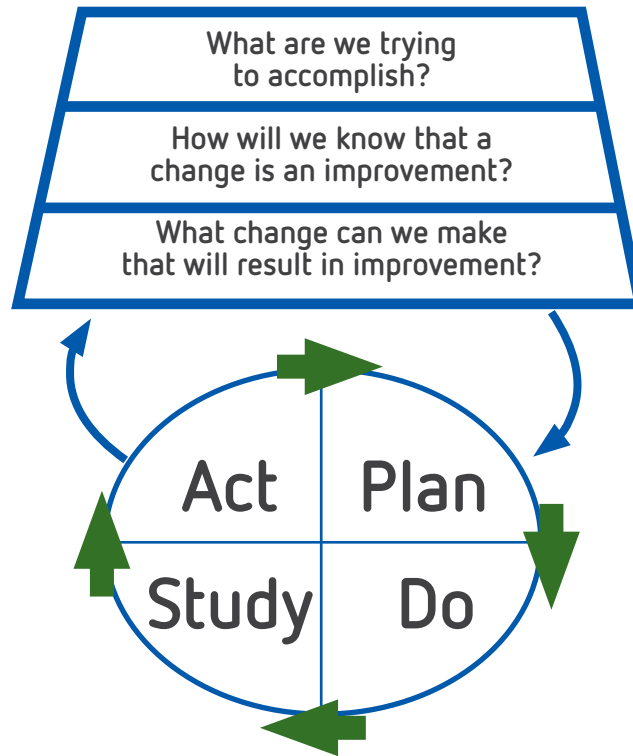
What the Care Inspectorate expects

You should ensure that children have appropriate opportunities to enjoy a range of suitable physical activities, including some vigorous activity. When planning the programme of activities, you could ask the following questions of staff, children and parents:

- how much time and opportunities do children in your settings have for vigorous physical activity?
- what outdoor activities could you introduce to help meet the physical activity guidelines?

Using the Early Years Collaborative Model for Improvement could help you to plan and improve children's opportunities and experiences outdoors. Aberdeen City Council successfully used the improvement model to provide children and young people with better access to the outdoors through their 'Wee Green Spaces' Project. However, the model is not just for large organisations – it is designed to be used by smaller, individual services too.

Model for Improvement



www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/early-years-collaborative

Find out more

Child's Play 2013? Active, Healthy Kids Scotland Report Card (2013) Active, Healthy Kids Scotland.⁽⁴²⁾

Going Out to Play and Learn (2011) M Ouvry; Early Education: Learning Together Series.

The Importance of Physical Development in Supporting Early Childhood Learning (2012) Early Education Journal.⁽⁴³⁾

Maternal and Early Years NHS Health Scotland <http://www.maternal-and-early-years.org.uk/topic/0-3-years/physical-activity>⁽⁴⁴⁾

Parks, Playgrounds and Active Living (2010) A Mowen.⁽⁴⁵⁾

School Gardens and Physical Activity: A Randomised Controlled Trial of Low-Income Elementary School (2014) N Wells, B Myers and C Henderson.

UK Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Years (2011) Chief Medical Office.

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens – Eastwood is a private outdoor-based urban nursery in Glasgow. Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens – Eastwood is registered to provide full-time care for 36 children aged 3 to 5 years. The last inspection in November 2014 awarded grades of 'excellent' and reported on the service's exceptional practice immersing children in a natural environment.

Outdoor classrooms

"At Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens our children have identified and chosen their own motivational learning 'classrooms' within the beautiful Pollok Country Park. Children are outdoors in their natural classroom every day for 51 weeks of the year.

"Our children are intrinsically motivated and engaged with all that nature has to offer as well as actively involved in a wide range of activities that encourage them to use their bodies in many different ways with lots of space and freedom to do so. Throughout the day they are able to run, jump, balance and climb to their hearts' content. We have no barriers or boundaries to inhibit children's natural instinct to play, explore, be creative and take managed risks. They are also able to relax and enjoy the sounds of nature and use all their senses as they experience the different textures of the earth and the sounds of leaves rustling in the trees. Sometimes they lie down on the forest floor, look up in awe, and wonder at the vastness of the sky!

"The sounds of their laughter echoes around our 'classroom' as they splash in puddles, wallow in mud pits and swing through the air on a rope suspended from a tree with a log for a seat. They are naturally drawn to living things too; bug hunts, beasties and animal tracking. They instinctively think with their hands as they touch and explore new and exciting things that they may not have encountered before. Mud cake shops and kitchens, mud balls and all things dirty inspire and excite the children whilst stimulating their natural curiosity as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world and their place within it."

Riverside Cottage Nursery is a private outdoor-based nursery in Bathgate. Riverside Cottage Nursery is registered to provide full-time care for 35 children aged 2 to 12 years. It achieved grades of 'good' and 'very good' when it was last inspected in August 2014. The inspection report reflects how the nursery's natural setting and physical play encourages the children to be active and to achieve good outcomes.

Climbing trees

"One of the uses of the trees is for climbing, which is a very important aspect of play at Riverside. This is because it encompasses so many areas of development (as well as being great fun!) Rather obviously, physical development is a large part of this. Gross motor skills are developed as muscle groups from all over the body are used to haul, push, twist and generally manoeuvre oneself up a tree. Fine motor skills are also used, seeking out and testing branches and exploring fissures in bark, possible points for grip, bugs, moss etc.

