

Ms Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Childcare and Early Years
Scottish Government
EDINBURGH
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7 December 2018
Our Ref: IR51941/GW/ca/kk

Dear Ms Todd

Thank you for the opportunity for the Care Inspectorate to contribute to the response from the Minister to the Convenor of the Education and Schools Committee in relation to applying the additional 20% capacity to settings providing a shared indoor and outdoor setting for children.

Space to Grow, published in June 2017 was the first action achieved as part of the quality action plan "A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland". It was developed through collaboration between Scottish Government, the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Futures Trust. The resource provides design guidance for early learning and child care settings and is a key tool to support providers in creating new or developing existing settings that will provide high quality environments to support positive outcomes for children.

The Care Inspectorate is keen to support innovation and new models of delivery of high quality early learning and childcare and through discussions with providers, local authorities, the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) and early learning and childcare networks, it was apparent that many providers planned to consider the use of outdoor space when expanding their service. Therefore Space to Grow included a section on supporting a model of an indoor/outdoor setting that would enable the registered number of places to take account of the high quality external environment and outdoor play experiences available to children in the setting.

Section two of the resource: Good practice in all aspect of the learning environment (copy attached) describes the background and the elements to be taken account of for indoor/outdoor settings. The additional capacity for children using the outdoor space would be dependent on the suitability of the outdoor space and plans for how it would be used. The quality of children's experiences and outcomes are and remain of paramount importance in terms of the use of outdoor space and is a key element of the Care Inspectorate assessment. Each application is assessed individually.

There is a Care Inspectorate registration inspector linked to each local authority to facilitate early discussion and support the implementation of the expansion plan. Some local authorities indicated they intended to submit a large number of applications to increase capacity to take account of the outdoor space for existing settings. We are aware that

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some applications have been withdrawn by local authorities who identified that their existing settings could not provide that high quality indoor/outdoor experience. Some of these were as a result of visits to individual settings and discussions between inspectors and early learning and childcare professionals. We are not aware that any authorities consider that the Care Inspectorate approach was restrictive and not in line with the assessment of the quality of environment for children. However if this is the case we would welcome discussion with these authorities at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to Space to Grow, the Care Inspectorate has published a practice note, "Early Learning and Childcare: Delivering High Quality Play and Learning Environments Outdoors" which outlines the current models to support providers consider the setting they wish to provide. This is available on our website www.careinspectorate.com.

As previously noted, the quality of children's experiences and positive outcomes are and will remain of paramount importance in terms of the Care Inspectorate's assessment of any setting, including those providing indoor/outdoor experiences for children.

I hope this information clarifies the points raised at the Education and Skills Committee on 29 October 2018. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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