



Section 4

Supporting practitioners to care for our outdoor spaces

As practitioners, we need to consider our knowledge, skills, experience and motivations around caring for outdoor spaces. We are the key to facilitating the input needed.

This section contains the theory and practical ideas to help us create an ethos of sustainable change, including:

4.1 Being an adult who cares. This makes a difference to a child, their perceptions and values about the places they live and play.

4.2 Developing reciprocity. We can enable our children to develop relationships with the places where they play.

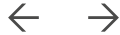
4.3 Changing our perceptions of nature. This sub-section will explore how our beliefs, assumptions and language affect actions and values that are truly inclusive of all people and places. Re-framing our perceptions can help – practice may be needed to do this.

4.4 Understanding the importance of biodiversity. This sub-section will explore what biodiversity is and why it matters.

4.5 Learning about life on Earth. Everything is interconnected. This sub-section provides a framework to help you and your children understand the main elements and entities involved so that we can feed into our everyday experiences outside.

4.6 Getting to know plants, animals and fungi that live in our outdoor spaces. This sub-section provides some advice from practitioners and outdoor enthusiasts about developing our own knowledge and understanding of other species in our outdoor spaces. This will help us better care for them.

4.7 Supporting our children to develop a sense of place. This sub-section considers how to develop a sense of place by involving families, developing communities and recognising the social element of caring for outdoor spaces. This leads to deeper ties and moving towards any space becoming “our green place”.



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4.1 Being an adult who cares

Why this matters?

Chawla (2006) highlights the importance of a child spending time outside with a significant adult who is able to model practice and demonstrate:

- Care for the land as a limited resource essential for family identity and well-being
- A disapproval of destructive practices
- Simple pleasure at being out in nature
- A fascination with the details of other living things and the elements of the earth and sky

Also, the quality of the relationship mattered. It was *“not only care for the natural world, but equally, care for the child.”*

This relationship with a significant adult has been shown to have a positive lifelong impact including a willingness to take pro-environmental action.

This research demonstrates that being an outdoor expert is not necessary. A practitioner who is reflective will have a desire to keep learning, an ability to interact sensitively, will be flexible and responsive to the children in their care and will have an understanding of how children learn and develop.

Nurturing wellbeing in an outdoor Community of Practice

“Acknowledging the challenges faced by practitioners in maintaining their enthusiasm for outdoor ELC, I created a Community of Practice named WIGLS, Working in Green Local Spaces, to nurture professional friendships, identity and connectedness which support wellbeing, while simultaneously deepening practitioners’ knowledge and skills through training, building confidence.

Hospitality visits, sharing peer-to-peer experiences in developing an outdoor context and further in-person and on-line training helped guide practitioners through the year. We explored the gifts of nature in Natural Treasures sessions, and the value of the outdoor context through Nurture Outdoors training. During the pandemic, training continued and included reflective practices to support practitioner self-care.”

(Dr Elizabeth Henderson, retired Education Support Officer, Aberdeen City)



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Tuning into the world around us

Being present in the world is a form of mindfulness. It can help us relax, slow down and pay attention to what is happening. This state of being is very helpful when working outside with children and tuning into their needs too. There are many approaches for acclimatising to being in natural spaces.

For example, when you are outside, ideally in a natural spot, take a moment to reflect on how you are interacting with the world around you. Focus on:

- Breathing air, in and out of your lungs
- The feeling of the weather on your face
- The connection of your feet to the ground (even stronger if this is barefoot)
- The warmth of our bodies inside our jackets

Other similar ways of “standing still” and developing a wider awareness include:

- Finding a leaf, stone or other natural item. Spend a moment feeling its texture, shape, size, noticing its colours and patterns and smelling its scent.
- The noticing of what is happening around you: birds singing, clouds moving, traffic humming.
- Gazing into the distance and focusing on something moving. This could be leaves waving on a tree, a car moving along a road, a bird flying overhead or exploring the shape of a blue patch of sky.