Individual trees are often tackled over a period of weeks. This gives the child an opportunity to set goals and targets and follow through plans. Children do this to achieve climbing to newer, higher, harder, further places.

This really does build high levels of confidence and pride in reaching personal goals and targets".

Angela Soutar is a childminder living in rural central Scotland. Angie's Childminding Service is registered to provide full-time care for 6 children aged 0 to 16 years and achieved grades of 'excellent' and 'very good' when she was last inspected in May 2015. The benefits of the mud kitchen that she created are exemplified in the inspection report.

Mud kitchen

When this childminder saw that children would benefit from more sensory and outdoor play, a mud kitchen in her garden was her answer. Everyone, from the local tearoom to neighbours and parents, contributed items to make the kitchen a wonderful place for children to measure, stir and pour their muddy mixtures.

First Kidzone

Climbing on the rocks at the beach

“School-age children gain the best experience from getting the opportunity to climb the rocks while we are at the beach; in fact they request the area of the beach that we go to now, the bigger the better. The children that are more confident in climbing always help others that can be a little scared to start with. You hear them reminding the other children not to stand on the green seaweed and to take their time, all instructions given by staff on past visits. They always explore the rock pools trying to find live crabs (it’s always dead ones we find). It’s great to see the older children helping the younger ones and taking care of them, but at the same time they get to go and explore on their own too, to see how far they can get to the sea. Staff are also becoming more confident in letting the children explore and take risks, going with the children to explore the rocks. Staff have come up with stories to tell the children about things they find while at the beach and rocks. On one visit staff found a big piece of seaweed that looked like an eel in one of the rock pools, children believed this and were shouting on the others to come and see. This led the children to thinking about how it got there, was it still alive, were they going to save it and how. This went on for 30 minutes, with children looking for items to help get it back into the sea.

“In the summer holidays we got the chance to go pool dipping with the rangers from Aberdeenshire Council to St Combs beach, where we all learned where best to go looking for marine life, what time of day is best, things to look out for in the pools and which rocks to turn over. On this day we found live crabs, starfish, fish, shrimp and also found out how to tell if the crabs are male or female. Children were all interested in finding marine life to show the ranger, and also in asking her questions and for help in catching things.

“Seeing the children experience and explore the great outdoors and achieve so much, not just in their learning but all others areas of their development, social, emotional, physical and wellbeing is wonderful to see. Also, hearing them talk about the last time we were here; “remember when we did this...”, “can we do that/go there again, it was fun”, “can we stay longer this time”, “don’t worry..., it’s only water/mud – Mum will wash it in the washing machine, you said it last time”.

3.6 Respected

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says:

“Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

We respect children when we involve them in planning outdoor play by:

- consulting with them about what they think, like, want or need outdoors
- listening to their views and choices about outdoor play
- giving their views and ideas equal weight and validity and more than our own
- treating them with dignity
- valuing their individuality
- protecting them to the level of their vulnerability but let them take some risks
- giving them space, privacy and time to be themselves and to follow their own interests.

Meaningful interactions of the kind listed above may mean that adults need to stop and think and make changes to their practices in relation to outdoor play. Adults need to consider whether their actions, in a leadership role, can inadvertently be seen as exercising power over children. Adults may choose not to be outdoors because of the weather, but is that what the children choose? To truly respect children we have to open our minds to the possibilities and the competency of children to lead the choices and decisions.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

Most children generally love to be outdoors and they have a right to access nature. As discussed in previous sections the benefits of outdoor play and learning to children’s development, health and wellbeing are many. We can respect children by developing our skills as enablers; helping children to have access and take part, taking account of what we know from our relationship with the child, our observations of them and what they tell us about their individual preferences, views and ideas.

For example, you might reflect on children’s personalities and ask yourself questions such as:

- Who in our setting would enjoy and benefit from risky, energetic, physical activity?
- Do we have quieter, creative children who would prefer sitting on the grass exploring transient art with flower petals and leaves?
- Is this child a water baby who wants to splash in puddles or dam a stream?
- What can an individual child be successful in achieving that will boost their self-esteem?
- How can we collaborate and role-model while letting children and young people take the lead?
- Are we reinforcing this child’s achievements with positive feedback and praise?

You respect children using care services when you ensure all of them are:

- listened to
- able to influence the service you provide
- included
- not discriminated against on any basis
- given equal opportunities and can participate fully
- able to reflect on their experiences and contribute to improving the service.

Find out more

Children and Young People's Views on Participation and Principles for Practice (2013) Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Children's Right to Play, Culture and Arts: A View of Article 31 in Scotland (2010) Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning (2010) Learning and Teaching Scotland.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Outdoor Learning 3-18 Self-evaluation Resource (2010) Learning and Teaching Scotland.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.

