



## Section 6

### Embedding care for our outdoor spaces into our experiences

#### Water for wildlife

Wildlife needs natural sources of water (not from a tap). We can offer:

- Flat, shallow dishes for bird baths – empty and clean regularly.
- Small ponds and wetland areas. These can be in raised beds on asphalt. Adding stick and pond plants enable wildlife to climb in and out of the pond.



#### Find out more

- **Out to Play** Section 6.4.7
- SEPA – **Scottish Environmental Protection Agency** is a useful starting point for a range of activities about looking after water supplies
- Bird baths and water butts – check out the **RSPB website**
- Establishing wetlands - **Gardener's World** and the **Royal Horticultural Society** have a step-by-step guides
- **Plantlife**
- **Eco Schools Scotland**
- **International School Grounds Alliance** have water conservation and quality explorations for all ages
- **World Water Day** is 22 March, every year

#### 6.14 Inland water margins

See also the **6.16 Beach visits**

#### Why this matters

Ponds, streams, rivers and lochs are part of our natural heritage. Think of the hours of fun to be had playing beside a burn: damming its flow, skimming stones and messing about.

There are invasive aquatic plants and animals that spread easily. If you enter water or go pond or stream dipping then do the following:

- **Check** your equipment and clothing after leaving the water for mud, aquatic animals or plant material. Remove anything you find and leave it at the site.
- **Clean** everything thoroughly as soon as you can, paying attention to nets, boots, and areas that are damp and hard to access. Use hot water if possible.
- **Dry** everything thoroughly before using elsewhere. Some invasive plants and animals can survive for two weeks in damp conditions.
- **Check-Clean-Dry: Stop the Spread.**

#### Building on prior learning

- Find out who knows about and has experience of playing in or near water locally.
- Children may also have relatives who fish, undertake water sports, go wild swimming or who spend family time together near a lake, stream or beach.



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#### Looking after ourselves

Your local authority will have guidelines which must be adhered to around groups using beaches and inland water sources. These are based on national guidance such as [Going Out There](#) and [Group Safety at Water Margins](#). All ELC providers must ensure their group uses these water spaces in a safe manner and that the risks and benefits are assessed. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accident (RoSPA) also has useful guidance on [water and leisure safety](#).

#### Reflective thoughts

- What fears or fascinations do we have, as staff when supporting children to play in or near slow moving, shallow natural water sources?
- What preparations, routines and practices do we need to support children's freedom to play beside and in water especially those with limited understanding or maturity?

#### We have agreed with the landowner/manager:

- Which water source is suitable for exploring so there's no inadvertent conflict with other user groups.
- Access points where children can get in and out unaided without causing significant erosion to the banks or sides.
- Clear boundaries so that our play minimises impact on the aquatic and nearby wildlife.
- Months and seasons when it's okay to explore. This is because some aquatic wildlife disappear into the mud or ground at certain times of the year and sometimes the banks and entry points may be too muddy or icy.
- Infection control practices and toileting that don't impact on water quality and wildlife. Washing hands is good practice after playing in and with natural water.
- Leaving the area as we found it. For example, we'll dismantle any dams we have made before we leave. (Leave beaver dams in place, though)!