Health and Social Care Standard 4.25:

I am confident that people are encouraged to be innovative in the way they support and care for me.

“I would urge practitioners to encourage children to look up. I found that was often missed. Take time to encourage them to look up at the sky, tree tops, clouds birds. Lie down and watch the clouds move.”

(Marian Cairns, Retired Forest Kindergarten Development Officer, Scottish Forestry)



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Understanding and embedding the Rights of a Child

“...in terms of the provision of play opportunities and environments, in general we might expect ‘high quality opportunities’ to happen when: the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are put into practice, the environment provides stimulus for play to flourish and if adults are involved, they work to established ethical and professional standards.”

([Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan, 2013](#))

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 29 states “*The development of respect for the natural environment.*” At times it may seem to be a balancing act between this and ensuring the right of a child to play outside (Article 31). Sometimes, children perceive their environment differently to adults. Patience and tuning in to children is required rather than assumptions being made about their behaviours. For example, many children like to strip bark from trees, which is damaging to any living tree and the organisms living under the bark. Yet it is a satisfying undertaking for children. When asked about this, children’s responses typically include:

- I wanted to see what it looked like on the inside
- We like to take things to pieces
- The outdoors is full of stuff you can use and take to pieces, why not bark as well?

One solution is to acknowledge this need and find a suitable fallen down tree that has bark which can be stripped off, whilst remaining mindful that deadwood provides a habitat for other living things.

There is a lot to learn about being in and thinking with nature. We’re all on an evolving journey. Being outside is a way to learn more about the children with whom we work. Some useful things to remember include:

- Being able to identify and talk about the skills and attributes children are developing through creating and caring for their outdoor spaces, not just what your children are doing.
- Avoid using language framed around the need to save the planet or of climate and ecological disaster when having important discussions. It can cause anxiety and stress so requires an approach informed by the children’s levels of maturity and their overall responsibility for the situation.
- When an environmental issue arises that children notice, rather than rushing into advocating solutions, take time to listen to children’s ideas and thoughts and together act upon these (Article 12). This is about empowering our children make positive changes, even if this involves trial and error.
- Showing a genuine interest in what children are doing outside, letting them lead on where to explore, what to learn about and how to engage with the outdoor space.



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- Slowing down and making the most of spontaneous moments.
- Giving children the chance to respond to the spaces they are in and all the elements and entities that exist. This is particularly important for babies and children who may not be able to talk confidently so that we learn more about what they need to thrive outdoors.
- Consider the different needs of children and how you may need to adapt your approach to make sure they can fully access outdoor spaces.

The Care Inspectorate (2022) **Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding and School Aged Childcare** describes the importance of children having an active role in influencing the design of the setting and in shaping their experiences and activities throughout the day, whether delivered indoors, outdoors or a blend of both. Quality Indicator 2.1 'The Quality of the Setting for Care, Play and Learning' encourages settings and staff to:

- Understand the importance of outdoor play for health and wellbeing, promoting sustainability and caring for the environment
- Recognise the right of all children to enjoy outdoor play
- Understand the positive impact rich multi-sensory outdoor play and learning has on children's resilience
- Promote opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and caring for their environment



Find out more

- **The ELC National Induction Resource** helps us plan and review what new staff need to develop their outdoor practice.
- **Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland (OWLS)** have local groups which provide support and training. The OWLS website has many resources.
- **Realising the Ambition: Being Me** applies equally to indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Play Scotland (2017) **Play Types Toolkit** has information about the importance of observation and giving space and time for play experiences and interactions with nature.
- South Lanarkshire Council has developed a helpful GIRFEC in the Outdoors **poster** that links improving wellbeing with the opportunities and experiences children can have outdoors.



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4.2 Developing reciprocity

Why does reciprocity matter?

Reciprocity is the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit. Many cultures around the world have embedded this concept for generations, particularly indigenous groups.