Potential of a Puddle (2012) Claire Warden; Mindstretchers.⁽⁵⁰⁾



Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Aberdour Playgroup

At the beach

"We have found that the imaginative games that evolve from the beach are continued on the children's return to the playroom. The children direct their own play; they have a respected voice in their learning. One example of this was when a couple of the boys started acting out the Peter and Paul birdie rhyme as they played on the beach. They were singing the rhyme and using the space to run along the shoreline to fly away and come back. On our return to playgroup, the boys wanted to make Peter and Paul puppets. They rummaged in the junk box and raided the art table and found all the materials they needed to make their puppets. As they were doing this one or two of the other children decided they would like to make bird puppets too. With only a little (very little) direction from the play leaders, three or four puppets were created. Then, as a whole group, they decided they would like to put on a puppet show, so they all decorated the climbing frame, sorted out their roles, put out chairs for an audience and put on a show for all the children and adults in the playroom. As practitioners, we just stood back, observed, admired the creativity, problem solving, choice making and confidence they all showed. As a demonstration of the curriculum in action, we need look no further. The beach provided the catalyst, the rest evolved."



Cheeky Monkeys is a private nursery and out of school care located in rural central Scotland. Cheeky Monkeys is registered to provide full-time care for 54 children aged 0 to 5 years and 13 children aged 5 to 12 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in May 2015 and the inspection report reflects how the service has ensured that children and parents have been proactively involved in improving the provision of meals and snacks.

Cook club

"Our staff have been focusing on the Setting the Table document recently, adopting a healthy ethos throughout by presenting workshops for parents, creating a cook club for all children in the nursery (which takes place once a week in each room) and encouraging the children to prepare their snacks and elements of their lunch. Parents have helped us to build on this by suggesting new meals for our lunch menu and joining us for stay-and-play sessions, where they can bake their own treats and help the children work through a recipe. We've had a visit from Tesco's Farm to Fork who helped us to begin a topic relating to where our food comes from. As I write this, it occurs to me just how much we have changed our practice over the last few years and how the enthusiasm for learning is not just down to the activities provided but also the location in which they take place. Visits to the woods allow the children to gain a sense of freedom and responsibility, enjoying a natural environment, with the time and space to explore and learn with their friends. We aim to travel further with this swift pace of change, continuing to draw from the Building the Ambition, Getting it Right for Every Child and Setting the Table documents. We hope to involve the parents further through stay-and-Play sessions to the woods and care home, to demonstrate the opportunities available first hand."



3.7 Responsible

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities and, where necessary and with appropriate guidance and supervision, are involved in decisions that affect them.

Helping children to become responsible through outdoor experiences can put them in touch with their local environment and community. It can lead naturally into learning about ecology, sustainability and global citizenship, helping them to become responsible citizens – one of the four capacities the Scottish Government aims for children to achieve through the Curriculum for Excellence.

Learning for Sustainability: The Report of the One Planet Schools Working Group⁽⁵¹⁾ recommends that all learners should be entitled to learn about sustainability. As part of this entitlement, outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive, curriculum-led experience for all learners. The report also says, “every learner should have the opportunity for contact with nature in their school grounds on a daily basis and throughout the seasons through the provision of thoughtfully developed green space for outdoor learning and play”.

These recommendations were accepted by the Scottish Government, and the Learning for Sustainability Implementation Group came together in February 2014 with a remit to begin embedding education covering global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning within the curriculum for children aged three to 18. The group was tasked with inspiring high aspirations, identifying and removing barriers to supporting and implementing learning for sustainability.

Sustainability topics encourage social responsibility from an early age. For example, a small-scale project in Aberdeen involved children visiting the beach with their childminder and being concerned about the litter. Together with the childminder, they organised an outing of all their families to do a group litter pick. This was supported and resourced by the local council.

A larger project in Australia was a water awareness program in early childhood centres. Children learned about water sources, shortages, processes and uses and how to conserve water. A study evaluating the program showed the value of children’s learning and how positive changes in responsible water use and conservation transferred into the home and to the children’s families. As a result, important long-term benefits to children were identified.

- Social benefits: child leadership and advocacy for water conservation.
- Educational benefits: uptake by teaching staff of sustainability teaching methods and practice.
- Environmental benefits: improved water conservation.
- Economic benefits: more efficient use of water resources.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

Giving children opportunities to engage with their local environment can help develop their responsibility within their own community. Topics include: waste management, habitat or wildlife protection; or exploring sustainability in the key areas of Scotland's fishing, farming, energy, tourism and forestry. Projects for young children should be relevant, understandable real-life experiences that extend their natural interest and enquiry. For example, growing and eating their own produce or sharing produce with another group in the community have become commonplace. Many settings have worked towards the Eco-school Scotland Award. For older children, perhaps in out-of-school care or residential settings, they might enjoy discovering, exploring and conserving a local wild place and sharing their learning while working toward the John Muir Award, run by the John Muir Trust.

Find out more

Butterfly Model of Education (2015) Petersen and Warwick; Presentation on Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Care and Education by Dr Valerie Huggins.⁽⁵²⁾

Eco-schools Keep Scotland Beautiful <http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainable-development-education/eco-schools/about-eco-schools/>⁽⁵³⁾

Every Child Outdoors (2010) The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The Impact and Potential of Water Education in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings (2011) W Boyd and B Jensen.⁽⁵⁵⁾

John Muir Award John Muir Trust <http://www.johnmuirtrust.org/john-muir-award>⁽⁵⁶⁾

Learning for Sustainability: The report of the One Planet Schools Working Group (2012) Scottish Government.

Revealing the Research 'Hole' of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: A Preliminary Survey of the Literature (2009) J M Davis.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Anna Clark describes how one of the children she childminds improved their ability to self-regulate through playing outside:

"One of the children sometimes needs to spend time alone and they especially like to be outside. I have a vivid memory of them sitting up in my covered playhouse (which was being a boat), rain pouring, playing magnetic fishing. They were completely absorbed and very peaceful.

