



Outdoor Policy

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Date Effective From	20 th June 2017
Date Last Amended	
Review Date	20 th June 2019

“There is a growing body of research that shows that young children’s access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and disposition to learning.” Davy, 2009 (My World Outdoors 2016)

Background and Purpose

The Indigo Group recognises the value of this body of evidence to the families it supports. This policy exists to communicate the principles which underpin our approach to outdoor play and our belief that free-flow access to outdoor learning in a natural environment alongside indoor experiences will enhance all aspects of the child’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

The policy will help all Indigo Stakeholders understand that outdoors is both a teaching and learning space where adults can interact with children to extend their knowledge, skills and concepts; build their resilience, develop their social skills and provide opportunities increased levels of independence.

The policy is underpinned by the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) principles and takes account of My World Outdoors. GIRFEC is founded on eight wellbeing indicators, often referred to as SHANARRI which are the basic requirements for all children and young people to grow and develop and reach their full potential. The wellbeing wheel (Appendix 3) shows the indicators and the connections between children and young people’s wellbeing now and their wellbeing in the future. Children and Young People attending our services are aware of these indicators, how they engage with them and how we work together to link them to the delivery of the curriculum.

The policy aims to support the wellbeing of all our children and young people within the services and to help them develop an understanding of the importance of respecting their natural environment and the world around them. From 2018, we will work on the delivery, evaluation and development of this policy in partnership with our staff, families and any relevant external services to continue to give our children and young people the best possible start in life. Our journey in relation to these aspirations will be reviewed day to day in an on-going basis as part of our general evaluation practice but strategically across the organisation in a year’s time.

Responsibilities

1. Our services strive to offer outdoor play every day for periods of time. As part of the daily routine, children and young people have opportunities to explore both indoor and outdoor learning environments and are responsible for choosing their areas of play throughout the day, including whether that is indoor or outdoor.
2. The safety of children accessing outdoor areas is paramount, all outdoor areas are regularly risk assessed and are checked prior to use by children. Childcare staff are responsible for ensuring that risks are minimised including entrance/ exit areas being supervised at all times.
3. Childcare staff are committed to ensuring that all outdoor opportunities are meaningful and contribute to children and young people’s learning and development. To achieve this, we will participate in regular outdoor training and visit other services to share good practice.
4. The Indigo Group is committed to providing active learning experiences for children and young people so that they have plenty of learning opportunities to practice developing skills that are age and stage, making them feel good about themselves and enriching their understanding of the world around them.

5. Children of all ages, gender and abilities will be provided with equal opportunities to access our outdoor learning environments. If required, children and young people will be provided with additional support to allow them to participate.

Indigo staff are therefore expected to be:

- passionate about nature and the environment
- Champions of outdoor play
- Prepared to go out in all weathers
- Dressed accordingly
- Positive role models in relation to staying healthy
- Proactive in allowing the children to take risks
- Involved in leading or supporting the build of a Mud Kitchen in all early years services and where possible and appropriate in services for older children.
- Able to build a fire pit and cook outdoors
- Proactive and consistent in recycling and using recycled materials
- Able to grow plants, herbs and vegetables either from window boxes or allotments as environment allows.
- Enthusiastic about exploring local community spaces through walks and outings

Roles

The role of the Indigo Group in relation to GIRFEC and Outdoor play is to ensure that:

Safe:

- We support children and young people to be active in assessing their own risk as part of their learning process by empowering them to make safe decisions whilst we work together to balance risk against the benefits of outdoor play.
- Our keyworker system in Early Years and consistent staff team across the organisation allows us to know our children and young people as individuals. Enabling us to support them to access the outdoor environment safely whilst challenging their capabilities.
- We ensure that written risk assessments are meaningful and relevant, where we actively promote a risk-benefit approach to support our children and young people to enjoy potentially hazardous activities such as using real tools and exploring the natural environment.
- Positive Outcomes for Safe include:
 - Self-awareness
 - Risk awareness
 - Brave
 - Courage
 - Inner-strength

Healthy:

- We are committed to encouraging all children and young people to form positive habits in relation to their health and wellbeing using active outdoor learning.
- We ensure children and young people have daily access to outdoor play to benefit from fresh air and exercise.

- Children and young people will be supported to develop their own free-flow play activities outdoors and helped to actively explore nature themselves.
- Positive outcomes for Healthy include:
 - sense of freedom
 - independence
 - inner strength
 - self-discovery
 - enhanced connectedness with nature
 - increased environmental knowledge
 - higher self-esteem
 - better mood
 - resilience to stress.