All life is interdependent and depends on reciprocal acts. For example, when we breathe out, we create carbon dioxide. Green plants need this, along with sunlight and water to make nutrients and oxygen. We need the oxygen to breathe and that has been made by the green plants. Thus, we are

responsible *to* (rather than *for*) all things around us not out of superiority to them, but because we are part of them, and cannot be safely disconnected from nature.

Our practice can embrace the concept of reciprocity by ensuring that whenever we use, take or receive something, we give back. What have our outdoor spaces gifted to us? It could be a sense of peace, room to run, plants to forage or use in our play. Likewise, how do we return these gifts and give thanks for them? This is the beginnings of expressing gratitude and developing a collaborative life with everything around us. It is also at the heart of genuine care.



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Building upon prior learning

We can show children that they are already demonstrating an awareness of the foundations of reciprocity by:

- Using our outdoor spaces on a daily basis and being actively involved in caring for these spaces through our ethos and routines.
- Supporting our children to notice cause and effect in the world around us.
- Identifying reciprocity in positive ways, for example through observing our children's acts of kindness and responding to these.
- Continuing to develop joyful reciprocal relationships with our children. For example, we notice: *'the many ways children express themselves, recognizing that intentional, open listening is the basis of a reciprocal relationship.'* (Rinaldi, 2001)

Supporting personal development

Reciprocity acknowledges we have spiritual, cognitive, emotional and physical connections with everything around us. When fostered, it deepens our relationship with our place and can lead to a sense of unity. It involves:

- Engaging in the world around us in ways that regenerates balance in our environment.
- Being aware of and understanding that we are completely dependent on everything in nature. Thus we have to cooperate with everything else as a way of life.
- Children and practitioners being active, yet equal participants within our world – be this natural or artificial – in loving and respectful ways.

Moving beyond environmental stewardship

At a community level, the concept of reciprocity extends to all species and entities in order to be healthy and balanced. Our use of different outdoor spaces is special and part of this includes giving back to the space in different ways. For example:

- We can be proactive in communication with our landowners. Do they feel valued? How reassured do we make them feel about use of the outdoor space? How do we make them feel a sense of belonging to our community?
- How do we acknowledge and celebrate the gifts of nature? Do we support our children to learn the ecological connections and the significance of various life forms throughout the seasons and all around us? Do we talk about how these relate to the past and future as well as other parts of our lives?
- When we harvest food from our garden or forage are we undertaking this in sustainable ways to support more life and improve the land? How do we share what we have harvested and who and what needs acknowledgement?



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Reflective thoughts

“What would be different if we lived with a strong sense that water, land, all of the world around us, are relatives? What if we love the world around us deeply, as our family? Our actions would then begin to reflect reciprocity in how we live and move in any direction, including seven generations into the future... we would ensure balance in all our interactions with the world around us, through space and time.”

(Anderson et al, 2017)





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4.3 Changing our perceptions of nature

Our beliefs, assumptions, and language affect actions and values that are truly inclusive of all people and places. Re-framing our perceptions can help – practice may be needed to do this.

These statements are summarised from a range of published research. In particular, the work of Ruck & Mannion (2021), Nelson et al (2018), Wilson (2019) and the [Common Worlds Research Collective](#).

From:

Referring to nature in terms of how it benefits humans or as a resource, object or utility.



To:

That we have **reciprocal relationships** with all existing entities at any given moment in time, including plants, animals, water, soil, landforms, etc. We treat them as part of our extended family or network of friends.

Assuming that nature and/or species are passive and need saved, protected or helped.



Nature is constantly active, changing and evolving with or without our care. But our **responsible** actions make a positive difference.

Using language that separates humans from nature and implies dominance.



Humans are a part of nature, no more or less important than any other species with whom we share a common world. Nature **includes** and looks after us too.

Speaking on behalf of other species, to ensure we do not reinforce human privilege.



Developing our capacity to acknowledge and **respect** the differences between and within other species.

Focusing on human interactions outside.