"On another occasion, the same child was deeply involved making wooden swords in the tarp-den in my garden. First, they made the workshop, then swords from wood and nails (demonstrating excellent use of tools), painting the swords and adding glitter glue. It was a really good day at childminding!"

Aberdour Pre-School Playgroup is a not-for-profit sector playgroup located on the East coast. Aberdour Pre-School Playgroup is registered to provide part-time care for 24 children aged 2 years 6 months to 5 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in November 2013 and the inspection report highlights the beach kindergarten sessions as a positive feature of the service.

Playing on the beach

"Aberdour Playgroup holds a weekly outdoor session at the beach which for many is part of village life. The beach is an amazing place and if used on a regular basis, provides the children with immense learning opportunities. The key to any outdoor learning, is ensuring safety and wearing appropriate clothing and going on a regular basis.

"All our beach sessions start at our playgroup and we walk to the beach. When we arrive at the beach we always gather on our meeting rock, 'the Big Rock', as the children call it, and talk about the beach rules and how we can all stay safe. The children are able to self-regulate and risk assess their own rules and behaviour. They show respect and responsibility for one another. They are risk aware and understand that some of the children within their group may need extra support in following the boundaries that we have all decided upon, so they look out for them in a very kind and supportive way.

"Our beach has many different areas, the beach/sand, the rocks and rock pools, the sea grass, the climbing rock and the shoreline; each one offering the children an opportunity for physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social, creative and spiritual learning. There are no restrictions to their imaginative play; there is one big natural play box at their disposal and a vastness of space to have fun in.

“What we do at the beach and some of the things we see our children doing are:

- energetic play
- observing living things in the environment
- teamwork
- being creative
- being responsible and respectful.

“As a result of going to the beach we have seen changes in our children. Children that we observe within an indoor environment change their behaviour at the beach. The girls who like to play mainly with the dolls or in the house corner in their princess outfits become the ones that are on the shoreline jumping in the water and dashing away from the big waves – that pure excitement and danger of running and sense of adventure, which sometimes we quash in an indoor setting. They are also the ones that love to run up and down the beach when it is rainy and stormy, with the wind in their faces – not what you would expect.

“We have talked about the beach and the children changing, but we as practitioners also change. We begin to see the whole child, by observing them in an environment that is different from the norm, we begin to change how we perceive the children we care for, and we can build up a picture of what they are capable of and use that information to develop their individual learning. After a beach session, we all also agree that we feel relaxed and have that feel-good factor, a sense of wellbeing not always experienced in an indoor setting.

“We believe using the beach for outdoor learning has the following impact on our children.

- They have developed confidence and self-esteem.
- They have developed an appreciation of the natural beauty of nature.
- They enjoy the energetic activity of outdoors while learning to be safe.
- They share their learning with others by communicating their thoughts and feelings and responding to each other’s needs.
- They work as a team.
- They develop their powers of observation using their senses.
- They are aware of the effect changes of weather have on them.

“We have also found that many of the parents enjoy the effects of beach kindergarten; here is an example of their thoughts:

“My daughter attends the beach session and I can see that she enjoys the opportunity to play using her imagination and ‘natural found’ objects like shells and sand, experiencing the weather and forming friendships with the other children. I feel that the outdoor sessions are a high quality and memorable experience for her’.”

3.8 Included

Wellbeing indicator: Children and young people have help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

"...it's building confidence in young people... they can work easily in a woodland setting... team spirit appears... very often the teachers will find the most unruly child and most difficult will become one of the leaders."

(Forest Education Initiative President)

For genuine inclusion to happen within a service, there needs to be a commitment to create a culture of respect and involvement, as well as just preventing discrimination. Inclusion needs to be valued and proactively promoted on an ongoing basis by providers and staff. Below we set out some ideas on how children can be included culturally, physically and socially by services.

What the Care Inspectorate expects

Cultural inclusion

In Getting it Right for Every Child, ensuring children are included means examining each child as an individual and ensuring they can take part, feel included and accepted. Children's self-esteem relies on their culture and diversity being valued and celebrated and feeling they can contribute equally.

Encouraging children to engage with the local community in local outdoor projects helps all children to feel included in the sense of the New Zealand early years guidance 'iki'; to have a sense of place, belonging and identity, to have two-way engagement with the community. These aspects are important in building all children's self-confidence and self-esteem.

Physical inclusion and disability

For each child, think about accessibility, their stage of development and physical ability. For example, this could mean thinking about creating safe spaces for babies to crawl, explore and develop their senses. If any child has mobility or sight impairment, sensory considerations are crucial. You should plan thoughtfully so that everyone is included, rather than taking separate measures to meet the needs of an excluded group. You should consider accessible pathways and manageable gradients for your service's grounds. However, your areas need not be sterile – think about adding interest and sensory experience, with varying materials, for example. The public areas you visit should already be accessible but may pose challenges that need creative solutions.

Social inclusion

Services can play an important role in ensuring that outdoor play is seen as something that can be enjoyed by girls and boys alike. Social attitudes and values can mean not all parents and carers see outdoor play as an equal opportunity for both girls and boys. Economic barriers may need to be overcome if payments are required for 'extra-curricular' activities.

