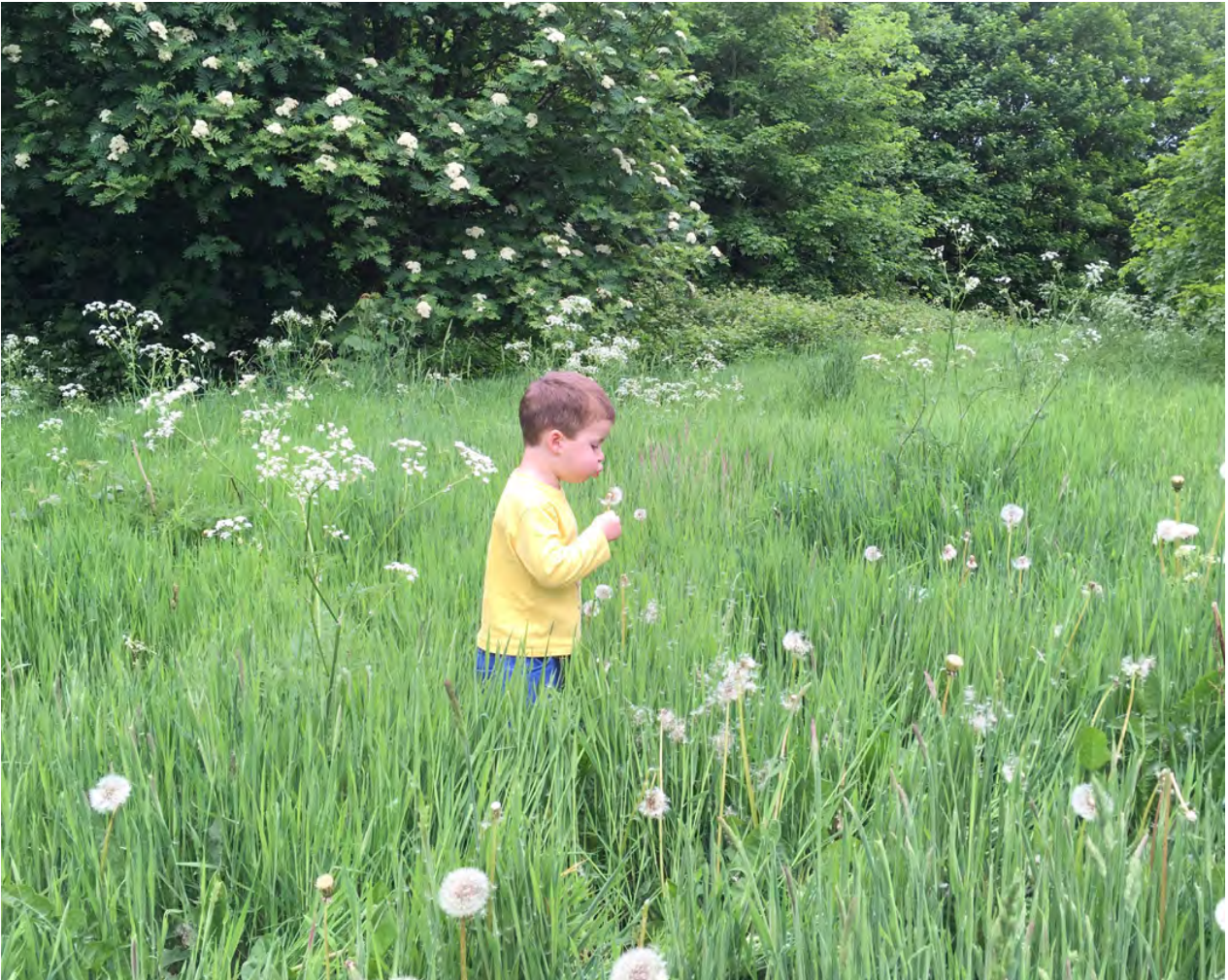




## Section 5

### Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning



In this section there are suggestions for things you can consider when embedding an ethos of care into your practice. Scottish Government (2019) **Out to Play** guidance also has lots of practical advice which can ensure your time outside is enriching and rewarding for all involved. Browning, Marion and Gregoire (2013) and Browning (2012) observed that long-term success in sustainable management of children's play spaces is based upon extensive planning.

