

Frequently asked questions: Space to Grow: indoor/outdoor settings

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What is an indoor/outdoor setting?

This is an indoor setting where the outdoor space has been taken into account when considering the number of children who can attend the setting at any one time. The outdoor area is another play area where children can independently choose to spend time in (think of it as a room without walls and a ceiling). Both indoors and outdoors offer high-quality play and learning opportunities and experiences for children. Children must have access to the indoor and outdoor areas at all times.

What resources should I use if I'm considering creating or registering an indoor/outdoor setting?

- [Space to Grow](#): A design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care settings.
- [Space to Grow: indoors/outdoors](#): Guidance for creating high-quality experiences and opportunities for children in indoor/outdoor settings.
- [Out to Play](#): Practical guidance for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare.
- [Early Learning and Childcare delivering high quality play and learning environment outdoors practice note](#).
- [My World Outdoors](#): A practice resource highlighting the benefits of outdoor play for children attending in early learning and childcare.
- [Health and Social Care Standards My support, my life](#): Standards setting out what we should expect when using health, social care or social work services in Scotland. The standards seek to provide better outcomes for everyone; to ensure that individuals are treated with respect and dignity; and that the basic human rights we are all entitled to are upheld.

All these resources are accessible through the Care Inspectorate's [The Hub](#) website. It also hosts photographs of aspects of indoor/outdoor settings.

What should the outdoor space look like?

The outdoor space is not about replicating the indoor experiences outside. Children's opportunities and experiences outdoors should be different to and complement indoor experiences. Both the indoor and outdoor area must be of a high quality. The outdoor space should be natural with a mix of surfaces and textures to provide opportunities and space to experience nature. This should include space to run, use wheeled toys, explore nature and wildlife, plant, dig, get dirty, play with natural materials, climb and to provide elements of risks for children to manage. There should be different spaces to enable children to explore, to create space to hide, to spend time with others, have space to be on their own to play or relax.

Do I need a landscaper to design the outdoor area?

There is no requirement to have a designed outdoor space, many of the natural materials that services use have been sourced from building merchants, local authorities or private land owners.

Does there have to be mature trees in the outdoor area?

No. An area which has trees may allow children to climb and to manage risk. However, it is not necessary for the area to have trees. You can provide other

climbing opportunities for children. The area should be suitable and natural as detailed above.

Is there an outdoor space standard?

There is no outdoor space standard for early learning and childcare settings. Currently the outdoor space standards for nursery school and nursery classes in a primary school is defined in The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Amended Regulations 1973. The School Premises Regulations are currently under review by the Scottish Government and one of the recommendations is that reference to nursery school and classes be removed. If a provider wants to use a space standard, at this time, they should refer to The School Premises Regulations, however the Care Inspectorate does not require applicants/providers to comply with this.

What is a big enough outdoor space?

The space should be large enough to enable all children, if they choose, to be outside at the same time and should support varied and high-quality play and learning experiences.

Why is only up to 20% of the indoor capacity considered?

Consideration will be given to UP TO 20% of the registered places of children who have access to outdoors and who can independently choose to be indoors or outdoors. This was agreed with the Scottish Government to ensure good quality experiences for all children both indoors and outdoors. By having a maximum of 20% additional children, should they all choose to be indoors at the same time this should enable the setting to continue to provide high-quality play and learning experiences at all times.

It is acknowledged that children aged under 2 years may be able to walk or crawl outside. However, due to their age and stage of development, the number of children aged under 2 years should not be taken into account when considering increasing capacity.

Will 20% of the number of children who can independently move freely from indoors to outdoors, be guaranteed?

No. An increase in capacity is not guaranteed. The criteria to be considered is described in [Space to Grow](#) to ensure high quality play and learning experiences for children both indoors and outdoors.

When considering increased capacity using the outdoor space, should there be enough indoor space, as consistent with Appendix 1 of Space to Grow, for the overall number of children?

No. The increased capacity takes account of the outdoor space when both areas offer high-quality play and learning opportunities and experiences for children and the criteria of an indoor/outdoor setting has been met.

Can a new setting be considered as an indoor/outdoor setting?

Yes, if the setting meets all of the requirements. As with any new registration application, there is an assessment process. If a provider is considering a new

indoor/outdoor setting this application will be assessed in the same way as any other application. The assessment of the accommodation both indoors and outdoors will take account of Space to Grow, Space to Grow indoor/outdoor settings and the Health and Social Care Standards.

What does free flow or independent access mean?

Children need to be able to move freely and independently between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Both indoor and outdoor areas will be accessible to children at all times during the session.

Does the playroom door to the outdoor area need to be kept open?

No, the provider needs to make sure children can move freely and independently between both areas. There are many ways this can be achieved, as described and shown in the resource, [Space to Grow: indoors/outdoor settings](#). [The Hub](#) website also has photographs of some different options currently in place.

Can fire doors be left open to facilitate free flow?

Where access is through a door designated as a fire exit the provider will need to discuss this with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Can 'butchers' curtains' be used?

Where this is the preferred option you will need to discuss with your environmental health department and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Can children go through another playroom or a corridor to access outdoors?

Children should have direct access from a play space to outdoors. Children should be able to see directly outside. Some providers are considering a small porch type or boot room area which would be easily accessible to children and staff. Any small space should not create a barrier to children accessing outdoors.

Does there have to be an outdoor shelter?

Yes. The shelter does not require to be fixed but the shelter needs to be suitable to enable children to still be outside in adverse weather conditions. [Space to Grow indoor/outdoor settings](#) provides examples of shelters.

Is an outdoor toilet required?

No. However, consideration needs to be given to how easily and quickly children can access the toilets indoors. Many providers choose to have indoor and outdoor toilets. The environment input standards and details about changing facilities and hand hygiene are detailed in:

- [Space to Grow](#)
- [Hand hygiene guidance](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings \(Daycare and Childminding\)](#).

Does there have to be a boot room?

No. However, you will need to consider how and where children will be able to get changed without disrupting others and where wet clothing will be dried.

Do some children need to be outdoors at all times?

No. Children need to be able to choose which area they want to spend time in.

When applying for a variation for an existing setting will a visit be carried out?

This will be assessed on a case by case basis by the inspector. However, it is likely a visit will be carried out. The inspector will spend time in the setting observing practice, speaking to children, staff and parents if they are available. The criteria as detailed in Space to Grow along with the Health and Social Care Standards will be considered.

What additional qualifications, skills and experience should staff have?

Staff would be expected to have knowledge, skills and experience of outdoor play and learning and to be able to confidently put this into practice. There is no requirement for staff to have a specific outdoor learning qualification.

Providers/applicants should consider the training/development needs of staff and ensure these are addressed. Staff should be fully committed to outdoor play and learning. Consideration needs to be given to how staff are deployed. The Care Inspectorate provides [guidance on adult to child ratios](#). This refers to the total number of staff across both the indoor and outdoor areas, staff should know their children well and be deployed accordingly. For example, if the adult child ratio is 1:8 there may be one member of staff outdoors with more than eight children but this will have been assessed and other staff close by if required. The deployment of the staff is the responsibility of the setting to ensure children's needs are met. Staff should carry out a risk assessment to assist with staff deployment. Children need to see staff both outdoors and indoors.

What indoor space standards should be used?

The minimum space standards are detailed in Space to Grow, Appendix 1.

What additional resources and materials should there be?

Resources should be as natural as possible using materials suitable to an outdoor learning environment and to encourage active play. Reference should be made to [The Loose Parts Play](#) resource.

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