There are close links in ensuring children are included by respecting their views and interests, and involving them in planning and risk assessments of their own abilities.

For most children, the outdoors can be a great leveller, offering an environment where they can be free to participate in their own way – an environment where all differences are respected and can play on common ground.

You can promote equality and ensure that children are not excluded, for example because they don't have the right clothing or footwear or attend part-time.

The outdoors should offer opportunities for children to play in wider age groups and with siblings in the same setting, or in the community. The outdoors experience can support children to build friendships, familial relationships and a wider sense of community that helps them to feel included.

Find out more

Equality and Inclusion (2015) Early Education Journal No 75.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Free Range Teenagers: The Role of Wild Adventure Space in Young People's Lives (2006)
C Ward Thompson, P Travelou and J Roe.⁽⁵⁹⁾

How to Plan a Sensory Garden Glasgow City Council Countryside Ranger Service.⁽⁶⁰⁾

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Understanding the Te Whariki Approach: Early Years Education in Practice (2012) W Lee, M Carr, B Soutar and L Mitchell.⁽⁶²⁾

Good practice

Here's what others have done. What can you do?

Aberdour Playgroup

The beach effect

"Children who, within the indoor playroom, are restricted from putting sand everywhere or spilling water, or who flit from one activity to another not concentrating on very much, suddenly, at the beach, have a massive sand tray to play with, a whole sea to spill wherever they like and, unbelievably, sit and build and construct for long periods of time.

"The child who, within the indoor playgroup, needs adult support, suddenly finds the confidence to run around the beach him/herself, joins in with other children's games and becomes part of the bigger group, boosting his/her confidence and giving him/her something they can remember and build upon."

Lochview Nursery School is a local authority nursery school in Coatbridge. Lochview Nursery School is registered to provide full-time care for 56 children aged 0 to 5 years. It achieved grades of 'very good' when it was last inspected in February 2014 and this inspection report highlights the nursery's good practice in using outdoor play to involve families.

Trip to Palacerigg

"There was whole family learning, when children and their parents and carers took part in learning about den building, kite flying, risk assessment and fire building. All these new skills were put into practice on an outing to Palacerigg Country Park."

Cheeky Monkeys

Our woodland area

“After discussions with the management at a neighbouring care home, we acquired a wooded area to the back of their building in October 2014. We snapped up this opportunity with aims of supporting more risk in play and in providing more experiences that challenged our children’s thinking and built their general confidence. The space was a short five-minute walk away from the nursery itself and we already had links with the staff and residents due to our frequent visits, which focussed on seasonal celebrations, games and songs. We began by completing a risk assessment of the area in order to minimise barriers of play which may have been restricting to the children. A few short sessions with the shears was all that was needed to make the space safe, but we were sure not to wipe out all of the nettles and roots of course, and these proved to be a fabulous learning tool. The first few visits with the children were all about getting them used to the new environment and talking about the different plants that can be found there. They took tentative steps and needed a lot of reassurance during the early days – after all, many of them were experiencing their first time in a wooded area! We told the staff to begin their research into the advantages of outdoor learning, and to start thinking about activities that would make the most of our space. It’s been a year since, and we have used the area on a weekly basis for children ranging from two years old to our out of school club. Used throughout the year, the children have enjoyed watching the many seasonal changes and this provokes an array of interesting discussions.

“Drawing from the Building the Ambition document, we are now able to boost the children’s creativity, curiosity and give them more opportunities for enquiry as they try out new skills relating to balance, climbing and jumping. Gathering an insight into how the children have benefitted by the use of the woodland area is also easily done, with use of the SHANARRI principles. The children have learned how to keep themselves safe and healthy, they are able to tell us what plants are ‘poisonous’ or ‘dangerous’. They can risk assess their movements over uneven terrain, another example of how to stay safe, as well as helping their friends. There is a real sense of teamwork, the children often work collaboratively to search for plants or insects. They are achieving a higher level on confidence and self-worth through den building. The children have gathered a sense of spatial awareness, climbing through foliage and roots and ducking under branches and cobwebs, the children’s confidence in this environment has grown noticeably. The space is accessible to buggies, this allows us to take children who otherwise wouldn’t manage. The out-of-school club has enjoyed climbing the trees and building dens with natural materials, this is a refreshing sense of freedom after a busy day at school. There is always a range of different activities on offer, ensuring that all children are included. The excitement on a child’s face when they go down to the Woodland area is fabulous to see, they become more inquisitive, this has encouraged the children to ask questions and manage their own learning. We are also able to bring materials back for our garden space, which has encouraged conversation further. The woodland area is a secluded spot where the children can hear the wildlife and discover mini beasts while exploring their habitats. One of our favourite trips was when we took the children down to the care home for an Easter egg hunt. We involved the residents by doing a baking class. The session was

a chance to give the children a sense of responsibility as they worked with the residents through a scone recipe, tasting the finished product was a particular highlight for all!

“Our relationship with the care home has grown and we hope to grow this relationship further as we continue with our scheduled visits.”

The Cottage Family Centre Creche is a voluntary sector children and family centre registered for 15 children aged 0 to 7 years located in Kirkcaldy, Fife. When it was last inspected in March 2015, it achieved grades of ‘good’ and ‘very good’ and the Dad’s Garden Group was highlighted as a particularly effective example of inclusion.