Most preventive actions we take can be integrated into our intentional planning of learning experiences and, by responding to our children's interests, needs and perceptions. When undertaken sensitively, we can help deepen the relationship our children need with other species and the place itself.



## Section 5

### Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

#### What this section covers

This list summarises the guidance, provided in various forms, on the following pages.

#### 5.1 Children and practitioners caring for outdoor spaces together

This [flowchart](#) is to enable you to respond to issues that arise promptly. It is a reminder of the process of addressing matters that arise and could be useful for reflection and self-evaluation. For example, supporting a child who is enthusiastically picking lots of wildflowers for the love and joy of it, or, managing the development of a large, deep puddle that has created a health and safety concern. It is aimed at what practitioners can do and rather than addressing concerns that require landowners to act.

#### 5.2 Sustainable planning

This [handy planning checklist](#) is adapted from [Appendix 2: Out to Play, Discussions with Landowner](#). You will need to amend this for your site, climate and group. When thinking about any children who have specific support needs you can involve the child, their families and other professionals in ensuring their needs are addressed. Ensure you know and understand who is responsible for what with regards to your outdoor spaces and avoid assumptions. Remember to follow local and national guidance when using off-site spaces. For practitioners working with primary-aged groups, the Nature Scot guidance, [Beyond Your Boundary](#) is a useful resource.

#### 5.3 Our off-site places: planning and reflection

Children and staff need time to learn the routines and expectations of being off-site. This [sheet](#) may be useful to support intentional planning of these repeated visits. This originated from the Wee Green Spaces project in Aberdeen City.

#### 5.4 Our outdoor spaces calendar

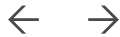
There are many different ways of annual planning for the maintenance and care of an outdoor space. This outdoor calendar is for illustrative purposes and is inspired by Stramash Outdoor Nursery's calendar.

#### 5.5 Daily things we do to care for our outdoor space

This sheet provides pointers for daily care activities. Many children enjoy working alongside an adult when invited and supported to do so. Don't expect every child to want to participate. You may need to find ways to make some tasks relevant and appealing for children.

#### 5.6 How well are we caring for our outdoor spaces?

This subsection will help you assess the impact of the ethic of care for outdoor spaces and to reflect on 'How well are we doing and how do we know?'



# Section 5

## Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

### 5.1 Children and practitioners caring for outdoor spaces together





# Section 5

## Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

### 5.2 Sustainable planning checklist

Remember to involve your children in the decision-making around these matters and landowners too.

#### Group impact

- Size of group (children and adults)
- Ages and maturity of group (first timers, additional support needs, new staff)
- Frequency of visits
- Day/time each week
- Suitability of group for the greenspace and intended area of play, e.g. noise levels
- Presence of other user groups: liaisons and shared expectations

#### Can-go areas: we have agreed..

- Main play space
- Alternative play spaces to enable rotation and/or to support children to choose where to play
- Access routes in and out of the site, including emergency procedures
- Use of existing pathways through the site

#### Site use

- Designated impact-resistant spaces for toileting, hand hygiene, snack, gathering
- Specific tree(s) for tree climbing, swings, rope structures, etc.
- Tree protection if using ropes
- Suitability of shelter for terrain and space
- Any structures to be created: seating, dens
- Seasonal impacts and jobs, e.g. light pollution after dark

#### No-go areas (add to site map and calendar)

- Safety
- Natural or heritage protection: protected species, nesting, animal homes
- Private property
- Environmental impact, e.g. trampling, native bulbs
- Site work (e.g. timber operations, estate work, excavations)
- Biosecurity (invasive species)

#### Routines that care for the land

- Infection control: toileting, hand hygiene, snack
- Tree climbing check
- Foraging approach
- What we can use in our play
- Fire: permission to have, designated space, leave no trace system, off-site
- Playing near water margins

#### Community building: when and what

- Litter picking (each time we visit)?
- Planting trees, bulbs, other?
- Minor maintenance, e.g., pruning at child level, weeding around newly planted trees, etc.
- Habitat improvements – what, where, when?
- Family celebrations or special events
- Reporting concerns





# Section 5

## Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

### 5.3 Our off-site places: planning and reflection tool

This can be adapted for your spaces, children and pedagogy, then linked to your curriculum.

