

Using local greenspace as part of your approach to re-opening: Aberdeen ELC guidance

The benefits for children and adults of spending time in a natural setting such as a wood are well-researched. It can be restorative: reducing stress, improving concentration and ensuring everyone is physically active. There is space and freedom. It offers a place where children can enjoy playing and learning in nature.

Preparation

If you are planning to use any public local greenspace: parks, woodland, nature reserves, you must:

1. **Get your paperwork in place.** If you are a local authority nursery, follow [ACC Educational Visits policy](#). Update your risk benefit assessment to ensure it matches local and national guidance.
2. **Get in touch** with City Countryside ranger team or park manager. Explain your intentions. Use the [Wee Green Spaces form](#) and [letter](#) to help you know what you need to say. It is important that this is also included and reflects the **current state** of your intended site.
3. **Get permission to use.** This is why you have to get in touch with the rangers/park manager. Even if you have had permission previously, you will need to up-date your request.
4. **Get prepared.** Find out who else plans to use the space and when. Think about what your children and parents need to know to feel reassured that the sessions will be safe as necessary and to engage them in the planning process.

Practicalities

1. Child: adult ratios. Follow the [Guidance on Re-opening ELC Services](#) about cohorts and the ACC Educational Visits Policy about ratios. You will need to consider which additional staff can support a cohort and how, as parent volunteers are unlikely to be able support a setting. Social distancing is necessary only between adults within the group.

2. Clothing, backpacks and equipment. Organise this so that each cohort of children have their own and it doesn't get mixed up with other groups. If in doubt, quarantine an item for 72 hours or clean in line with [HPS Covid-19 Guidance for Non-healthcare settings](#). The greenspace will provide lots of interesting things for children to see, hear and play with so only take what you really need. Each child can still carry their own snack, drink and seat.

3. Hand hygiene. Follow [HPS Covid-19 Guidance for Non-healthcare settings](#). Wash your hands before you leave your setting as well as when you return. Children and staff may hold hands as normal when walking along pavements, crossing roads and so on.

4. Toileting. Supporting children to go to the toilet is an intimate routine and each child needs kind, responsive care. The Wee Green Space protocol remains in place. Everyone can still pee into the ground. Faecal matter must be bagged, removed and disposed of back at your setting, just like nappies. Take extra care and use PPE where needed. Use an approved detergent/wipes to clean the potty between each child. Clean the potty thoroughly according to [HPS Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings](#) guidance back at your setting. Travel potties that use a bag system may be the most straightforward option. Do not use public toilets, even if you have a key as you will not know the cleaning schedules and levels of use by the public. Cleaning the public toilets before and after use by your group is unrealistic and could detract from your children's experience.

5. Key touch points. Walk the route and look around your greenspace site prior to taking your group for the first time. Note key contact points such as pelican crossing buttons, gates, rails, litter bins and other street or greenspace "furniture" which staff or children may touch during the off-site visit. You will need to decide your procedures for managing these. For example, you may have hand sanitiser available for adults involved in this aspect of the visit. You may decide to do a handwash on arrival in at the local greenspace if there are a lot of key touch points on your walk.

6. Accessing greenspace. In line with [Government advice](#), settings should access greenspace within walking distance. If you intend to have parents collect or drop children off at the greenspace these will need to be discussed with the land manager in advance to avoid risk to other greenspace users. You may need to consider provision for children settling in, who may need a parent with them and risk assess this accordingly.

7. Social distancing in public spaces. Keeping safe is a mutual responsibility. Your children will need to practice measures such as how to move to one-side, away from the kerb as a group, to allow other users to pass by safely. If you use a greenspace site, ensure your activities are at least 2m away from paths, to enable other users to safely use them. If a path cuts through the space you use, work with your group, to manage this sensibly. You cannot prevent the public from using a path, but you can re-think how and where your group will play. Social distancing will apply to any member of the public who stops to chat. Children will need to remember and practice this too, with support of staff.

8. Emergency procedures. Double check that the designated safe place will still be able to accommodate your group. If not, you will need to find an alternative.

9. If you need further advice. Everyone has been through a lot of changes and adaptations with the COVID-19 lockdown and re-opening of education and childcare establishments. If you have any questions or are concerned about any aspect of your use of greenspace, then the following people may be able to help you to think through and plan your approach:

- Elizabeth Henderson Email: EHenderson@aberdeencity.gov.uk
- Juliet Robertson Email: julietrobertson@btinternet.com
- Your Locality Lead Office

The following contacts are for Aberdeen City Council managed greenspaces:

- ACC countryside areas: City Countryside Ranger Service, Email: countrysideranger@aberdeencity.gov.uk
- ACC parks: Alan Findlay, Email: AlanFindlay@aberdeencity.gov.uk
- Aberdeen Beach, Lorna Paul, Email: LoPaul@aberdeencity.gov.uk

If your greenspace is not on Aberdeen City managed land, then you will need to contact the owner/manager of the greenspace you are using.

Further updates. The advice changes very rapidly at the moment from national government as the research, information and infection rates change. Keep checking the national guidance regularly and amend your procedures and risk benefit assessments accordingly.