



My Active World

Move more to
nurture happy and
healthy children



Forewords



The Scottish Government's ambition is for Scotland to be the best place to grow up; a nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people – in homes, nurseries, schools and communities.

My Active World is a resource that can support practitioners to promote the rights our children have to be healthy and to experience play. We know the benefits that being physically active can bring for young children, in terms of their mental and physical health, cognitive development and their overall wellbeing. Active play also supports wider learning by boosting creativity, socialising, imagination and understanding.

Lifelong healthy habits are established when children have the opportunity to move their bodies, explore the world around them and eat healthily in their early years. This means that with the expanded hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC), providers have an ideal opportunity to deliver a high-quality experience for our children and to promote the development of these positive habits from a very early age.

It's particularly important to focus on encouraging and supporting young girls. We know that through being active from an early age girls form social connections and build friendships, have opportunities to explore their local environment but most importantly have fun.

This guidance brings together practical, real-life examples provided by ELC settings and out of school clubs from all across Scotland to inspire practitioners to bring more movement and physical activity into their own settings. It also complements other priorities such as the delivery of healthy meals and snacks for children in their ELC settings and increasing children's daily access to stimulating outdoor environments where they can play, relax, take risks, learn and explore.

I would like to thank the Care Inspectorate for their work in shaping this guidance and thank the settings featured for so generously sharing their experience and practice.

I hope it assists in making it easier for children to be able to access physical activity in their daily routines in ELC.

Clare Haughey MSP

Minister for Children and Young People



The Care Inspectorate's vision is for world-class social care for children in Scotland, where everyone, in every community, experiences high-quality care, support and learning, tailored to their rights, needs and wishes. We aim to achieve that by working towards our four strategic outcomes to ensure: high-quality care for all; improving outcomes for all; everyone's rights are realised and respected; and our people are skilled, confident and well supported.

We recognise that the early years are a vitally important time to encourage children to develop an enjoyment and interest in physical activity which will last into their adult years. Babies are born to move, and this starts even before birth. Being physically active supports children to learn about themselves and the world around them. It helps them to develop healthy bodies and minds as well as the personal and social skills they need.

This resource is timely and gives messages about the importance of children being physically active. How individuals develop is their own story and is influenced by a variety of factors including their environment and experiences. It is therefore vital that the messages children receive about activity in their childcare setting are positive and promote their natural behaviour.

In recognising the positive impact of the provision of early learning and childcare and school-aged childcare, it is important that we plan opportunities for children to be active across their whole day. We know that without careful thought and encouragement there is the potential for children to spend much of their time sedentary with only brief periods of planned activity.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, physical inactivity was believed to be the fourth leading cause of death worldwide. Learning from the pandemic points to a link between obesity and poorer outcomes. It is therefore more important than ever that we provide the support and environments which excite and encourage a healthy and active lifestyle for children from a very young age.

This resource offers a wealth of fun ways to be physically active. By highlighting examples of good practice, we aim to promote a culture where everyone can learn from each other.

I would like to thank all the people who have worked with us to create this resource and share their stories. The contributions from children, young people, parents, guardians, carers, practitioners and service providers have been invaluable. I hope that you will enjoy this resource and find it both useful and fun.

Edith Macintosh

Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement, Care Inspectorate



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1. Introduction

A child's right to be active

Why is it important to consider the [Health and Social Care Standards](#), and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) when planning your approaches to promoting physical activity in your service?

In developing this resource, we recognise that children's rights are central to every aspect of care, play and learning provision across all service types. We have used the Health and Social Care Standards alongside the principles of the UNCRC, to illustrate children's right to be active and to attain the highest standards of health and wellbeing.

We have identified four Health and Social Care Standards which are particularly relevant in respect of the benefits of physical activity.

- 1.1 I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health status, race, background or sexual orientation.
- 1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.
- 1.31 As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open-ended and natural materials.
- 2.24 I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life.

However, there are many more that give us the opportunity to think about children's activity and the benefits this can have to their all-round development when we explore the standards a bit further. For example, the principles encourage us to consider themes around privacy and dignity, compassion, as well as responsive care and wellbeing.

We have also identified UNCRC articles in Section 5, that we think are particularly relevant. It is important to get to know all the Health and Social Care Standards and the UNCRC articles and how these may apply in different situations.

There are four general principles of children's rights.

- **Non-discrimination**
Children must be protected from discrimination and treated fairly whoever they are.
- **Best interests of the child**
When making any decision, adults – including governments and businesses – must do what is best for children rather than themselves.
- **Survival and development**
Children must be supported to grow up into what they want to be without harmful interference.
- **Respect for children's views**
Children have opinions that must be taken into account in all the things they care about.

There are also many versions of the UNCRC that have been adapted for use with children that you may find it helpful to access. [The Children and Young People's Commissioner website](#) has a range of accessible documents that can help in exploring and promoting a rights-based approach with children, their families and your staff.

We have also included direct links to the [Health and Social Care Standards](#) and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). This is to help you see how all the aspects link together.

Improvement and support questions

How do we use the Health and Social Care Standards and the UNCRC to develop our thinking around physical activity in our setting?

How might our thinking develop if we explore the Health and Social Care Standards and the UNCRC further?

What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any action that requires us to use energy to move muscles and our body. Different levels of physical activity intensity have different health benefits, with activity which is described as moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) being more beneficial than light activity.

The infographics from the Chief Medical Officers for the UK, demonstrate the types of activities and the duration children should be involved in across their day. (See Figure 1)

Think about the resources you already have in your service that promote physical activity, are these readily available for children or do they come out as part of planned activity only? Or are there resources that promote physical activity available at all times? Of course, being active doesn't have to involve resources. Movement, and in particular music and movement, is a great way to get children and staff to feel energised and add some activity into their routine.

We recognise that the early years is a vitally important time to encourage children to develop an enjoyment and interest in physical activity which will last into their adult years. Babies are born to move, even before birth, and their movements will become increasingly powerful, complex and refined. How individuals develop is their own story and is influenced by a variety of factors including their environment and experience. It is therefore vital that the messages children receive about activity in their childcare setting are positive and promote their natural behaviour.

"Children learn with their bodies before they learn with their brains and in this sense, movement is our first language." (Goddard Blythe, Movement Your Child's First Language)

Young children express their feelings and needs physically, and research shows that non-verbal language continues to be a major contributor to effective communication for the rest of our lives. The skills of posture, balance and coordination are all needed to support the development of other movements such as hand-eye coordination, walking and even keeping still. Children need to have a wide variety of opportunities to experience activities which support this development.

We know that children's developmental needs have not changed over time. However, we can see that changes to modern life have had an impact on children's experiences. Changes such as the increased use of cars, the variety of technological devices and heightened fears about risky play have influenced children's experiences.

When we talk about physical activity for children, we are not just talking about those activities that are structured and planned. For young children, physical activity is about playing and having opportunities to move about and explore the world around them. It is therefore important that we encourage children to be as active as possible with the aim of encouraging a lifelong interest and enjoyment of physical activity.

A physically active child is one who does not spend long periods of time in places which restrict their movement such as buggies, car seats or doing lots of stationary activities. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the effect of inactivity on health. It is widely acknowledged that too much time sitting down can have a detrimental effect on health. The term used to describe this behaviour is sedentary and is not just defined as the absence of moderate or vigorous physical activity. It includes everyday activities such as watching television, reading, working on a computer and travelling in a car. Adults have also become much more concerned about the amount of time spent on devices such as mobile phones, tablets and games consoles.