Dad’s Group

“It was felt that it was imperative as a family centre that The Cottage provides a space for a Dad’s Group. This idea came from dads after a comment from a dad that was dropping off his partner and child to a mother and baby group at the centre. A local health visitor who was at the time completing a dissertation on young dads as part of her master’s degree at college was then contacted for her evidence and thoughts on dad provision. The Cottage felt that this group would need to function differently from other groups as we did not think that getting them to sit around a table doing activities would be a successful way for them to bond as a group as well as feel that they were achieving anything positive that would make them want to come back week after week.

Our first group of seven dads wanted to do something that would give them both physical activity and emotional support and therefore we agreed to do the children’s garden with the support of local businesses and achieved this. One day one of the dads asked about a piece of wasteland that was directly adjacent to our children’s garden and said that would be great for growing fruit and vegetables that could be used for groups provided in the centre. After contacting the local council, we secured this land and the dads developed into a beautiful woodland area with beds for the children and parents to plant and grow. This garden also allowed families to have fun together and is used for one to one sessions with our family support service, supervised contact sessions, family fun day events as well as by our children’s support service to give children the opportunity to play, grow and explore.

Our Dads project has been ongoing since 2010 and operates four days per week. It has given the dads in the group a purpose that has benefited the community as well as allowing them to learn new skills, gain support from one another, form friendships and has given them a sense of feeling that they are part of something again. This is huge for our Dads Group as they all suffered from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence which was due to a number of reasons which included job losses, lack of being able to gain employment, addiction, poverty and mental health issues. The dads in this project have told staff that it has given them a sense of fulfilment and they have all benefited by feeling included and with a real purpose. Staff working with the dads have noticed tremendous change within their

general wellbeing and have said that the project has given them a focus and made them feel that they are able to be more involved in their children's lives as they have a greater understanding of their needs. It has also allowed staff involved in this project to get to know them and access appropriate services such as counselling and educational opportunities."

Hailesland Early Years Centre is a local authority children and family centre in Edinburgh. Hailesland Early Years Centre is registered to provide full-time care for 50 children aged 0 to 8 years. The inspection report from the last inspection in July 2014, when the service achieved grades of 'excellent' and 'very good', describes exemplary practice regarding inclusion and outdoor play.

Additional needs

"One of the first steps we made in developing our outdoor play area was to plant and grow willow tunnels. These willow tunnels provided the children with sensory experiences as well as giving them the opportunity to enjoy and explore the consistency of living structures. A willow tunnel offers opportunities to learn and explore, even for our youngest babies. Something as simple as a willow tunnel will have a fundamental impact on all aspects of development: social, physical, emotional and intellectual.

"An example of this is how the willow tunnel helped a child with additional needs to engage with other children, to be treated as an individual and have her needs met and nurtured. The tunnel connected her to her environment. She showed delight when peers would peek through the willow, making lots of sounds at the sense of wonder around her. She enjoyed the tranquillity of lying in the willow tunnel.

"An 11-month-old baby who was passive, unresponsive and had poor eye contact responded to the adult playing peekaboo games at either end of the tunnel, engaging in lovely eye contact and anticipating cause and effect. This child was supported through new experiences and challenges in an environment that promoted her cognitive and emotional development. She experienced a sense of engagement and achievement in her learning

"Our environment has been enriched to offer the children opportunities to try new skills indoors and outdoors and enjoy sensory experiences. Communication and literacy have improved as the children explore and thrive in an interactive and natural environment. Staff have commented on how the children's attention span and concentration has improved. The adults and children learn from each other, are respectful of each other and are relishing building their confidence and skills."



4. Find out more

National Guidance for Scotland:

- National Care Standards for early education and childcare up to the age of 16
- Pre-birth to Three
- Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Play Strategy for Scotland.

The Care Inspectorate

Each service has an allocated inspector who can provide advice and support to improve children's experiences of outdoor play. We also have a registration team, which can provide advice to anyone applying to register a new service. Our website is also a source of advice, with examples of good practice regarding outdoor play highlighted on the HUB section.

www.hub.careinspectorate.com

Grounds for Learning

Grounds for Learning is the Scottish programme of the UK charity Learning through Landscapes and supports outdoor learning and play for children by helping schools and settings to enrich childhood by improving outdoor spaces, 'however, small or uninspiring they may be'.

www.ltl.org.uk/scotland

Learning for Sustainability Scotland (LFS)

LFS is Scotland's United Nations Recognised Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development. Every month LFS issues a free email bulletin with all the latest information on LFS news, grants, events, courses, policy and more.

www.playscotland.org

National Children's Bureau

www.ncb.org.uk

Outdoor and Woodland Learning

OWL Scotland is dedicated to increasing the use of Scotland's outdoor environments for learning. OWL Scotland is supported by the Forestry Commission Scotland and nationally supports outdoor and woodland learning for local OWL groups. OWL also provides a range of learning resources and opportunities for continuing professional development training.

www.owlscotland.org/

Play Scotland

Is the national organisation for play in Scotland, working to promote the importance of play for all children and young people, it campaigns to create increased play opportunities in the community.