Realising that at any given moment we are interacting with everything in our environment: the ground we move on, the air we breathe, the stick we hold and so on. As a result, it is complex, messy and “entangled” but this more **relevant** to how children become immersed in their play.



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4.4 Understanding the importance of biodiversity

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity means “diversity of life” and is essential for our planet’s health. Humans and all other species rely on lots of other species for their existence. There is biodiversity:

- *Within species:* For example, we are all human but we are all unique beings. We have diversity thanks to our genes.
- *Across species:* This is the numbers, type and range of animals, plants and fungi within any given space.
- *Across climate and/or geology zones:* For example, in Scotland, different species will be found in coastal areas compared to in old native woodlands or on the top of a mountain. Also, what appear to be similar environments can be very different – using a global example, the Amazon equatorial rainforest in South America has very different flora (plants) and fauna (animals) compared with the Congo rainforest in Africa.

We now recognise that plants, fungi, animals and microorganisms have a right to exist and flourish and this right includes our children and ourselves.

Humans, along with all other living things and entities such as water, soil, rocks and landforms are all interconnected and dependent on one another reciprocally. Terms such as “more-than-human” are being increasingly used to avoid singling out humans as different, special or better. It also helps focus attention on the relationships between entities. (See Ruck & Mannion, 2021)

Importance of biodiversity to our environment

Scotland’s Biodiversity Strategy is overseen by NatureScot. Every local authority has a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Children need biodiverse play spaces

A range of habitats with lots of plants, fungi and animals has greater and more diverse play possibilities including:

- Shelter
- Places to play
- Food to forage through the actions of pollinating insects
- Encounters with animals
- More variety and quantity of plant materials such as fruits, flowers and sticks

See **6.8 Gathering and using natural materials** and **6.10 Animal allies**.



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Some useful terms to know

A species is a specific type of plant, animal or other life-form (organism). A native species is one that has existed in Scotland since the last Ice Age or longer.

A habitat is the natural home of a plant, animal or other species, such as wetlands, moorlands, parks, meadows, rock-pools.

An ecosystem is a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. Every woodland, aquatic or other ecosystem is unique.

Natural heritage is a term that includes plants, animals and geological features as well as natural beauty and amenity. Scotland's biodiversity is a key part of its natural heritage.

Biodiversity loss is a key impact of human action. We can make a difference through developing an awareness of its importance and taking positive action to maintain or improve biodiversity in all outdoor spaces we use.



Find out more

- [NatureScot](#)
- The Wildlife Trust. Check out [the Wildlife Watch](#) section
- [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#)
- [Eco Schools Scotland](#)
- [Scotland's Outdoor Learning Directory](#)
- [Local authority biodiversity groups are listed here](#)
- Learning through Landscapes, Scottish Forestry and the Outdoor Learning Network have a series of helpful videos around [sustainable management](#) of sites for outdoor play and learning. Here are two that focus on conservation and nature play




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4.5 Learning about life on Earth


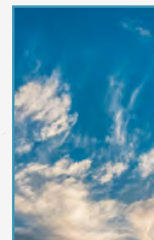
Everything is fundamentally connected. A healthy planet depends upon the complex relationships between the sun, water, air, land and living things (producers, consumers and decomposers).

Each child has their own intuitive way of growing into their relationship with the world and in doing so, developing their sense of being part of and belonging to nature.




Sun

The source of energy that green plants capture. The Earth's tilting towards and away from the sun impacts on our weather and seasons.


Air

The gases that we breathe and can feel on our bodies when the wind blows.






Producers

Producers are mainly green plants such as trees, flowers, grasses, ferns and moss. They use sunlight to make food.



Consumers

Consumers are mainly animals. Herbivores are animals that eat plants. Omnivores eat plants and animals. Carnivores (predators) eat other animals (known as prey).



Decomposers

These are tiny animals, fungi and bacteria which break down dead organisms in many different ways. The decomposition process produces nutrients that plants can then absorb through their roots.


Water

On land, plants and animals need water to stay alive. Seas, rivers, ponds and other natural water sources are also habitats.