Being physically active supports children to learn about themselves and the world around them. It helps them to develop healthy bodies and minds as well as the personal and social skills they need. Many of us think better when we move and children are the same, yet many adults consider wiggling and fidgeting to be signs of poor concentration. Activity should be a regular part of the child's daily life, when they *"will be encouraged to wiggle, giggle and fidget if they need: to walk in uneven lines; and even to bounce, shake and slouch from time to time, since that's what children are biologically engineered to do"*. (Sahlberg & Doyle, Let the Children Play)

Movement helps young children to learn where their body begins and ends and to develop a sense of where they are in space. Children learn best from their experiences and are often seen to repeat what they're doing, for example dropping things from their highchair again and again - we call this schematic play. Further reading on this aspect of children's development can be found on [Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub](#).

For helpful hints and tips to support our youngest children to be active go to the NHS website [Start 4 life, Baby Moves](#).

Improvement and support questions

How many different ways of physical communication can we see in our children?

Thinking about daily routines, how much time do our youngest children spend strapped into car seats, pushchairs or highchairs?

How do we know that the children we care for are physically active across their day?

How can we use children's natural development to encourage physical activity into their day?



How much physical activity do children need?

Under-5s and Infants (less than 1 year):

- Infants should be physically active several times every day in a variety of ways, including interactive floor-based activity, for example crawling.
- For infants not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day while awake (and other movements such as reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling themselves independently, or rolling over); more is better.

NB: Tummy time may be unfamiliar to babies at first, but can be increased gradually, starting from a minute or two at a time, as the baby becomes used to it. Babies should not sleep on their tummies.

Toddlers (1-2 years)

- Toddlers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities at any intensity, including active and outdoor play, spread throughout the day; more is better.

Pre-schoolers (3-4 years)

- Pre-schoolers should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) per day in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active and outdoor play. More is better; the 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.

Children and Young People (5-18 years)

- Children and young people should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. This can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports.
- Children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength.
- Children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity.

Source: [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines](#)

We know that children's lifestyles have changed considerably over the past 20 years. The 2019 [report from the NHS's Information Services Division](#) highlights the continued concern over levels of overweight and obesity among children in Scotland.

Obesity during childhood is a health concern, and it can also lead to physical and mental health problems throughout adulthood. We want children to have a positive self-image and make healthy choices without feeling they are being judged. We do not want children to be worrying about whether they are 'fat'. We do know that children will compare themselves to others and to the images portrayed in the media, even from a very young age. It is important that the messages we give children promote positive self-esteem and help them feel included, focusing on what they can achieve.

Building in increased opportunities for activity across your day makes this part of a healthy routine. Being overweight or obese are not the only indicators of poor health and being underweight in childhood can also be a cause for concern, indicating poor nutritional intake and/or underlying medical problems. It is important that you get to know your children well so you can recognise when there may be a change that might give cause for concern. There are now substantial inequalities in child unhealthy weight across Scotland. Since 2001/02, the proportion of Primary 1 children at risk of being overweight or obese has increased in the most deprived areas but decreased in the least deprived areas.

Analysis from national diet surveys indicates that adults on a low income in Scotland consume fewer fruit and vegetables, consume more (non-diet) soft drinks and have an increased percentage of their energy consumption from sugary foods and snacks. Households in the most deprived areas also eat fewer fruit and vegetables and less oily-rich fish than households in the least deprived areas. When thinking about improving the overall health of children we need to support families to eat well. We have supported the development and promotion of resources to encourage good nutrition for children – [Food Matters](#) and [Setting the table](#) highlight the importance of working together with families to improve children's nutrition. It is our aim that My Active World will complement the good work already being promoted in the sector to support children's health and wellbeing.

Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

Active children are healthy, happy,
school ready and sleep better



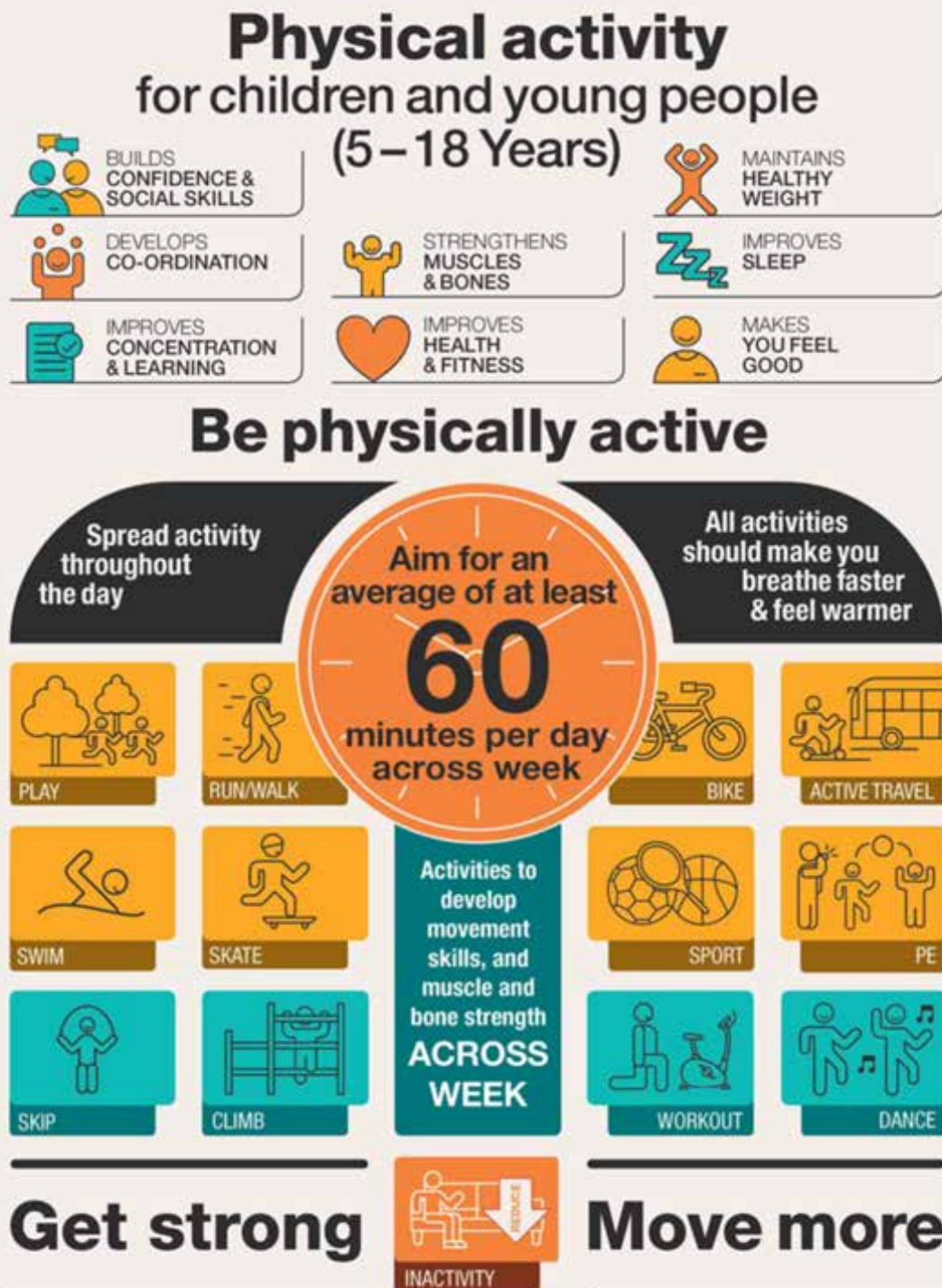
Every movement counts



Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

Figure 1



Find ways to help all children and young people accumulate an average of at least 60 minutes physical activity per day across the week

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

How to use this resource

We have developed this resource for people who work in early learning and childcare (ELC), children and their families. It is important to note that ELC includes childminders and school-aged childcare. The concept is simple, we need to be active to be healthy, we know activity promotes not just our physical wellness but also our mental health and wellbeing. Importantly, what we intend to do through this resource is to demonstrate the fun to be had from moving more. We are also keen to promote further examples of good practice through our online resources. So, if you have an experience you would like to share you can email us: myactiveworld@careinspectorate.gov.scot

In recognising the positive impact of the expansion of ELC hours it is important that we plan for opportunities for children to be active across their whole day. We know that without careful thought there is the potential for children to spend much of their time sedentary with only brief periods of planned activity.