#### Site check (prior to use)

- Windspeed
- Weather
- Ground conditions
- Canopy concerns
- Other changes
- Phone
- Wifi
- Dog mess check
- Litter pick
- Group photo
- Other concern, notes, actions

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Needs</b> of the group<br/>(social, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual)</p>        | <p><b>Interests</b> of the group</p>  | <p><b>Focus routines</b><br/>(caring for people and place)</p>      | <p><b>Nature, seasons and community events</b></p> |
| <p><b>Support strategies</b><br/>(game, story, song or poem, challenge, hook, adult modelling)</p> | <p><b>Review</b> (think <b>SHANARRI</b>)<br/><b>What worked well...</b></p> | <p><b>Even better if...</b><br/>(sign &amp; date when achieved)</p> |  |

#### Have we...

- Reviewed the session with the group and included needs of the place and other species
- Connected to ongoing curriculum (not SACC)
- Adding observations for focus to the children's records
- Updated our risk benefit assessments
- Contacted landowner regarding any site concerns
- Dried and sorted out equipment and organised resources for next session
- Thanked volunteers, listened to their reflections
- Arranged volunteers for next session



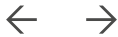
## Section 5

### Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

#### 5.4 Our outdoor calendar

This can be adapted for your spaces, children and pedagogy, then linked to your curriculum.

| Autumn  | Winter  | Spring  | Summer  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenspace visit with small group of children to help plan and advise on what others need to know and preparations needed (children, parents, staff)</li> <li>• Harvest celebrations and explorations</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know local site</li> <li>• Learning about how to be out and about</li> <li>• Cutting wildflower meadow</li> <li>• Leaf piles and leaf mould</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree planting</li> <li>• Feeding the birds: where and how</li> <li>• Geese migrations</li> <li>• Prepare for snow play and winter weather</li> </ul> | <p><b>December</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play on the darkest day: winter solstice celebrations</li> <li>• Winter festivals linked to our families: outside and nature-based</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying warm and safe</li> <li>• New year – wishes for our special places and people</li> <li>• RSPB Big Birdwatch</li> <li>• Clear pond of excess plant material</li> <li>• Annual external tree check and installed playground equipment check</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New life – rotate or move play space if needed</li> <li>• Check or make and put up bird boxes</li> <li>• Prune trees, shrubs and willow structures</li> <li>• Plan seed sowing</li> <li>• Harvest compost bin</li> </ul> | <p><b>March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check local ponds for frog, toad and newt spawn</li> <li>• Start seed sowing, including re-grassing cordoned-off areas if needed</li> <li>• Chit potatoes</li> <li>• Community clean-up of greenspace</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>April</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring celebrations:</li> <li>• Watch out for ground nesting birds</li> <li>• Nettle season – good soup!</li> <li>• Wild garlic – great pesto!</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep gardening</li> <li>• Plant out seedlings</li> <li>• Sorrel season – good soup!</li> <li>• Enjoy playing with common wildflowers</li> </ul> | <p><b>June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play on the longest day: summer solstice celebrations</li> <li>• International mud day</li> <li>• Keep gardening</li> <li>• Care for saplings</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>July</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harvest summer fruits such as strawberries</li> <li>• Stick to paths rather than trample through vegetation</li> <li>• Shallow pond and stream dipping</li> <li>• Pond check</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowner discussions</li> <li>• Update permissions from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Parent/carer</li> <li>◦ Management/organisation</li> <li>◦ Local authority educational visits procedures</li> <li>◦ Landowner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review risk benefit assessments</li> </ul> |



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## Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

### 5.5 Daily things we do together to care for our immediate outdoor space

Adapt for seasons, climate, landscape and features of your space as well as age and maturity of your group. Determine which actions need taken prior to children's arrival.

Anything else? Add your own and children's ideas.

#### Caring for our creatures

- Ensure there is water and food available for birds
- Clean out bird feeders and the ground below prior to refilling, once empty
- Add spare wood and found sticks/stones to habitat piles
- Ensure our pets or domestic animals are cared for in line with animal welfare guidelines

#### Caring for our plants

- When available, add the following to the compost bin:
  - fruit and vegetable peelings
  - clippings and other appropriate plant material from gardening, snipped up small
  - shreds of used paper and cardboard
- Weed, water, prune and dead-head annual flowers as needed.
- Check seasonal jobs to do.

