

A brief explanation of the aims of this guidance document

National & international case studies



# SECTION 02 ENVIRONMENT



## SPACE FOR CHILDREN

### Indoor/Outdoor Settings

The Care Inspectorate has facilitated the development of outdoor and forest settings over a period of time. While not all settings can provide solely outdoor provision, there are opportunities to provide a blended approach of outdoor and indoor learning and care in many settings. Already, there are some existing early learning and childcare settings where account has been taken of the quality and children's use of outdoor space and the number of registered places has been increased in acknowledgement of the positive experiences children have.

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 plan to consider the use of outdoor space when expanding their service. This is based on: recognition of the importance of outdoor experiences, children's increased use of suitable outdoor areas and improvements to the

quality and accessibility of outdoor space. It is the view of the Care Inspectorate, The Scottish Government and Scottish Futures Trust that the following additional guidance will support the provision of indoor/outdoor settings.

There is no agreed standard for the provision of outdoor space. For expansion planning purposes, providers and planners have requested the Scottish Government provide some parameters on the outdoor space to support registration of an increased number of children within an indoor/outdoor setting. **It is therefore recommended that a maximum increase of**

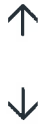
**20% of the total registered number of children is considered as a guideline.** This would of course be dependent on the suitability of the outdoor space and plans for how it would be used. The quality of children's experiences and outcomes are and will remain of paramount importance in terms of the use of outdoor space.

If a setting wishes to maximise the outdoor space to increase the number of children, the following elements should be considered to support the provision of indoor/outdoor settings:

- Do the aims and objectives of your service clearly reflect both indoor and outdoor experiences?
- Have parents been involved and consulted in the development of the service to enable staff to share the positive effects on health and wellbeing of children of being outdoors?
- Have children been consulted and supported to provide ideas for the environment?
- Do you have a comprehensive proposal on how the outdoor space will be used every day?
- Have you given careful consideration to the opportunities and experiences that will be available outside to compliment indoors experiences?
- Do the staff team understand the value and ethos of outdoor learning?

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- Are staff motivated and enthusiastic and do they have appropriate training to provide children with a range of learning experiences both indoors and outdoors?
- How can the outdoor space be directly accessed from the playroom?
- Are children able to go outside independently when they choose to?
- Will staff be suitably deployed to enable children to use both indoor and outdoor space?
- Is the outdoor area as natural as possible, offering a range of different surfaces, a stimulating environment which promotes challenges and provides elements of risk for children to manage?
- Is there a suitable sheltered area to enable children to access outdoor space in all weathers either fixed or of a temporary nature?
- Is there a variety of different areas to allow children to have quiet time, have space to play alone, with small or large groups?



Fenton Barns Nursery, North Berwick



Cowie Nursery, Stirling



Pen Green, Corby access to the outdoor space through a tunnel

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#### THINK ABOUT

- How does or could the indoor and outdoor space meet the needs of individual children?
- Does the space help children to form attachments to individual adults who are their main caregiver?
- Does the space help children to form attachments to other children?
- What space is there for children who are learning to walk or crawl?
- How do you think the space feels to a child? Would they be overwhelmed by the size? Would they feel cosy, content and safe? Is it too noisy?
- Where would a child go to have some quiet time or space on their own?
- What space is there for children to run around and take part in physical activities?

- How does the space support children's learning and development, health and wellbeing?
- How do you feel as an adult in this environment?

#### Space to Eat

Provision of food is an integral part of a care and learning environment. When children have a positive experience of eating and drinking in an early learning and childcare service, it will help them to develop an appreciation that eating can be an enjoyable activity, and understand the role of food within social and cultural contexts on long term health benefits.<sup>68</sup>

68. Scottish Executive (2004), Curriculum Review Group Report <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/26800/0023690.pdf>

Children should have suitable space to have food and drinks. With the expansion in early learning and childcare more children may have lunch within the service. Therefore, providers may need to look at the space available for meals or snacks and consider where improvements could enhance the child's experience. Opportunities should be available for children to help prepare meals and snacks<sup>69</sup>. Space for children to eat should be relaxed, quiet and peaceful and allow for children and staff to sit together<sup>70</sup>. Children often take longer to eat than adults, particularly babies and toddlers, as they try to be independent and feed themselves. Similarly children can get restless if mealtimes take too long. Therefore, mealtimes should take as long as a child needs, as stated in Health and

69. 1.34: If I need help with eating and drinking, this is carried out in a dignified way and my personal preferences are respected. Scottish Government (2017), Health and Social Care Standards <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00520693.pdf>

70. Health Scotland (2015), Setting the Table: Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland <http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/21130-Setting%20the%20Table%20Nutritional%20Guidance%20and%20Food%20Standards.pdf>