In the resource [My World Outdoors](#) we encourage you to get outside with children and let them experience nature. We also encourage a risk-benefit approach to activities so children can be challenged and learn new skills to be confident adults. My Active World is designed to build on the good work already present in many children's settings. We hope through considering the examples in this resource that you will begin to create opportunities for children to be active across the whole day. We continue to encourage a risk-benefit approach to children's play and learning experiences and this includes their opportunities to be physically active.

You can read more about a positive approach to risk in play on the [Care Inspectorate website](#).

Our [Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare](#) highlights this in Quality indicator 2.1: Quality of the setting for play and learning:

"Positive approaches to the benefits of risky play underpin effective outdoor and physical play and learning experiences. Staff embrace a risk benefit approach and support children to safely engage in play to push their own boundaries and build self-confidence."

In this resource, we also highlight the work of the [Care About Physical Activity](#) team, who were involved in adult services helping people be more active in their care settings, and we thought this would be a good opportunity to apply the methodology within children's services. We hope that by highlighting the improvement methodology and sharing our examples with you, this will help you to

think about what you could do differently to encourage activity in your service. We had the opportunity to work with a service which was already working well with children but recognised it could do more to get the children moving. Hearing from the staff and children about the difference a small change has made to their experience is really encouraging.

We hope parents also find this resource helpful. While compiling this document, we had the privilege to meet with some parents and their children through the Down's Syndrome Support Group. Their experiences of the importance of activity and inclusion for their children will resonate with parents and practitioners alike.

The [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#) approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected and can realise their full potential. At home, in school or the wider community, every child and young person should be:



These eight factors are often referred to by their initial letters – SHANARRI. They are wellbeing indicators which help make it easier for children, families and the people working with them to discuss how a child or young person is doing at a point in time and if there is a need for support. Each child is unique and there is no set level of wellbeing that children should achieve. Wellbeing is influenced by children's individual experiences and changing needs as they grow.

Every example in the resource is of course part of the active indicator but we will highlight how the other indicators come in to play, (actively of course!). All the indicators will be relevant to most ELC activities if they are planned and executed appropriately.



Why does physical activity matter?

Each child is a unique individual with the right to live in a safe environment which supports them to achieve their full potential, enabling them to develop a variety of social and physical skills in a fun and engaging way.

There is an increasing volume of knowledge and research that reinforces the relationship between physical activity and our health. It is therefore important that children learn positive messages about activity and health, to reduce their chances of being obese in adulthood.

As well as helping us to feel better, there is evidence which shows the positive effect of physical activity on a range of conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and social isolation. For children, the benefits of regular physical activity include improved learning and attainment as well as better mental health and physical fitness.

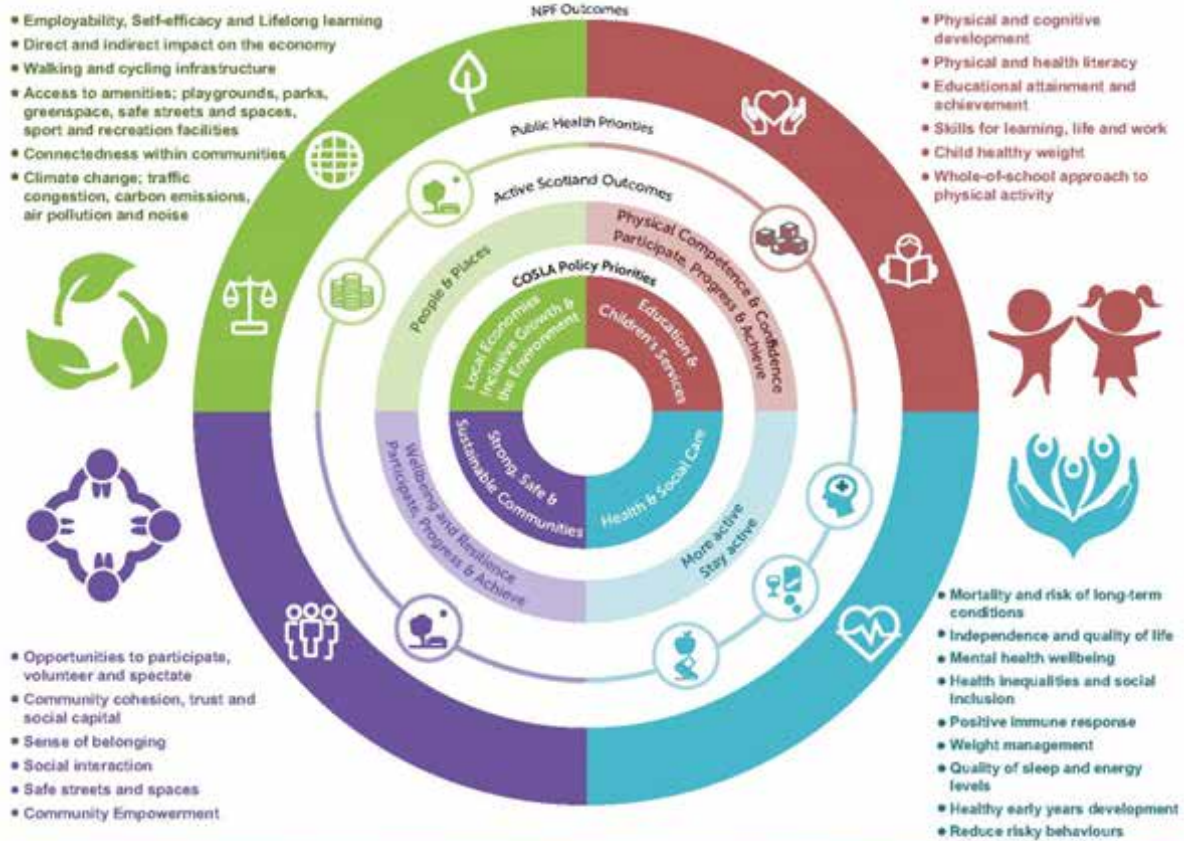
Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, physical inactivity was believed to be the fourth leading cause of death worldwide. Learning from the pandemic points to a link between obesity and poorer outcomes following infection. It is therefore more important than ever that we provide the support and environments, which encourage a healthy and active lifestyle from a very young age.

Drawing upon global evidence in 2019, UK Chief Medical Officers identified updated guidelines (replacing the previous guidelines from 2011) that cover the volume, frequency and type of activity required across life to achieve health benefits. These include revised guidance on what is expected for our youngest children, as well as highlighting activities which help to develop muscle strength and build healthy bones. The guidelines also reinforce the importance of the types of activities for all age groups, and for the first time include guidance for activity during pregnancy.