Achieving:

- As enablers of active outdoor learning we will continue to introduce resources and concepts to extend children and young people's play/ interests and their learning and development.
- We provide natural and open-ended materials and loose parts to support inquiry based and imaginative learning.
- Positive outcomes for Achieving include:
 - increasing concentration
 - stimulating creativity
 - developing problem-solving skills
 - enhancing critical thinking and decision making

Nurtured:

- We create meaningful opportunities for children and young people to connect with nature and the outdoor learning environment.
- We are inclusive in our practice to ensure we support all children and young people to have the time and space outdoors to be alone, to work through personal scenarios in play, or express various emotions.
- Our open and inclusive outdoor learning environment offers children and young people the opportunity to come together, to play in parallel, to observe and learn from peers, to be part of a team and develop and demonstrate leadership skills.
- Positive outcomes for Nurtured include:
 - Developing self-regulation skills
 - Resilience
 - Self-esteem
 - Health & wellbeing

Active:

- We provide a range of opportunities for our children and young people to participate in physical play including some vigorous activity.
- We are inclusive to our approach in providing daily active play to all children and young people based on their capabilities.
- Our outdoor learning environment provides opportunities for various types of active play.
- Children and young people have access to a range of physical resources such as scooters, bikes and sports equipment to participate in active play.
- We continuously source training for staff to improve staff's knowledge and understanding on the need for active play for children and young people.
- Positive outcomes for Active include:

- Spatial Awareness
- Improved Confidence
- Happiness
- Coordination/ reactions
- Sense of freedom & adventure
- Improved memory & cognitive processes

Respected:

- We support our children and young people to take part in a various range of outdoor learning and child-led activities.
- We ensure that we provide a range of outdoor learning experiences to suit various interests such as active risky play, natural investigative play and transient art activities.
- Observations support staff in their awareness of children and young people’s individual preferences, views and ideas and how to integrate them into their outdoor experiences.
- We actively encourage children and young people to take the lead in developing their own ideas through various forms of outdoor learning.
- Our children and young people have the freedom of choice to move between the indoor and outdoor environments, whenever practicable.
- Positive outcomes for Respected include:
 - Improved Confidence
 - Responsibility
 - Developing problem-solving skills
 - Decision making
 - Included

Responsible:

- In promoting social responsibility, we support and encourage children and young people to play active and responsible roles in their environment and community.
- We develop our children and young people’s knowledge, understanding and respect for the natural environment around them.
- Through actively engaging in the local community and environment we support our children and young people to become responsible citizens.
- Our children and young people have the opportunity for direct contact with nature in all seasons through thoughtful and meaningful outdoor learning experiences.
- Our outdoor learning provides real-life experiences that extend children and young people’s natural interest and enquiry.
- Positive outcomes for Responsible include:
 - Leadership at all levels.
 - Ownership and a place in their community.
 - Improved confidence.
 - Responsibility
 - Self-Esteem

Included:

- We make good use of our local community and environment, where children and young people have the opportunity to participate in local events and explore their natural environment.
- The outdoor environment is accessible and inclusive for all children and young people to explore and develop their capabilities equally.
- We promote equality during all outdoor learning experiences to ensure that we do not discriminate against physical ability, gender or religion.

- The outdoor environment supports experiences that allow children and young people to build friendship and have a wider sense of community to help them feel included.
- Positive outcomes for Included include:
 - Acceptance
 - Self-Esteem
 - Self-awareness
 - Happiness

1. The **role of the parent** is to:

- a. Provide your child with suitable clothing and footwear for all weather.
- b. Provide a sun hat and sun cream which should be minimum SPF 30 and can be left in each childcare setting.
- c. Support the commitment to their child's all round development and learning experiences by understanding that this may involve children/ young people becoming wet and/ or dirty and being outside in a variety of weathers unless there is a serious risk to their health and safety by doing so.

2. The **role of the child** is to:

- a. Participate in outdoor experiences
- b. Develop risk awareness to allow them to make their own judgements when involved in outdoor play.
- c. Have fun whilst socialising, exploring and developing their natural curiosity.
- d. Develop respect for their environment and to look after their learning spaces.
- e. Contribute thoughts and ideas to future experiences and the evaluation of ongoing experiences.