Land

The underlying rock affects our soil and the shape of landforms. Many organisms live on rocks and in soils. Most plants need soil to grow.





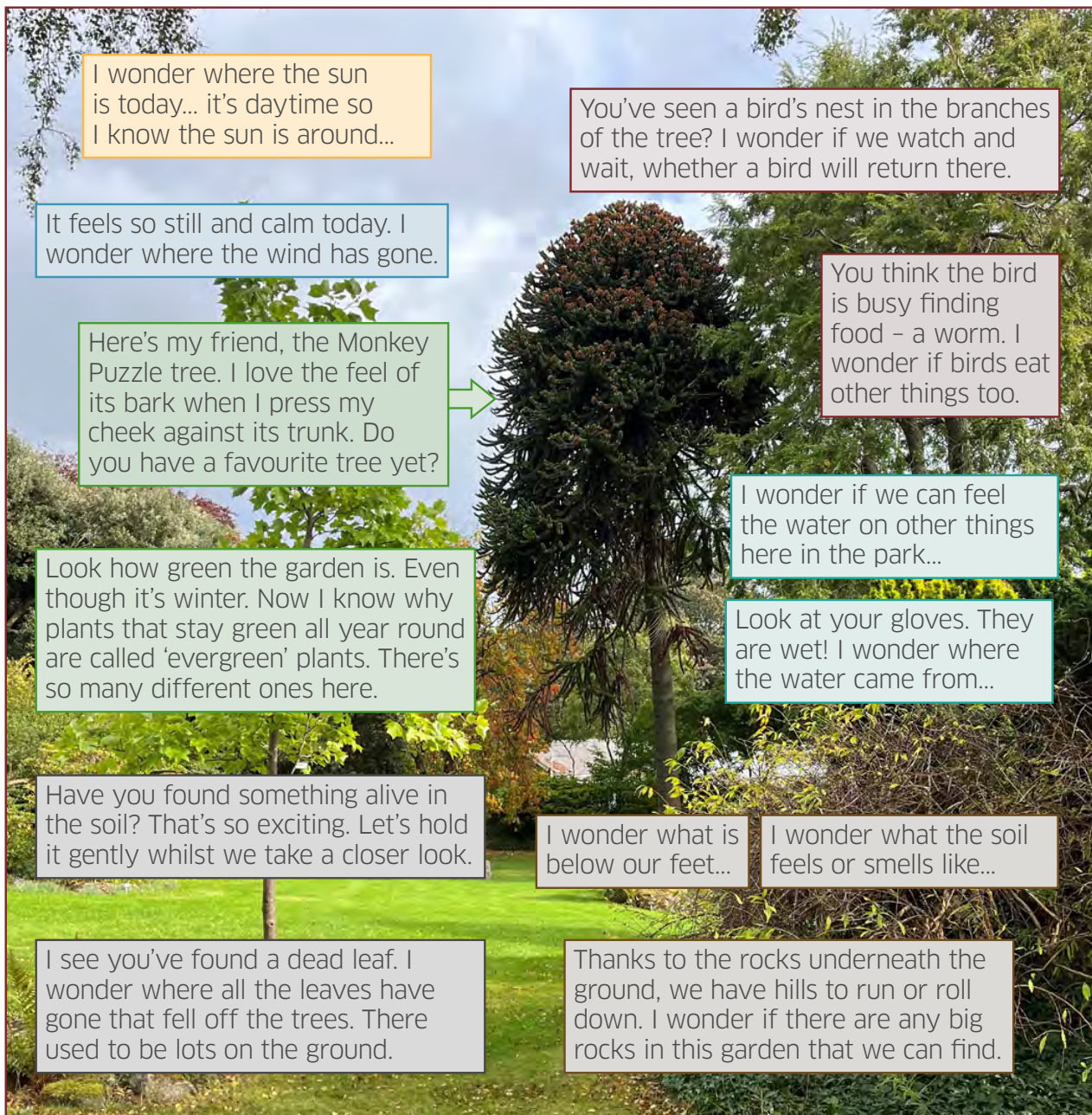
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Discovering life: nurturing awareness

Through our explorations with children, as we play together, we can introduce basic ecological ideas.