Evidence now demonstrates that there is no minimum amount of physical activity required to achieve some health benefits. The previous requirement for a 10-minute bout of activity is no longer valid and is no longer included in the guidelines. However, specific targets such as aiming to do at least 10 minutes at a time can be effective as a behavioural goal for people starting from low levels of activity. The guidelines emphasise the importance of regular activity and acknowledge that even small increases in activity can improve overall health and quality of life. They build in greater flexibility around how and when children can achieve the recommended levels of activity.

The Positive Contribution of Physical Activity and Sport to Scotland

Physical activity and sport provides a range of physical, mental, social, environmental and economic benefits:



Public Health
Scotland

COSLA

sportscotland
the national agency for sport

spòrs alba
an àghaidh brùthaidhean
na h-àghaidh brùthaidhean

How gender influences access to activity

It is also important to recognise the difference gender plays in respect of uptake and access to the range of benefits from physical activities. We know that women are less likely to take part in certain sporting activities and from a young age children lose confidence in their abilities. For example, there has been less investment in women's football and this is often an activity identified as one for boys rather than girls.

Education Scotland has a range of resources highlighting its work to support gender equal play which you can access on its [website](#).

An analysis published in [The Lancet Global Health](#), in 2018, noted: *"Across most countries, women are less active than men (global average of 31.7 per cent for inactive women vs 23.4 per cent for inactive men). Policies that tackle the gender gap in physical activity could therefore have a substantial impact on overall population health."*

While children can be influenced at a very young age as a result of gender stereotypes, it becomes more apparent when they get older. Having access to positive role models who promote activity for girls will be an essential part of the success of any programme to increase activity in girls.

We should also consider how we might support girls to feel more confident to join in physical activities. It is important to talk to the girls in your service, get to know if they have anxieties and work together to find an approach that works for them. The [Fit For Girls](#) programme, jointly undertaken by Sport Scotland and the Youth Sports trust, identified that: "Consultation and giving girls a voice is critical for engaging girls in PE, physical activity and sport. Evidence shows that, when low active girls were consulted about activity choice, this resulted in more positive experiences and engagement. Broadening consultation to include potential barriers to taking part in these activities may further help increase participation. Consultation with girls was a key component of the training and implementation of the Fit for Girls programme and as a result, consultation with girls saw great improvements. Consultation with girls in settings could have great benefits to them becoming involved in physical activity in the setting and more active throughout adulthood."

The website [This Girl Can](#), has a range of resources and ideas for activities to encourage girls and women to be involved in sport and generally be active in ways that suits them.

You can read more about gender neutral play in [Gender Equal Play in early learning and childcare](#), an improvement resource that promotes gender equality in how children experience ELC and gives people working in ELC practical tips on avoiding gender stereotyping.

Improvement and support questions

How might our personal attitudes to gender impact on our day-to-day practice with children?

What do we notice about the impact of gender stereotypes on the participation in activity in our service? How might we address this?

2. An inspector's personal reflection



One of our inspectors, Lorraine Hendry, shares her childhood memories of physical activity with us as part of this work. Although not always positive, Lorraine describes how she found enjoyment through fun, everyday activities that were within her capability. She continues to enjoy similar recreational activities

as an adult, influenced by her childhood experiences. Lorraine lives and works in North Aberdeenshire.

"I have very happy memories of my childhood and was lucky enough to spend my early years growing up on a croft in the North East of Scotland. This provided lots of opportunities for exploring outdoors and playing with my sister. However, as a young child I found it difficult to walk and run around. Despite numerous visits to specialists, no one was ever able to tell my parents why. I dreaded play time, games and physical education at school. I was always last to be picked for team games and was never invited to join in the ball games or running races with my friends. Sports days were a nightmare and although I was allowed to start further along the field, almost at the end of the track, I still came in last. Swimming was hated, and I was left to flounder in the shallow end while my classmates received lessons.

"Fortunately, there were other ways for me to be active. I loved feeding the animals with my mum and helping my dad around the croft. Summer picnics and playing on the garden swing were great fun. My sister and I created dance routines to the latest tunes on Top of the Pops, and these were performed on the garden wall. As I grew older, I discovered cycling. This increased my mobility and independence, and it meant I could visit my friends and my granny. As an adult, I still enjoy cycling along the paths and routes near my home. I also continue to enjoy dance and regularly attend Zumba classes. I finally learned to swim and go to aquarobics at our local pool.

"I will never be able to run fast or walk at speed, and despite trying yoga and pilates, I will always have poor flexibility. However, I have found ways that I enjoy keeping active, which support my emotional health and wellbeing and help keep me fit.

"In my role as an inspector, helping services support children's health and wellbeing through fun, physical activities is really important. I was so pleased to read about children being supported to excel at their sports days in this resource despite some challenges and I hope you will think about my story and the others in this resource when thinking about innovative ways to help all children be active. Supporting children to develop skills and lifelong practices that will help keep them fit and well, now and in their future. Habits children establish in their formative years should help pave the way for a healthy life."

Improvement and support questions

How do our experiences of activity in childhood influence our behaviour as adults?

How can we use this understanding to support children's activity across their day?



3. Fun ways to move more

Tech time

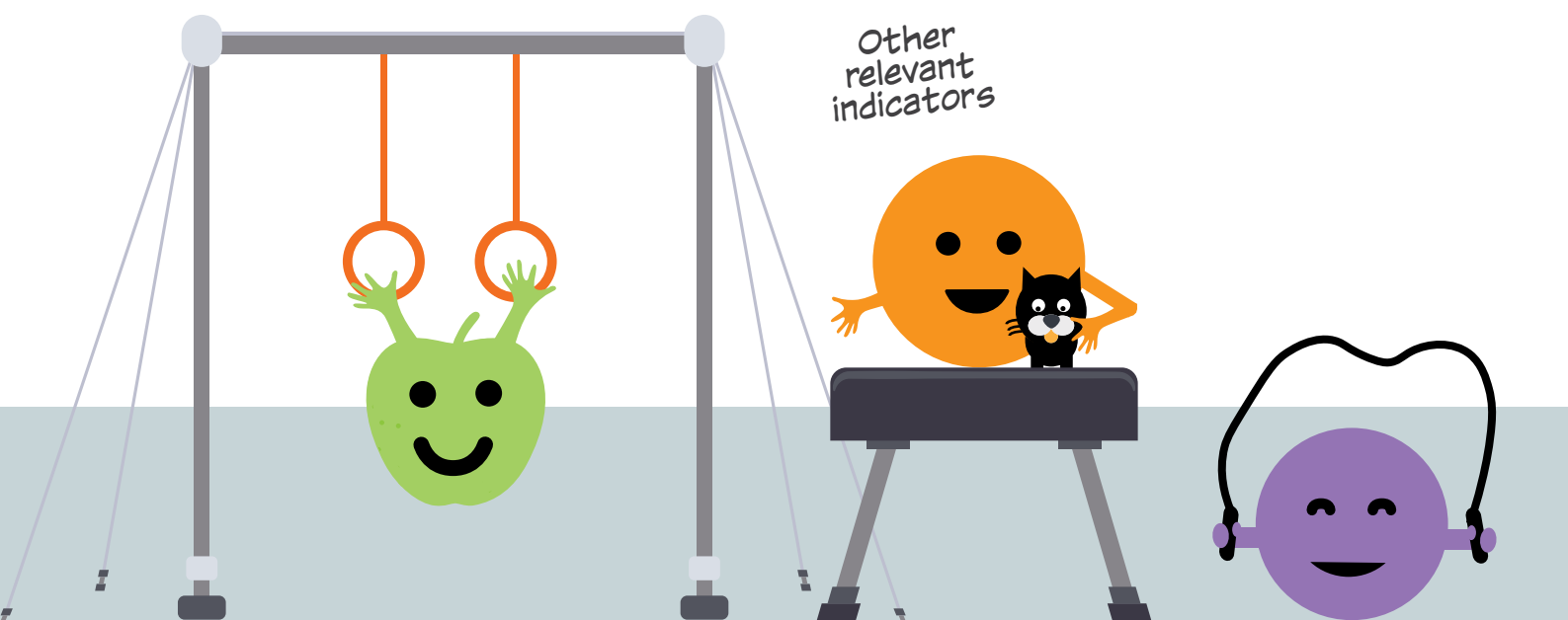
Simply Play@ Bathgate

Simply Play @ Bathgate is part of a West Lothian-wide voluntary organisation providing out of school care to school-aged children. The Bathgate club is registered to care for a maximum of 60 children aged between starting primary school and 14 years.