Royal Society for the Protection Birds – Scotland

The RSPB work in partnership with Real World Learning and Learning for Sustainability Scotland to raise awareness of the importance of children's connection with nature.

www.rspb.org.uk

Scottish Wildlife Trust

The Trust works with its members, partners and supporters in pursuit of its vision of healthy, resilient ecosystems across Scotland's land and seas. The Trust does this through policy and campaigning work, demonstrating best practice through practical conservation and inspires people to take positive action through its education and engagement activities.

www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN)

SOSCN is the national infrastructure umbrella organisation providing support, mentoring, training, information and resources to all childcare services in Scotland, which provide childcare, play and learning opportunities for school-age children.

Wild Play Kitbag.resource pack (2005) Catcher Media available on SOSCN website.

www.soscn.org

Scotland's Environment

Scotland's Environment provide a list of apps you can use to collect data, find information and become involved with science.

www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/getinvolved/mobile-apps

iSpot

Website aimed at helping anyone identify anything in nature. iSpot is part of OPAL – Open Air Laboratories – a partnership led by Imperial College London, which aims to inspire a new generation of nature lovers by encouraging people to explore, study, enjoy and protect their local environment.

www.ispot.org.uk





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Appendix 1

Current list of outdoor-based services:

Service Name	Registration Date
Allsorts – Dornoch Afterschool Club, Dornoch	1 April 2002
Dunblane Nature Kindergarten	2 April 2008
Auchlone Nature Kindergarten, Crieff	2 May 2008
The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery, Cupar	3 September 2008
Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens – Eastwood, Glasgow	1 October 2009
Treetops Nursery, Irvine	18 May 2012
Stramash Outdoor Nursery, Oban	14 August 2012
First Kidzone (St Fergus), Peterhead	8 April 2013
Riverside Cottage Nursery, Bathgate	13 November 2013
Stramash Outdoor Nursery, Fort William	16 July 2014
Methilhill Nature Nursery, Leven	15 August 2014
Greenbank Woodland Play, Glasgow	12 January 2015
Chapter One Childcare – Treetops Outdoor Nursery, Dalkeith	15 April 2015
Stramash Outdoor Nursery, Elgin	13 July 2015
Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens – West End, Glasgow	26 August 2015
Evergreen Outdoor Nursery, Glasgow	5 November 2015
Without Walls – Earthtime’s Outdoor Nursery, Elgin	17 December 2015
Livingstone’s Explorers Outdoor Playgroup, Glasgow	30 December 2015

Last updated 19 January 2016

Note: The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery was the first outdoor-based service in Scotland. Although some services have prior registration dates according to the above list, these other services changed the type of facility they provided after becoming registered.



Appendix 2

Outdoor-based services and activities – guidance for registering and developing daycare services and activities for children in a natural environment.

For children, particularly those in the early years, each day holds the potential for new experiences and learning. Spending time outdoors supports this learning and development in different ways from those in the indoor playroom.

The benefits of outdoor play are widely recognised and understood. It helps children begin to understand the world that they live in, gives them fresh air and exercise, develops communication, imagination and thinking and builds confidence and resilience – all whilst having fun. The outdoor environment, including temperature, light, weather, colours, changes on a daily basis, providing children with a never-ending range of resources and challenges. We know that there are aspects of children’s development which are better supported in the outdoors: they are able to be more active, imaginative and purposeful, and can develop a more positive attitude to learning. Children who may, indoors, be quiet and reluctant to join in often become more confident outdoors. Children often behave differently outdoors, becoming more respectful of rules and boundaries and developing their social skills and relationships with staff and other children.

In Scotland we have a growing number of registered daycare of children’s services, mainly pre-school, providing very good and excellent outcomes for children by using and enabling children to experience the outdoor environment. Services make good and imaginative use of resources in the local environment, from utilising a small patch of ground adjoining their buildings, some of whom visit parks, woods and beaches for a session each week, to those which provide full-time daycare outdoors with no buildings in use other than those which may be used in extreme weather conditions.

Outdoor nurseries have been successful in the Scandinavian countries for a number of years and have become popular in Britain more recently as we come to recognise the benefits of these settings to children’s health and overall development. Local authorities, with the support of Scottish Government, are actively promoting use of the outdoors and providing training and support for staff.

The Care Inspectorate is frequently asked for advice on aspects of caring for children outdoors and have provided this guidance to support providers and practitioners who wish to extend the range of outdoor play opportunities for children or indeed provide a service exclusively using the outdoor environment. Every service provision is different, as are the children and parents who use the services. The following should be used as prompts, but it is up to each individual service to develop policies and procedures to take account of the specific environment, parents’ views and other factors in order to meet the needs and ensure best possible outcomes for the children in their care.

