

Supporting Outdoor Childcare Provision



Supporting Scotland's children to grow, play & learn outdoors

This guide is designed to show you the range of possibilities when designing or developing high quality outdoor childcare provision. The list provides examples of practice combined with site-specific and appropriate design. The images used below meet the specific site needs and are designed to give an indication of what can be done. *There is no one-size-fits all solution and they are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive.* The Out to Play guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-play-practical-guidance-creating-outdoor-play-experiences-children/> and Care Inspectorate's Early Learning and Childcare: Delivering High Quality Play and Learning Environments Outdoors Practice Note can be found here: http://www.careinspectorate.com/images/ELC_practice_note.pdf

Site & Access - Out to Play Section 4

Identify a suitable site and establish ownership. This may be straightforward but could take **weeks or even months** if ownership is not clear cut.

Get a formal agreement on permission to use. Consider the times of use, duration of agreement, responsibilities, permission for installations, costs etc. This could be quick depending on the owner but could also take weeks or months if ownership is unclear or layers of bureaucracy to negotiate lease/use.

Consider site requirements. Remember to discuss with the landowner what you may be looking to use/have on site regarding toileting or vehicle access for example.

Consider access. How will staff get there and how easy will it be to transport what you need to it? How will children access it? Is it suitable for drop off and collection or will you need another site for that? Is it on public transport?



Shelter - Out to Play Section 5.6

You may need a site-specific area outdoors to provide shelter from bad weather, also a consideration for Space to Grow variation. Your site may offer natural shelter but you are likely to have to install something.

Shelter can be done cheaply and quickly. Use of ropes and tarpaulins tied to trees or other existing structures or teepee tents do not require planning permission and cost little (they can be as cheap as **£50 to £400**) and are more flexible, allowing movement between a number of sites.

More permanent buildings may need planning permission. Speak to your local authority as early as possible and consider gaining pre-application advice from your planning department. Yurts (canvas or wooden), wooden huts, bothies or lean-tos can all be used. Consider how aspects of your site might affect your choice. The cost of these structures will vary hugely from **a couple of hundred pounds to around £20k** for a yurt with wood burning stove fully installed.

Where planning permission is needed, **allow three months** from submitting plus installation time.



Toilets and handwashing - *Out to Play* Sections 5.5 & 5.6

All ELC settings must provide sufficient toilets for the number of children, regardless of whether the setting is indoor or outdoor. Toilets must afford children privacy and dignity and a separate toilet is required for staff.

If your site has flushing toilets available, for instance public toilets, these are fine to use. There are many options depending on your site, your budget and your approach.

At its most basic, a bag in a bucket could be set up using compostable bags and sawdust or cat litter and a pop-up tent to provide privacy. There are other, less basic, portable options of compostable or chemical loos. These require no planning permission and staff can dispose of waste along with nappies. These are very cheap and mobile so can go wherever the children go.



More permanent structures can range from home-made toilet shelters made using pallets, or woven willow igloos which can host portable toilets or more permanently installed compost toilets. These can also be fairly cheap if building yourself or cost anything from a **few hundred to a couple of thousand pounds** if buying a fancier waterless toilet.

Glamping type units and mini-sewage works can also be installed. These can be traditional and alternative, using natural materials such as bracken or reeds for breaking down the waste. Cost can go up to several thousand pounds but are often require much less frequent maintenance. Some of these might need planning permission. Speak to your local council and, if so, allow **at least three months** for planning plus installation time.

Handwashing requires running warm water and liquid soap. Warm water can be provided using a large plastic tank topped up from a thermos flask at the simplest to installing a solar powered water heater and plumbing. Again, this will be costly and may require planning permission and so could mean a wait time of **three months plus installation**.

Eating - *Food Matters* (Care Inspectorate)

Practice and your site will dictate how you provide food outdoors and where children will eat it.

Transporting food to the site is an important consideration. If you bring it at the beginning of the day, how will you store it and maintain correct temperatures? If lunch is being delivered to the site at lunchtime, how will that be done?

You may wish to provide an eating area including somewhere protected from the elements for bad weather. This might be through insulated matting or logs to sit on, cable drums or pallets for tables to sit or stand at and a tarpaulin to keep the rain off. If you have a firepit, providing hot chocolate or soup on cold days might be useful.



Disposal of waste, especially plastic wrappers, and washing of crockery or cutlery are other considerations.

Consider your environmental health officer's feedback throughout to ensure they understand your ambitions and the mechanisms you have in place to provide quality eating experiences for the children in your care.

Clothing

Children and staff need access to layers of clothing when it's cold and waterproof clothing when it's wet. Parents and carers may provide these but if not, as a minimum, you may need to provide waterproof jackets and trousers for children.

These can be shared if you keep them on site. Costs vary considerably with trousers starting at around £10 a pair and jackets at £50, but can go up hugely from there. You may decide to provide staff with an outer, waterproof layer too.

Similarly, footwear needs to be suitable and you may want to provide welly boots. Some advise welly boot socks or neoprene lined wellies to aid the warmth of little feet. Big suppliers will often give discounts to nurseries, especially those that are charities. Some suppliers may be able to manage bulk orders which could benefit councils or groups of nurseries for management, maintenance and potential discount.

You will get to know your site and children, and you may decide to have spares available just in case.



Play materials - Loose Parts Play Toolkit (Inspiring Scotland)

Less is more especially if you want to stimulate children's curiosity and creativity. Repurposing materials such as cable drums, pallets, tubing of various sizes and tyres helps the environment and is a cheap way of providing loose parts for play which can also enhance learning.

Consider developing relationships with local DIY and garden centres, as well as super-markets for materials that will aid your loose parts play and keep it replenished for free.

Guidance and advice on this is available in our Loose Parts Toolkit - find it at <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Loose-Parts-Play-Toolkit-2019-web.pdf>