Karen Pattinson, manager, tells us about the work the service started when they noticed children were becoming less active and were choosing sedentary activity rather than moving about. Respecting children's wishes to use technology, the service uses this as an incentive.

"Tech time was introduced across the organisation to support lifetime habits of balance. Children have to take part in other activities before they can use a screen and, even then, the time is limited. Often children get into what they are doing and forget about the tech."

The service uses children's interests from home to create an environment which supported being active in various ways. Children are supported to be responsible in sharing their knowledge with peers. Gymnastics mats offer areas to practice existing or new skills, building strength, agility, flexibility and body awareness. Safety is a topic of discussion to support children to recognise risks and solutions for themselves.



The thrill of a challenge is used to engage this age group. Football games are organised by children each day. Group danceathons are fun and energetic, using current music and dance trends. Boot camps are hard work and competitive, introducing different movements to children who tend to avoid being active. Open-ended materials are available to freely create obstacle courses or dens which could continue from outdoors to inside.

Lifting, balancing, climbing and stretching are contributing to children's strength, coordination and confidence as they achieve their goals.

The variety of active opportunities are visible and so engaged children easily. Another factor contributing greatly to the engagement of this age group is the involvement of staff in the activities setting a good example to the children and not being afraid to look a bit silly. All activities are gender neutral with staff working with children to challenge stereotypes and beliefs, including all who want to be involved.

Karen adds: *"Staff joining in, being silly, having fun and trying things out influences children's willingness to take part. It models the behaviours we are trying to encourage."*



Yoga

ACE Place Nursery

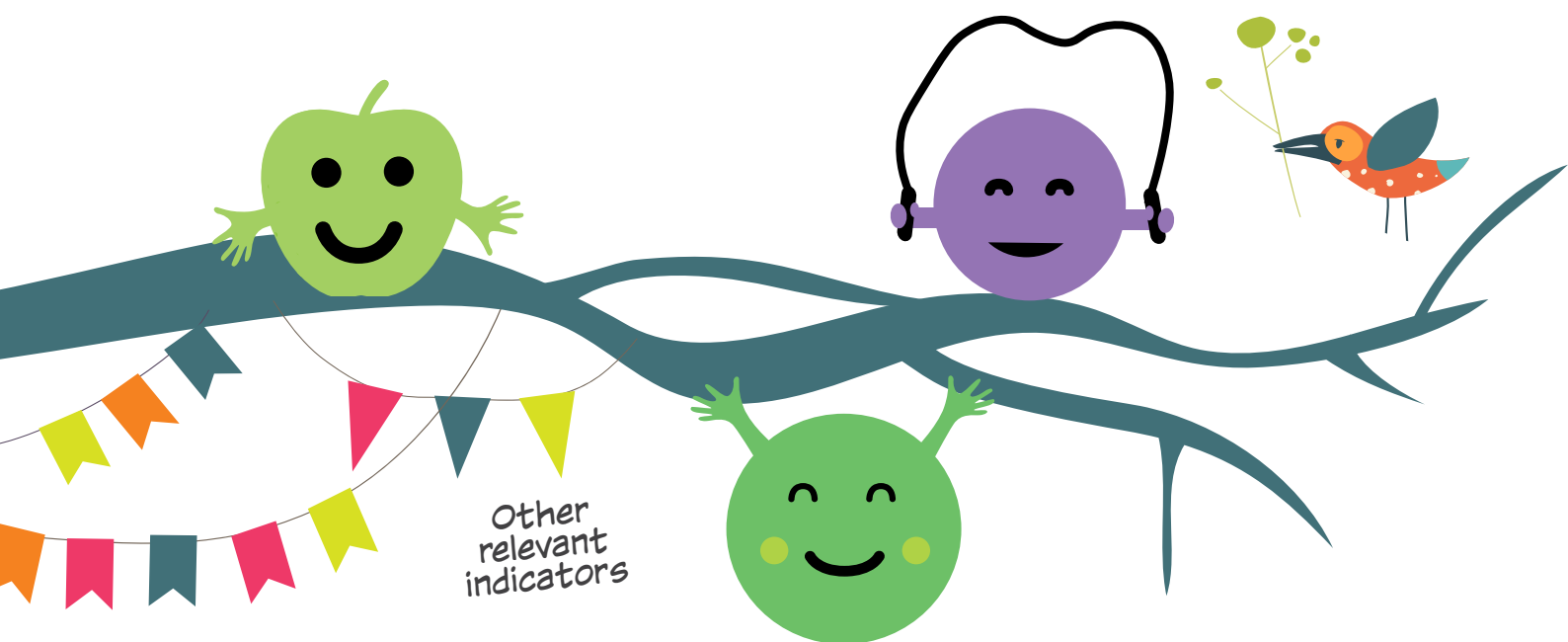
ACE Place Nursery in Rutherglen works in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and provides care for nursery children during term time and primary school children during holiday periods.

Alison Harkin, director, recognises the importance of activity for children and tells us about the nursery's yoga initiative. Staff were trained by a parent and the resulting activity has proved popular with children and families alike.

"Children at ACE Place Nursery spend most of their time outdoors and are not averse to a bit of exercise. We are always looking at ways to enhance children's experiences and have introduced yoga.

"Staff have been trained in leading yoga and children enjoy taking part in regular sessions with their friends. This can be as a wind down after a day out in our woodland site and children have also been known to do yoga outdoors, which they love and find fun!"

"Yoga is adapted to suit all our children, it can be calm and static or faster paced and energetic. So really it is something that everyone can take part in. Balance and coordination are also important in yoga, but of course there are fun ways of making sure this is appropriate to the children's abilities and provides challenge for those who are ready for it.



"We are lucky to have a parent who is a trained yoga teacher delivering classes for our children and their parents during our stay and play sessions. Yoga is a mind and body experience where children learn about their bodies and the importance of keeping fit. The class is fun and interactive and very popular with our children.

"Children learn about their internal organs and the role that they play in keeping their body fit and healthy, where the yoga teacher uses fun names to make this relevant.

"Exercise is beneficial in early years, with physical activity playing a vital role in supporting children's physical and social wellbeing. We feel yoga contributes towards children's mental and emotional wellbeing by encouraging them to take time to relax and reflect, a useful tool for them to draw on for many years to come.

"Children have been trying yoga at home with their families which provides a good prompt for discussion and learning. We encourage parents to get involved and look for ways to incorporate yoga into different situations outside the nursery. Some of our staff have been to yoga classes led by the nursery parent – who is a much harder task master for grown-ups and it's a really good workout!"

Improvement and support questions

What skills do our families have that they could share to improve children's physical activity?

How can we develop physical activities that are fun and support children's mental health and physical wellbeing?



Dough disco

St Andrews Nursery Class

St Andrews Nursery Class in Dumfries is registered to care for 48 children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The nursery's primary aim is for the children to have fun, but also to learn, be independent and have challenge.

