

My world outdoors ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF ^[2]

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.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: curricula and pedagogy ^[4]

outdoor ^[5]

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