

INSPIRING SCOTLAND



Out to Play

SECTION 12: CARING FOR OUR OUTDOOR SPACES

 TheScottishGovernment

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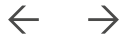
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Acknowledgements

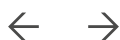


Executive Summary



This guidance is part of the *Out to Play* series that aims to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) practitioners to provide great outdoor play experiences for our children. *Caring for Our Outdoor Spaces* is about making the most of the outdoor spaces your ELC settings use and caring for the environment through embedding Learning for Sustainability (LfS). It has been developed to complement the original **Out to Play** guidance.

Relationships are key to the effectiveness of caring for any outdoor space. We know that relationships matter between children and adults and that these relationships need to be nurturing, caring and empowering. We also know that when outdoor play is happening successfully, children and staff have develop a strong relationship with the places where they play. They have an emotional and spiritual attachment to the land and a sense of belonging to, and being part of, nature which motivates them to care for their environment.



Executive Summary

Why we need this guidance

It's a really exciting time for ELC and outdoor learning in Scotland. Outdoor play and learning is already an integral, everyday part of ELC. More and more settings are now fully outdoors or expanding their outdoor facilities and experiences to increase children's opportunities for quality outdoor play and learning.

As outlined in '**Best Start**', the Childcare Strategic Plan, it is our vision that children in ELC will spend as much time outdoors as they do indoors, and that time outdoors will happen every day, in every setting. We also set out our commitment to work with our partners to build on the range of outdoor learning support for providers that we put in place during the pandemic.¹

There is clear research, evidence and recognition about the benefits of outdoor play, especially in natural spaces. This includes physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual benefits, as exemplified in the Inspiring Scotland (2018) **Scotland's National Outdoor Play and Learning Position Statement**.

How we manage and care for our outdoor spaces reflects our values and understanding of a pedagogy² that embeds LfS. With increasing use, our outdoor spaces are at risk of detrimental wear and tear. This can reduce the play and learning possibilities for our children and impacts on the biodiversity of the space – that is the range of wildlife, including plant life, that inhabit these spaces, even in urban areas.

In addition, the environmental and climate challenges that we currently face – now and in the foreseeable future – are significant and serious. We are having to learn creative approaches requiring new ways of thinking and acting, using LfS as the context. It is important that professionals working with children have the capability to do this very well so that we and our children feel empowered to shape our future.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is written primarily for all professionals working with children in ELC and at early level in schools. This includes ELC practitioners, childminders, teachers working at Early Level, playworkers and practitioners who work in Out of School Care (OOSC) for young children. Throughout the guidance, the term 'practitioner' is used to collectively represent the workforce.

While the guide is primarily aimed at ELC settings and early primary, much of it is relevant for others providing play experiences in an outdoor environment. It will also be of interest to decision makers with responsibilities for developing outdoor play and learning and/or sustainable cultures and approaches.

How to use this guidance?

This new chapter of *Out to Play* guidance has been published online in order to uphold our commitment to environmental sustainability. Practitioners will be able to download relevant sections of the guidance and to access links to helpful resources.

¹ **Best Start: Strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-26** (www.gov.scot)

² Education Scotland (2020) **Realising the Ambition: Being Me** has helpful explanations of the term 'pedagogy'.



Section 1

Why care for our outdoor places

1.1 Outdoor spaces and outdoor play

This guidance is part of the *Out to Play* series that aims to support practitioners to provide great outdoor play experiences for our children. *Caring for Our Outdoor Spaces* is about making the most of the outdoor spaces your group uses and caring for the environment through embedding Learning for Sustainability (Lfs). It has been developed to complement the original **Out to Play** guidance.

Relationships are key to the effectiveness of caring for any outdoor space. We know that relationships matter between children and adults and that these relationships need to be nurturing, caring, and empowering. We also know that when outdoor play is happening successfully, children and staff have developed a strong relationship with the places where they play. They have an emotional and spiritual attachment to the land and a sense of belonging to, and being part of, nature which motivates them to care for their environment.

1.2 Why we need this guidance

Scottish Government have committed through the national outcomes to focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. In recent years we have seen significant changes within Scotland's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) sector to support this purpose, which set the context for this guidance.

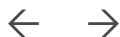
'**Best Start**' - our strategic plan for early learning and school age childcare 2022-26, contains a clear commitment to our vision that children in ELC will spend as much time outdoors as they do indoors, and that time outdoors will happen every day, in every setting. In the plan, we set out our commitment to work with our partners to build on the range of outdoor learning support for providers that we put in place during the pandemic.³

The Plan also describes our vision and strategic priorities for early learning and school age childcare over the rest of this Parliament and articulates the three outcomes we expect all of our policies to deliver:

- Children's development improves and the poverty related outcomes gap narrows
- Family wellbeing improves
- Parents' and carers' opportunities to take up or sustain work, training, and study increase

There is also a greater emphasis on quality outdoor provision supported by guidance such as: **Space to Grow**, Care Inspectorate (2017); **Realising the Ambition: Being Me**, Education Scotland (2020); and **Out to Play: Practical guidance for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare**. It's a really exciting time for ELC and outdoor learning in Scotland. More and more settings are now fully outdoors or expanding their outdoor facilities and experiences to increase children's opportunities for quality outdoor play and learning.

³ **Best Start: Strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-26** (www.gov.scot)



Section 1

Why care for our outdoor places

There is clear research evidence and recognition about the benefits of outdoor play, especially in natural spaces. This includes physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual benefits, as exemplified in the Inspiring Scotland (2018) **Scotland's National Outdoor Play and Learning Position Statement**. Nationally we have a strong commitment to ensuring all our children have daily opportunities to play outside as a fundamental part of growing up in Scotland. The emergence of Covid-19 has further emphasised that being outside can be safer and can be a pragmatic measure that reduces the transmission of contagious diseases and promotes good health and wellbeing in our children.

How we manage and care for our outdoor spaces reflects our values and understanding of a pedagogy⁴ that embeds LfS. With increasing use, our outdoor spaces are at risk of detrimental wear and tear. This can reduce the play and learning possibilities for our children and impacts on the biodiversity of the space – that is the range of wildlife, including plant life, that inhabit these spaces, even in urban areas.

In addition, the environmental and climate challenges that we currently face – now and in the foreseeable future – are significant and serious. We are having to learn creative approaches requiring new ways of thinking and acting, using LfS as the context. The ELC profession and teachers working with children at Early Level, have the capability to do this very well so that we and our children feel empowered to shape our future.

“The space is an aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes and cultures of the people who live within it.”

(Loris Malaguzzi, 1984)

⁴ Education Scotland (2020) **Realising the Ambition: Being Me** has helpful explanations of the term 'pedagogy'.