Barbara Chierici-Black, nursery teacher, tells us their story.

"At St Andrews we want our children to experience a wide range of activities and experiences which encourage them to learn and develop life skills in a fun and inclusive way. We consulted with parents and found that many of them wanted their children to improve writing and pre-writing skills. We wanted to increase opportunities for this in the nursery and decided to use dough disco as a fun way to promote this. At the same time, we realised that other areas have to be developed first. So, we knew that including parents in what we were doing would be a very important part of the activity.

"We planned a 'Pop Pirate, Dough Disco' with our buddies in Primary 6 and sent home information about what we were doing and how the children would benefit from the dough disco. We held family learning sessions to share the importance of dough disco, show the parents how it is done and for them to take part with their children. We also gave them the recipe so that they could try it out at home.

"We made a leaflet which gave parents information about the benefits of a dough disco. We said that a dough disco strengthens muscles in the back, shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists and hands. This is essential for developing the upper body strength to be able to hold a pencil. Dough disco also strengthens and develops children's fine and gross motor dexterity, balance and hand-eye coordination as well as organisational skills. All of which help children to develop their bodies and brains to be able to move the pencil and make marks with skill. Using music also helps to stimulate brain development and helps us to feel happy.



"Each child is given some dough that they hold throughout the activity, the more dough the better because the heavier the dough, the greater the resistance. We first remind the children that the dough gym will help them to build up different muscles so that they are able to hold a pencil to help with drawing pictures and writing. The children choose the music we are going to move to. We have a picture sheet on the table, showing the moves and each move supports a different area of development, from shoulder pivot to pincer grip.

"The children decide which one we will do and then the adult leading the activity starts to model and call out instructions for the children to follow.

"The children have a real sense of achievement from this activity and in particular we can see that because it is something everyone can do together and its fun, children have become more confident about using different areas of the nursery. They are also able to do this independently and continue playing with the dough after the disco is finished. Children also like to choose different music types and we've observed that they choose to continue playing to music in other areas as well."

Children's comments

"Standing helps with our balance and it helps build our shoulder muscles."

"It helps with our other muscles. You can balance on one leg and do it."

"It makes me stronger, like the Hulk - you need muscles to lift things like building and also drawing and painting."

Parents' comments

"I learned the importance of these skills. We are going to make some at home."

"I loved this. My child has been doing it at home with playdough."

"I learned that writing involves the whole body, gross and fine motor skills."



On your bike

Play on Pedals is a partnership between Cycling UK, Cycling Scotland and Play Scotland. It is now delivered across much of Scotland, including in Edinburgh and Glasgow, reaching a diverse range of young people, families and communities. Cycling Scotland continues to roll out the training programme, funded by Transport Scotland, to local authorities across the country. It is currently working with 26 different authorities to deliver training in early years settings.

For more information, visit the [Play on Pedals website](#).

Step by Step Private Nursery

Step by Step Nursery in Cumbernauld recognises the importance of activity for children's health, they have been awarded a Gold Health Promotion Award by the NHS for its commitment to promoting healthy living for all the children.

Claire Irvine, nursery manager, tells us about one of the opportunities they promote with children to be physically active through cycling.

"Play on Pedals helps our children to start pedalling together. The fun and freedom of cycling helps them to develop key life skills, such as physical and mental wellbeing, and encourages families within our centre to make short journeys without a car. It also helps to break down the barriers children experience when participating in physical activity.

"Cycling together helps our families gain independence, maintain a healthy lifestyle and have a lot of fun too. Access to a sustainable, low-cost way to travel encourages them to leave the car at home. Cycling is not only a healthy way to travel, there are also many environmental benefits too."



Kildrum Family Learning Centre

Leona Maule, Depute Head of Centre at Kildrum Family Learning Centre, tells us about how the centre also used bicycles to encourage children and their families to be more active throughout the last year.

"Here at Kildrum Family Learning Centre we have continued to roll out the Play Together on Pedals programme with huge success. We now have roughly 30 per cent of our children in the 3-5 room peddling on the two-wheeler bikes and many more are confident on the balance bikes. This is a great skill and a very good activity to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

"During the lockdown, we encouraged parents and children to engage with online learning ideas, but we were conscious not to have everything on the computer. So we suggested various activities and experiences from across the curriculum that were low cost and simple to carry out at home, including if children had bikes at home to get out and use them.

"We recognised as a staff team that many parents may not have a bike or have cycled themselves since childhood. It's a big step to purchase a bike and we already had a successful bike lending scheme for the children, which was funded by our Scottish Attainment Challenge funding the previous year.

"This year, to encourage parental engagement and shared learning, we purchased two adult bikes to include in our learning programme. Staff did a charity bike ride to raise the funds needed to buy bikes and other equipment, such as helmets. We also got some balance bikes donated by the local community. Parents shared what a great experience it was to ride as a family, and they are keen to purchase their own bikes to continue this. We realised that it's also more likely that families will go out into the countryside if everyone has access to a bike.

"The excellence and equity lead also met with families on a one-to-one basis. At these meetings they shared the theory of the programme and delivered a small taster session to parents and their children. This helped share the benefits of balance bikes and their value in the success of early cycling.

"We found that not everyone realised that you could learn to ride a bike without using stabilisers first. Our staff have had training which supports children to master how to balance and they are great at sharing this with parents. We also shared bike maintenance tips through Teams and the children shared their success with their parents/carers using this platform also.

"We found that the benefits of this programme came quickly. We have a great garden area with plenty of space and we painted a road on the concrete area so that children can practice safely before going out on the roads. This was great for developing resilience as some of the children were super cautious and reluctant to get back on if they fell off. So we had to overcome that. Once they had mastered this small area, we took them to the big car park where they could go a longer distance. We also ran workshops on risky play so that children and parents could learn to manage their own risk.

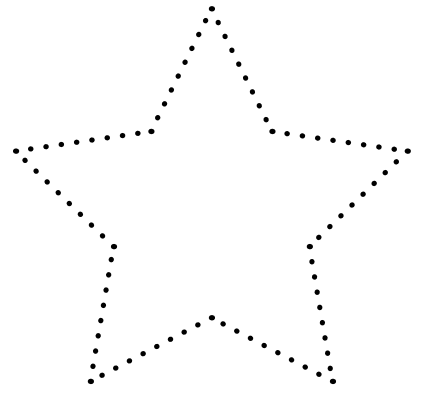
"Children and their families have been able to spend time being active outside together and this has helped build personal confidence and relationships."

Improvement and support questions

What do we know about how our families travel to our setting?

What could we do to encourage families to use their journey to our setting as an opportunity to be physically active?





Fitba

Football

St Andrews Nursery Class

Wellpark Children's Centre in Greenock, Inverclyde, is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 15 children aged two years of age up to primary school age. They provide football coaching supported by Morton Football Club coaches.

Ann-Marie Cunningham, Head of Centre, tells us about the benefit of football sessions the centre offers as part of an holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

"Taking part in the football sessions our children develop physical skills in coordination and movement, improved balance, large motor control and how their body feels during exercise such as their heart beating faster. This activity is fun and tailored to their interests and we hope that these early physical experiences will reinforce the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and encourage children to engage in physical activity in their later years.

"Staff engaged in professional reading around the benefits of physical activity for children, this included children's improved mental wellbeing. They observed that children were happier, had improved emotional understanding and were able to better negotiate within social situations.