With practice this will soon become part of your everyday conversations with children outside.





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4.6 Getting to know plants, animals and fungi that live in your outdoor spaces

Deepening the relationships we have with the range of species that share our outdoor spaces is a never-ending journey of discovery. It can feel daunting not being able to recognise or know much about the wildlife that exists. This advice from practitioners may help.

Get excited about it – awe and wonder, curiosity and questions!

“Find a bug, bird, plant or fungi that you like and explore it. Share your new knowledge. I was very cautious about beetles because of their creepy, wriggly wee legs. Now I have a real respect and admiration for these guys. I get so excited if I find a new kind or see a different larvae. I even bought myself a beetle T-shirt.”

(Suzanne Robinson)

Share and learn together

“At my old outdoor centre, we decided on a tree, a bird, a mammal and a bug each month. We spent four weeks pointing out these species to whoever was passing. In a year the whole team felt more confident and we continued with more plants and birds, the year after.”

(Matt Robinson)

Capture creatively what you notice

“I enjoyed creating a nature journal as I liked drawing and collecting bits. My brother-in-law gave me a basic microscope and I loved it. For the beginner, what motivates you? Is it colour, pattern, beauty or the weird and macabre? If you are out often enough, patterns begin to reveal themselves.”

(Penny Martin)

Make it relatable

Here are some examples:

- Be excited about what your children find and learn more with them. Build up your knowledge through their interests.
- Imagine the species is a new family member. What would you need or want to know about this species? How would you treat this species? What would you do to make the species feel welcome and valued?
- Find out, read and tell stories that help you remember a species.
- Assign words to a song call or other sounds they make, e.g. Chaffinches calling “Pink. Pink.”
- Use what you find. By making a link with a purpose, such as eating, drawing or crafting, it can be easier to remember the plant.



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Start with what's around you every day

When you see things every day it's easier to remember them.

"Get to know one or two plants at a time. Sit with them, research them, draw them."

(Mell Harrison)

"I first took photos and identified the birds that came into my garden from a book. The same ones came regularly which helped me remember them. I then took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch and started to identify less common ones I saw on walks."

(Natalie Campbell)

Ideas to increase awareness and developing a sense of space include: carrying out an audit or keeping a list of trees, plants, mammals and insects; participate on citizen science surveys; guided walks, including focussing on a particular sense e.g. smell, touch; creating maps; worm survey.

Learn from more knowledgeable people, including:

- A child with a passion, a parent, an outdoor professional or volunteer.
- Joining a countryside ranger or similar professional; for a guided walk or course. Absorb the enthusiasm of others attending too.
- Remember it's more than identifying species, it's about observing their lifestyles and habits.
- Using reputable apps and websites.

Look, talk and write

"Look at the key features as you see them. Talk about them. Give the plant a name which describes it. Only then look at the correct name. Write both names together as well as a note about where you found it and what you were doing. Many of our wildflowers have common names that describe how they look, where they were found or how they were used."

(Marian Cairns)



Find out more

- Learning through Landscapes and Scottish Forestry have two [videos](#) on [practitioner knowledge and understanding](#)

4.7 Supporting our children to develop a sense of place

What is a sense of place?

The concept of 'place' describes the feelings and perceptions we develop about a space as we visit it repeatedly based upon our experiences and aspirations. Our ties to any place are strengthened by processing and absorbing information through our bodies and emotions as well as our minds.

"Our research showed that 'place-responsiveness' is cultivated by repeat visits, noticing how places change, and noticing what the children are attending to, such as frogspawn or sponginess of moss."

(Mannion et al (2012).)



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Children and adults have a very different relationship to place. Engaging with children at their level and ensuring their voices are heard needs to be supported and valued by adults.