3. The **role of the practitioner** is to:

- a. Provide planning and resources for a challenging outdoor area that supports and encourages children and young people to explore and extend their experiences.
- b. Be an active role model interacting and supporting children and young people's learning.
- c. Set up, store and maintain equipment safely.
- d. Give opportunities for children and young people to explore their natural environment.
- e. Ensure appropriate ratios are maintained.
- f. Ensure all health and safety checks have been carried out prior to use and that risks have been minimised.
- g. Ensure safety and supervision always, placing themselves strategically around the area.
- h. Ensure all children and young people are dressed appropriately for the experiences provided.
- i. Carry out regular head counts to ensure all children and young people are accounted for whilst outdoors.

4. The **role of the manager** is to:

- a. Ensure that national guidance in relation to Outdoor Play is shared, implemented and followed.

- b. Review, monitor and carry out regular assessment of safety checks, use of outdoor spaces and quality of learning environments.
- c. Provide equal time to plan and develop the outdoor learning spaces.
- d. Should an incident which compromises security take place, all children and young people should be gathered together and taken inside if possible. The manager should take the appropriate action and complete an Incident Form.
- e. Ensure all staff, children, young people and volunteers are aware of play boundaries for each setting.
- f.

This policy is our ideal position and whilst we aim to have it fully operational by 2020 we are currently working towards it. Each service will have an action plan implanted from June 2018 with specific aims and objectives.

Additional Reading/Associated Documents

1. Appendix 1 – Benefits of Risky Play
2. Benefits of outdoor play - <http://www.aastateofplay.com/wild-child-33-evergreen-benefits-of-outdoor-play/>
3. Appendix 2 – National Care Standards Ratio Guidelines
4. Appendix 3 – Wellbeing Wheel

Appendix 1 – Risky Play

Risky Play

Risky play is a natural part of children's play, and children often seek out opportunities for engaging in challenging and so called "risky play". Risky play can be defined as a thrilling and exciting activity that involves a risk of physical injury, and play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk. Activities such as climbing, sliding, balancing, jumping from heights and hanging upside down can be considered as risky. It is important that both staff and parents are aware of the importance of risky play and that safety policies and regulations do not get in the way of this vital form of play

Why risky play is important?

Involvement in risky play gives children the opportunity to access risks and manage situations. Even very young children are taking risks, which in turn lead to new learning experiences, such as walking, running, climbing and riding a bike. Each of these activities involves some risks but they are necessary for the development of children and risky play is not different. Risky play gives children the opportunity to extend their limits and learn life skills. Success and failure provide children with the motivation to try again and work out different ways of doing things. Movements that are often associated with risky play, such as, swinging, climbing, rolling, hanging, sliding, are not only fun for children but also essential for their motor skills, balance, coordination, and body awareness. Children who do not engage in such movements are more likely to be clumsy, feel uncomfortable in their own body, have poor balance, and a fear of movement. The role of our staff is to create a play environment where children can engage in movements that fulfill their sensory needs.

Appendix 2 – National Care Standards Appendix Guidelines

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/37432/0010250.pdf>

1 Adult:Child ratios in non-domestic premises The ratios apply to new providers from 1 April 2002. Existing providers are expected to achieve the new ratios by 1 April 2004.

Age Ratio

Under 2s 1:3

2 to under 3s 1:5

*3 and over 1:8

If all children are 8 or over 1:10

*Where children aged 3 and over attend facilities providing day care for a session which is less than a continuous period of four hours in any day the adult: child ratio may be 1:10. providing individual children do not attend more than one session per day.

Two adults to be in attendance at any one time.

Only adults in contact with children for the majority of the session should count towards the ratios.

The regulator would be able to vary the ratios up or down where warranted for example attendance of children with special needs, awkward premises and additional support staff on the premises.

2 Adult:Child ratios in domestic premises 1:6 for children under 12, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 1.

nationalcarestandards early education and childcare up to the age of 16

These ratios include the childminder's own children. The Care Commission will have regard to the number of children aged 12 to 16 who are likely to be in the house regularly, and will have the discretion to vary the ratios accordingly. The Care Commission will also have discretion to vary the ratios to take account of special circumstances, such as siblings under 1, special needs, awkward premises, etc.