"All children who attend the nursery engage with football and staff support those who are reluctant to take part. Due to the extended opportunity to have football over a period of a year, children became comfortable with the programme and engaged well at their own pace. The programme was available for all children and was adjusted to suit every child's physical needs.

"Parents were invited to attend family football fun sessions throughout the programme, which were well attended and extremely positive."

"Some parents engaged with community sessions outwith the nursery, reinforcing the success of the programme and encouraging lifelong healthy habits with physical activity. Evaluations from parents told us that the programme would not have been readily accessible for some families. Parents felt that having this opportunity encouraged their children to engage more in physical activity outwith nursery, such as a trip to the local park.

"We also encouraged the children to evaluate the programme using a voting system, which allowed their voices to be heard. Children gave positive feedback with most being able to share their experiences and discuss their favourite part of the programme with staff and parents.

"Staff tracked children's skills such as balance, ability to kick a ball and listening. Almost all children made very good progress in these areas."

Parent's comment

"It was a great opportunity to have fun with my child."

Children's comments

"I like playing football outside." Andrew, 4

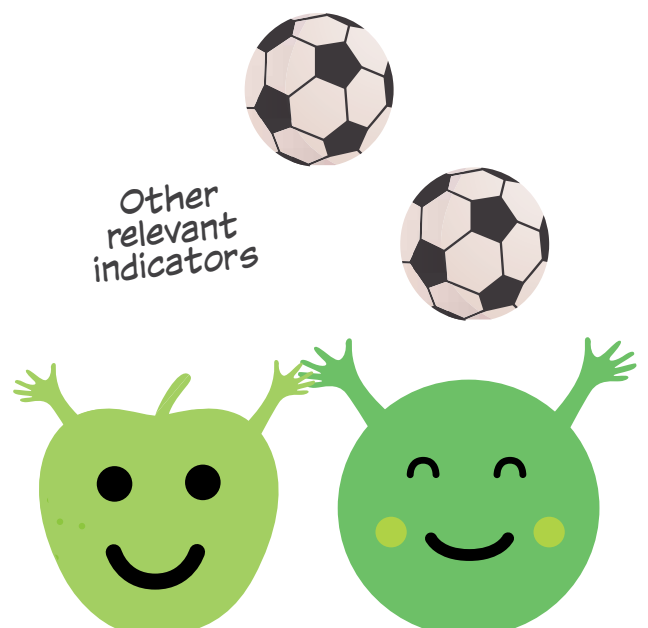
"I liked the floor is lava game the best, I am best at stopping the ball and freezing." Kerr, 4

"I like to kick the ball; Paddy is fun, and he likes to kick the ball too." Abi, 4

Please note that recent changes to Scottish FA guidelines in respect of children heading footballs include no heading practice in children's football (primary school age children) and a graduated approach to heading in the youth ages (secondary school age children). For more information on this guidance, visit the [Scottish FA website](#).

Improvement and support question

What community resources or programmes are available in our area that could help children be more physically active while learning new skills?



Go outside

Outdoor training

Pauline McNally, childminder

Pauline McNally is a childminder who lives and works in Newmains, Wishaw. We spoke with Pauline about how she involves the families in her service to promote active play opportunities for children.

"My parents have been encouraged to take part in outdoor training along with me, which supports them and their child in having a better understanding of the benefits of being outdoors. As a result, parents and children access the woods nearby more often to explore our woodland walks.

"Outdoor activities, such as a scavenger hunt, provide children in my service with some of the best learning opportunities through play. Children develop their natural curiosity, while being active.

"Being active in the fresh air benefits children's emotional wellbeing and their physical health. Children's sleep, coordination, fine and large motor skills, including muscle strength, are all improved.

"Children appear happier while being physically active. They love the freedom and space that the outdoors provide and are keen to share the adventures they've taken part in with their parents. Being active outdoors is good for our own wellbeing, makes us feel better and provides a positive experience for children."

Children's comments

"I wish I could stay in the woods every day." Millie, 4



"I like wearing my wellies to splash in the puddles." Victoria, 3

Parent's comment

"My child and I had so much fun."

Improvement and support question

When supporting children to be creative outdoors, how do we ensure a balance of physical activity in their exploration?



Other
relevant
indicators

Outdoor play

Teenie Tots Childminding

Teenie Tots Childminding is operated by Christine Brown from her home in Angus. She is registered to provide care to a maximum of six children under 16.

Christine tells us about the opportunities she provides for children to be active in the garden and further afield. She uses the learning from active play outdoors to support their learning and development in linked activities indoors, ensuring that parents are involved to promote learning opportunities at home.

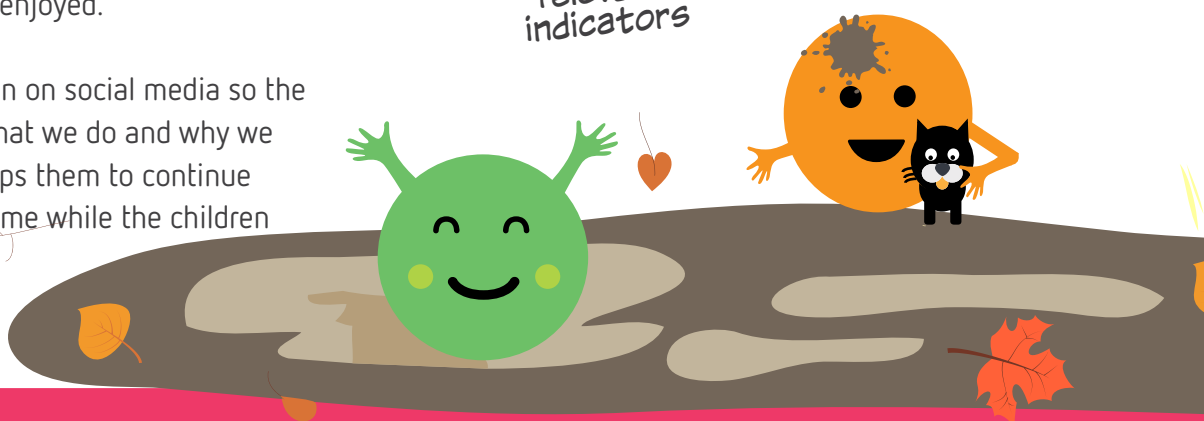
"All of the children are involved in planting and growing opportunities, which get them outdoors being physically active, digging in the soil and creating planters. This supports them to be active, developing their gross and fine motor skills. We use items from the garden to make healthy snacks. The children all take part in chopping up the fruit and vegetable they have planted and looked after. It also helps promote independence and take responsibility for the activity while learning about keeping safe.

"We do lots of simple physical activities and the children really enjoy playing in the mud kitchen. These activities are fun for the children and we always talk about what and how they are learning."

"I always follow the children's interest and support them to make choices about their activities. The children spoke about autumn, and this led to developing our indoor and outdoor loose parts play opportunities. We had a scavenger hunt during our walk to a local wood where we collected leaves, conkers and twigs and brought them back to the house. One child spoke about conkers and went hunting for some with his dad and brought them back for us all to use. After the scavenger hunt the children created activities using the conkers in a tuff tray and a game rolling the conkers through cardboard tubes. This provided opportunities for the children to transport items around the playroom from one activity to another, which the children really enjoyed.

"I share information on social media so the parents can see what we do and why we do it. This also helps them to continue the activities at home while the children are interested."

Other
relevant
indicators



Improvement and support questions

How do we encourage children to explore and move around their environment?