Every place has a history and meaning and continues to be shaped by our interactions. The landscape tells a story of the place: from the rock type which indicates how it has moved around the planet, to the history of how the place came to be as it looks today. Our use, including how we live and work in the place, as well as the presence of other species, are part of this bigger story.

The interactions with local community and involvement of families to come and play and learn alongside their child enriches and deepens children's sense of themselves being part of a community. Intergenerational learning is reciprocal and a core part of building a strong community.

Why a sense of place matters

- It is a lifelong process of developing deeper and more engaging relationships: with humans and other species and forms.
- It can help us feel safer and give us stability – a sense of being and belonging to our communities (including being part of nature).
- Responding to the environmental and climate crises is vital. Collectively, we are responsible for this and also vulnerable to its effect. Developing a sense of place can help build individual and community resilience and enable us to respond through positive actions within our locality.

Making links in children's lives

Being outside is naturally interdisciplinary. Our practice needs to ensure our children make connections in their play: between their lives at home, our ELC setting, and our community by:

- Noticing and learning when a child comes alive, what matters to them and what makes them laugh and connect with other children and adults outside.
- Acknowledging and addressing practical, cultural, mindset and other challenges. Ensuring all children and their families feel a sense of belonging and identity through our outdoor experiences.
- Exploring our outdoor spaces in all seasons, weathers and even at night in ways that foster community, for example through: shared oral stories about the stars, moon and constellations; eating food; star gazing; and after dark explorations.
- Equipping children with the skills and confidence to continue playing outside in their own time with their family, away from the ELC settings.
- Discovering the plants and animals that live in our place. Can any of them be eaten or used in some way? Are any not okay to use and why?



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“Most children want to be able to play outside in their local neighbourhood. They enjoy spaces that offer them the opportunity to experiment, to challenge themselves physically, to feel free and to interact with others. The changing nature of the outdoors makes it a more interesting, stimulating place to play, and allows children the sense of fun and freedom they crave whilst at the same time promoting their physical, emotional and psychological health.”

(Play Scotland’s ‘[People, Places and Play](#)’)

Building upon prior learning, for example, by considering:

- Engaging all of their senses: touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, vestibular and proprioception⁵. Demonstrating how we are providing this for our children when playing outside daily in nature.
- Extending the involvement of children’s families in our time outside, especially in local greenspace.

“‘**You’re joining a community not a nursery.**’ This is our mantra at Stramash Fort William. Our 2021 Care Inspection report strongly reflects this ethos with many parental comments demonstrating the strong place-based culture. Our community days enable families to stay connected, even after their children have left.”

(Cameron Sprague, Team Leader)

Capturing children’s voices and experiences of their places

How children experience place and how they indicate this to the adults matters. Children tell us about their connections to place through their body language and that needs to be observed.

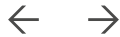
Listen to your group of children talk about their special places.

- How do they react?
- What expressions and body language can you see?
- How do they describe their place?
- What is their relationship with the place?
- How can we deepen and enrich this?
- How do children play in different spaces and why might this be? Why is the space special or unique for the children?

Encouraging children to *express* their sense of place in creative ways could happen through drawings, craft, sculpture, song, digital media, journaling and helicopter stories (see ‘Find out more’ on the following pages).

The documentation of children’s perceptions and understandings can be illuminating and helps children feel that adults are taking their feelings and thoughts seriously.

⁵ Proprioception is how your body knows which position it is in and how it is moving. You can find more information about this at: [Proprioception | Glasgow Science Centre](#)



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“We cannot really approach the truth about our world without feeling how our identities are intimately woven into place, without truly being our place, in every way. And when we do feel this way, the patterns of waves or the appearances of certain birds at certain times assume profound meaning, inspiring an expansive love for where we live.”

(Anderson et al, 2017)

Sharing stories of land and people

“Stories and knowledge of our place ultimately live in people not books. If we are severed from such stories we are severed from place.”