Outdoor Provision: guidance on issues to consider

- **Aims and objectives of service:** these should be clear, describing how the aims will be met and how children will be cared for in an outdoor setting.
What pedagogy/philosophy is being followed, if any, as there are very many different ways of providing an outdoor-based service? Will the service be outdoor-based full time or will this be planned for set days? Will there be any circumstances that prevent the service being based outdoors?
- **Manager/staff:** consider staff skills, knowledge and previous experience, in addition to any childcare qualifications/training. Do they understand the different environments to be used and issues relating to the use of these by children?
Are they able to manage risks appropriately, carry out a risk benefit analysis and support children to manage risks? Staff should be able to evidence how to assess appropriate staff: child ratios for specific activities.
Working outdoors is very different from working in an indoor environment and requires staff to have a different set of skills and knowledge. This may also influence the decision as to how many children can be cared for within the environment.
- **Environment: premises and shelters:** Are there or do you need a building or some form of shelter? Permission will be needed from the landowner and/or landlord of any buildings.
Will there be a shelter available at all times of operation, such as a tarpaulin, tent, yurt? Will this be dismantled when the service is not operating?
Will any other safe shelters be available for extreme weather conditions?
There should be emergency procedures in place for extreme weather conditions and other emergencies.
We will always strive for high standards of the environment, both indoor and outdoor, and will consider requirements, standards and good practice guidance to aim for the best possible outcomes for the children using the service.
- **Natural environment: outdoors:** staff should have prior and ongoing knowledge of the woodland and/or areas to be used and how it changes in different seasons and weather.
There should be clarity about the boundaries/areas to be used. It is important that children are aware of this too; for example, rules re staying within sight of staff and not going beyond markers/ ribbons on trees.
'Missing child' procedures should be practised regularly.
Appropriate risk management according to the natural environment and location of this. For example, distance from main roads should be taken into account.
There should be an initial risk assessment of the plants/trees based on knowledge of what can cause harm to children. Is there a range of trees, undergrowth and terrain for different types of play?
The use of areas by animals (wild and domesticated) should also be risk assessed. Consider how often the area is used for walking dogs, horse riding and any other activities.

- **Resources:** the range of resources will be different from 'indoor' resources and equipment, but some may be the same.
 Will resources be carried to venue daily by staff or is there safe, secure storage of equipment, including on-site secure, dry storage.
 How will appropriate/available resources be provided to meet development needs?
- **Healthy eating:** how will snacks and lunches be provided, including any packed lunches? What kind of hot food and drinks will be available?
 For the preparation and storage of food, there needs to be consultation with local Environmental Health services.
 Fresh drinking water must be available at all times, which may involve staff carrying this if it is not available on site. There must be extra water available in addition to any drinks children may carry.
- **Transport:** getting to the site. Do parents/carers drop off nearby or does the service transport (car, minibus, walk) from a base?
 There needs to be clarity about staff supervision of children when they are being transported, including walking to the site.
- **Policies and procedures:** in developing your policies and procedures you are able to ensure that your practice and approach will encourage the best outcomes for the children in an outdoor setting. Policies and procedures need to suit the aims and objectives and type of service. Information to parents/carers about how the service will operate needs to be accurate. Some will differ from the 'normal' content of policies and procedures, such as emergency procedures, infection control, missing child, media interest, using fire. These are important procedures to be developed by outdoor-based services.
- **Risk management:** you need to balance the risks against the benefits and make children the main focus of the risk benefit assessment process. A good suite of initial risk-benefit analyses for specific sites and activities do not need to be repeated and can just be reviewed to ensure that they are still relevant. Narrative rather than numerically-based risk benefit assessments are advised.
 Risks should be managed appropriately for ages/stages/abilities of individual children, group(s) of children, as well as the type of service and the staff team.
 There needs to be a risks benefit analysis for the environment overall and travel to and from the sites being used.
 Children should take an active part in risk management, both individually and as a group. Parents should also be involved in assessing and understanding risks and how they will be managed. For example, for climbing trees, parents can be asked to sign to indicate that they are aware and approve of risk management arrangements.

For communication, is there a good phone signal or will walkie-talkies be used? How will emergency help/parents be contacted and will ambulance/police know where to go? Staff must carry and know how to use a first aid box.

Provider must be able to evidence how risks are managed.

- **Clothing:** must be appropriate, including adequate waterproofs and walking boots/wellies. 2 pairs socks and 2 pairs gloves (1 waterproof) are advised for cold weather. At least three layers of clothing recommended in cooler weather. Sun hats (with neck flap) and long sleeves for warmer weather. Children can carry their own backpacks with lunch/drinks/foam pad for sitting. There needs to be clarity on who supplies the above to ensure that this is available for all children at all times. Staff can carry changes of clothing for children or there can be storage on site. Parents need to be aware of the need for appropriate clothing.
- **Recording systems:** how will details be held (for example, laptops, mobile phones, waterproof notebooks)? There must be easy access to personal information and emergency contacts. Maintaining and safe secure storage of required records to be kept.
- **Toilets/nappy changing/infection control:** Tent/tarp? Composting toilet? Toilet tents can be easily carried and erected. Agreement must be reached from parents regarding the management of toileting and nappy changing, including hand hygiene. We will always strive for high standards of the environment, both indoor and outdoor, and will consider requirements, standards and good practice guidance to aim for the best possible outcomes for the children using the service. Health Protection Scotland's latest guidance regarding hand hygiene should be shared with parents and staff. Best practice is always to use running water and liquid soap whenever practicably possible. There may be individual unique circumstances in a service where that is not possible. If this situation does arise the service must take a considered and reasoned approach to the best alternative in consultation with parents/carers. Consultation with local Environmental Health services will be needed. Clear, written procedures regarding the above issues must be developed and shared with parents/carers.
- **A time and place to rest and sleep:** tents or hammocks can be considered. Any bedding, sleeping bags etc. used need to be for individual use and laundered as appropriate. Allow time during sessions to stop/sit/rest, especially if particularly young children attending and/or full-day sessions.





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