3 Qualified staff The intention is to move to a position where all staff in centres providing childcare or pre-school education either hold an appropriate qualification, are seeking accreditation of skills and experience or are pursuing on-the-job training with a view to registering with the Scottish Social Services Council in due course. The Council published its qualification requirements for registration of the early years workforce in March 2004, and will begin phased registration of the workforce during 2006. Employers are advised to develop training plans in order to meet the expectations set out in Standard 12 and help their staff meet registration requirements. For further information see Annex C.

4 Space standards in non-domestic premises The School Premises (General Requirement and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 (as amended) continue to apply to nursery schools under the management of education authorities.

For all other non-domestic childcare, the following space standards apply, although the Care Commission will have discretion to vary the standards to take account of special circumstances.

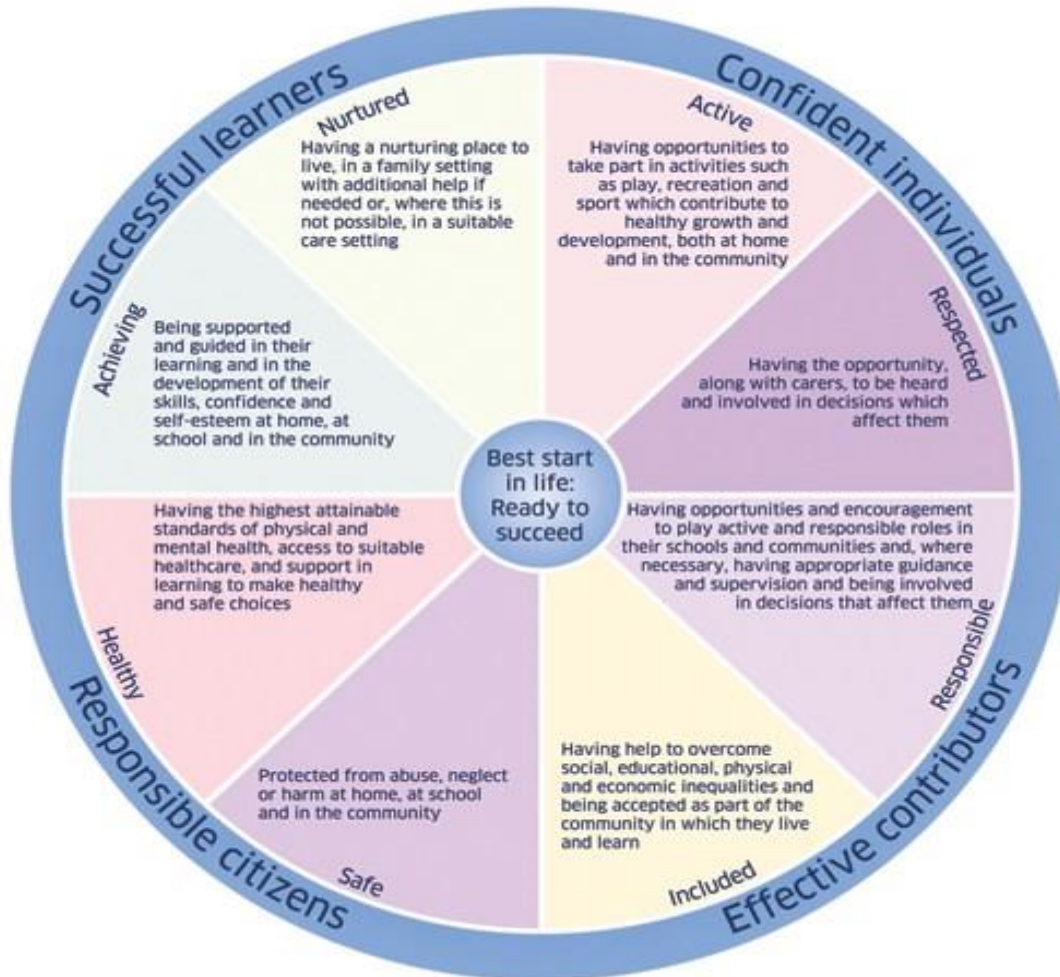
Age Space

Under 2s 3.7 square metres

2 to under 3s 2.8 square metres

3 and over 2.3 square metres

Appendix 3 – Getting It Right For Every Child - Wellbeing Wheel



Version	Date	Author	Replaces	Comment
1	June 2017	Steph Grant	N/A	
2	October 2017	Jacqueline Lamb	v. 1 June 17	Reviewed, still requires updates.
3	January 2018	Steph Grant	v. 2 October 17	Sent for approval
4	March 2018	Ashley Turner	v.3 January 2018	Circulated to staff team