(Anderson et al, 2017)

- Do we know about our families connections to local places? Parents and grandparents have their own narrative, such as the origins of local place names that will never appear on a maps or photos of them playing outdoors in the past, both locally and from other places and countries. What stories, myths or legends have been passed through generations?
- Over time, our children will also begin to name features and markers in imaginative ways which indicates that they are “place making” in the places they walk, visit and play. For example, an electricity substation passed on the way to a park may be where the children believe a monster lives. Roads become rivers, and pavement features become crocodiles.
- What about local dialects and how they link to the land? Is our landscape mapped by Gaelic, Nordic or other ancient names and how can we learn more about these based upon our children’s interests?
- What are the stories and history – both natural and cultural of this place? For example, what is the significance of the standing stones, or the ‘granny’ Scot’s Pine? What was happening in the Jurassic era on this land? We may not know, but through time, our children may create their own stories about how the land came to be.
- Whose stories have maybe been forgotten or untold here? For example, there may be a Gypsy/Traveller connection or memories from other minority communities which include some of our children and their families?



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“We’ve been nurturing a partnership with Early Years settings in Accra, Ghana. Our children have been prompted to explore the identity of their own communities and their place within that identity, in line with our Frobelian principles. Their love for and ownership of their coastal environment has been particularly striking. This common feature of life in Edinburgh and Ghana allows children and adults to contemplate how connected their communities really are. Our children’s interest in their natural environment has been a wonderful catalyst for shared experiences and developing relationships.”

(Jayne Weaver, Early Years Practitioner, Cowgate Under 5’s Centre)

Reflective thoughts on equalities and inclusion

- Research (CPRE, 2021) has highlighted differences in engagement with nature, dependent on people’s backgrounds and identities. Inequalities in access to the countryside are connected to income, age and disability but are particularly severe when it comes to race. Our approach in the early years can reinforce or challenge these inequalities.

- When do we feel a shared sense of belonging? Does every child and their families in our ELC community feel this or are we unintentionally marginalising some groups? How can we support families from all cultures, countries, races and religions through our outdoor practice? Through the co-creation of new traditions and legacies, we can help create places that are truly inclusive.
- For some children and adults, connections with place may be severed. Starting from where they are at in gentle and respectful ways, can begin the process of healing and strengthening ties. Take the time to learn about approaches to connecting with places from across the globe and incorporate learning about these with children. Emphasise, accept, celebrate and include individual cultures and approaches as this can create a shared appreciation of our special places.

“Partnership working is a key theme of working and extends beyond the family to local services within the community. It is crucial to understand the local context that the family and your setting is in.”

(Realising the Ambition, 2020)



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Find out more

- **Breaking the Mould** – is a programme that has been designed to support learners, educators and leaders understand what an anti-racist curriculum can mean in practice
- Davy, A. (2019) *A Sense of Place: Mindful Practice Outdoors* is an early years book full of suggestions and support
- Mannion & Adey (2011) have thought provoking questions and discussions relevant to all ages about intergenerational learning and responsiveness to place



- **NatureScot have bilingual resources** in Gaelic for Outdoor Learning
- The **Sheiling Project**
- **The Place Standard** is aimed at decision-makers
- **Play Scotland have Place Standard Tools** for Children and Young People that are child-friendly and The **Play Well Outdoors Pack includes a mapping** activity
- Information on establishing **PEEP sessions** outside, e.g. in a nearby park or open community space
- **The Helicopter Approach of Storytelling and Story Acting** is based on the work of Vivian Gussin Paley who has been pioneering this work in the UK since its conception in 2002
- **A research overview: Access to nature in the English countryside**, CPRE, 2021
- Robert McFarlane's book **Lost Words**, described as '*the bearer of a powerful message about the need to close the gap between childhood and the natural world*'
- The writers Robin Wall Kimmerer, Suzanne Simpard and Peter Wohlleben extensively explore reciprocity, including the **Wood Wide Web**