#### Caring about access within our space

- Ensure pathways are free from obstructions
- Check emergency access routes are free from obstructions
- Grit any key paths that are slippery
- Check ground surfaces – cordon off any patches that need recovery time
- Check boundaries are intact where they exist.
- Handwashing and toileting facilities available and accessible where needed

#### Maintenance matters

- Repair or remove any broken items
- Ensure tools are clean, dry and put away safely
- Keep storage areas accessible and tidy
- Check installed play equipment and self-built play structures to ensure safe as necessary

#### Caring for our sandpit

- Remove breathable sand pit cover
- Remove debris and any hazards
- Play in sand – it adds air, keeps it fresh
- At the end of the day, rake sand. Cover if required

#### Local and national guidance followed, where it exists

- Local guidance on security checks, fire prevention, loose parts, etc. in place
- Latest infection control guidelines for cleaning schedules
- Empty stagnant water, e.g. from tyres and other holders

**“Saying thank you, together, at the end of the day to the birds, plants, animals, trees, clouds, rain, wind, sunshine and earth for letting us share their space, builds humility and connectedness to nature for children. This can be done using a simple song or rhyme. The children can add anything specific to each day, such as seeing our first snowdrop, or catching our first falling autumn leaf.”**

(Dr Elizabeth Henderson)



## Section 5

### Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

#### 5.6 How well are we caring for our outdoor spaces?

How well are we doing and how do we know?

##### Why does reflecting upon and evaluating our spaces matter?

- Our spaces have to be flexible and responsive to the needs of our children. This will change throughout their time with us.
- Our spaces also change through time. The weather, seasons, the movement of other animals, the growth of plants and so on, all have an impact.
- This is about caring for children as well as the spaces in which they play.
- There are two main strands to consider:
  - How well the site is bearing up to use by our group?
  - What is the ethic of care being expressed and demonstrated by children, staff and wider community, including janitors and parents?

“We should consider how this process could be recorded or documented so that we can talk about and evidence the children’s development journey.”

(**Realising the Ambition**, p85)

#### Monitoring biodiversity in our space

- Build a collection of the wildlife observed in your outdoor space. Celebrate what a child has found with a photo and a date.
- A **bioblitz** is an informal time-based search for plants, animals and fungi. It’s also fun as a family session with young children as then shared learning can happen.
- If you use local woodland, older children may be interested in a **biodiversity survey**. Remember to compare results year-on-year and take steps to actively improve biodiversity.
- **Make Space for Nature** has examples of seasonal actions.

#### Listen to your children

Children are learning all the time. Ask them for their advice and act upon it, e.g.:

- How can we stop a mud patch from growing?
- What do we need to remember when climbing a tree?
- How do we care for a slater we have found?





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### Embedding caring for our outdoor spaces into our planning

“Even very young children develop an awareness of their world. For example, an 18-month-old toddler on a walk found a leaf to hold. The child said “jaggy” and pointed to the brambles and nettles each time the group walked past them”

(Juliet Robertson, education consultant)

Look at the **SHANARRI** wellbeing indicators. These are useful to review what learning has happened. Often, values such as “included”, “nurtured” and “respected” come to light through these conversations and are about children relating to the more-than-human world.

#### How well are we caring for our outdoor spaces?

How well are we doing and how do we know?

#### Every photo tells a story

Children and staff can take photos of an outdoor space over time. It works best if taken from the same place. Use the photos to:

- Reflect upon what is happening in this space?
- What are children doing?
- What are staff doing?
- What is not happening?
- What was happening before the photo was taken and afterwards?

Use photos to document “before” and “after” situations. For example, what a willow den looked like before being pruned, photos of the children being involved, their thoughts and what the willow den looked like afterwards. What did your children learn from being involved?

To compare you can take pictures across each season and year-on-year. This could be helpful as staff and children change which means that routine site monitoring can still continue and the visible impacts recorded and discussed.

Document the story. For example, if a child is struggling in a mud patch and decides that a ladder is needed to cross the mud, then take photos and note down what is happening and what the children think they have learned - skills and knowledge about how to manage the mud. The “**Learning Story**” approach to documenting children’s experiences developed by Lee & Carr (2016) has many helpful examples.