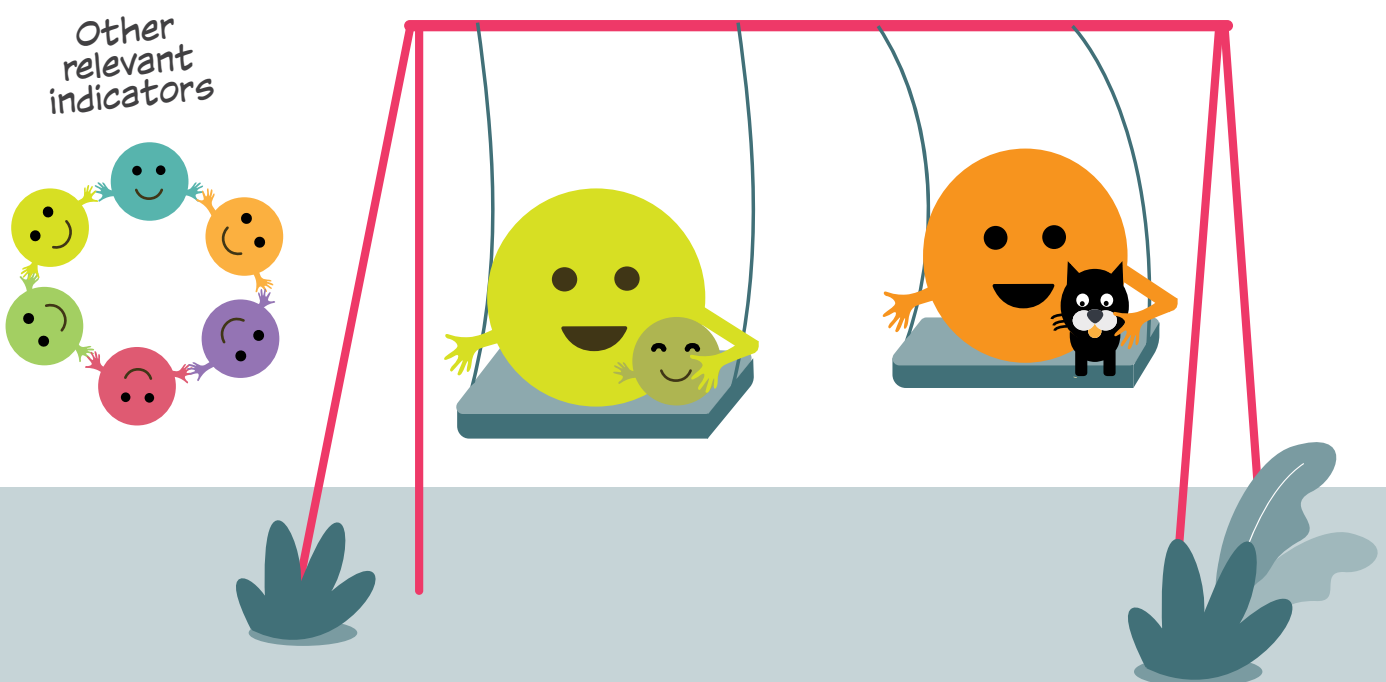
How do we use relevant theory to support children to be physically active across their day?

Outdoor play

The Childminding Nature Group

The Childminding Nature Group was set up by childminders delivering services within West Lothian. Brought together by the common aims of getting children outdoors in the fresh air with new friends, while also having some adult conversation to share ideas and support each other, the group has become a resource for other local childminders to access.

While the weekly group times offer pre-school children opportunities to explore natural environments, a focus is placed on getting to where they want to base themselves that session. The group chooses a different venue each week from local country parks to beaches and playparks. This offers a variety of



challenge and interest, as seasons and weather change. After parking the cars, children are supported on their walk to the planned destination. Differing age groups are respected as they have time and freedom to explore as they go, allowing their curiosity to lead the way. They could climb over tree roots, stomp through puddles, balance along benches and use ramps to gather speed. All of which provide opportunities to build strength and coordination, while gaining confidence in their own ability to keep themselves safe. Even walking in wellies was a new experience for younger children, requiring more thought and balance.

The group is mindful of babies' needs, offering areas outwith buggies to sit and rest if needed. Babies who are not yet mobile are able to actively engage with their surroundings by reaching, stretching and rolling to achieve their aim. Babies and toddlers are included by being encouraged to walk and crawl if they wish, the empty buggies providing great transport for resources.

One childminder describes the benefits of being active outdoors for both children and childminders. *"Parents report that children sleep better after our group, children are happier and more able to manage different surfaces. New children joining the group often just watch as the environment feels strange to them. But they slowly follow the others and usually end up asking for the forest. Having some company makes the time less stressful for the adults too as we all help each other. And we feel like we've had some fresh air and movement."*

Improvement and support question

When moving children's experiences outdoors, how can we promote opportunities to be physically active while ensuring we don't just replicate indoor activities outdoors?



Go on an adventure

Promoting adventurous play

Lecropt Nursery

Lecropt Nursery, in Bridge of Allan, is registered to care for 47 children aged from three months to those not yet attending primary school.

Vicki Allan, Nursery Manager, and Nicola Hamilton, Deputy Manager, tell us about their approach to risk to enable children to be more adventurous in their play.

"At Lecropt we have a strong focus on helping all our children to develop the knowledge and skills they will need in a changing society. Our staff have been working with each other, parents and the children to provide children with a greater variety of open-ended and adventurous activities and increased opportunities to explore the world around us. This has helped children to develop skills such as resilience and creativity, as well as to be more cooperative with each other.

"We realised that staff were not as confident about allowing children to take part in activities which were regarded as risky, such as climbing, as we would like. We were aware that this meant that sometimes they were stopping children from trying things out. Rather than encouraging children to think for themselves, staff were telling them what to do."

"We did research and we worked with parents, children and staff to develop our adventurous play policy. Now, staff are more confident about creating environments which support children to explore what they can physically do.



“For example, a lot of our children like to climb, so our staff work with the children to enable them to climb safely both indoors and outdoors. We involve children in assessing the risks and benefits of what they’re doing so they are learning to keep themselves safe. They really understand the consequences of what they’re doing both for themselves and others. They are good at solving problems, such as considering how to stabilise a wobbly bridge.

“Staff question more, rather than directing, for example they may say ‘that’s wobbly, what could you do to fix it?’ We’ve noticed that children are more cooperative with one another and like to help each other out when they’re involved in activities such as climbing trees.

“All children are included and enabled to be active and adventurous. We don’t have direct access to outside from the playrooms, so now we have a member of staff outside all day. Children choose when they want to go out themselves and can get their coats and wellies by themselves. They are more independent and have more choice. We have also made the garden more accessible for children who are less mobile than the others, so all children can actively explore.

“Staff make more use of carriers so that children can get to places where buggies can’t. We feel that it’s really important for children to get to know their local area, so we have been exploring the local community. As well as the nearby woods and parks, we also go on adventures to a well-known cave. The children are very good at walking the route safely.

“We appreciated that we had to work with parents so that they were confident that we were keeping their children safe. This meant that we had to think about the language we were using. We thought that talking about risky play wasn’t a helpful way of describing what we were doing, so we started talking about adventurous play. We consulted parents and found that they were really supportive and were really keen for us to take this forward. When new parents come, they are shown what happens and we make sure that they know that accidents can happen. We always try to respect parents’ wishes and we involve them in our evaluations.”



Julie Anderson, a parent at the nursery, tells us: "For us as parents, one of the most important aspects that we want our children to develop is their confidence. Not just confidence in themselves but confidence to explore the world around them and access all the opportunities life has to offer which can sometimes be daunting.

"Nurturing and promoting adventurous play as well as encouraging our children to give things a try from an early age sets up positive health and wellbeing and prepares them for growing up in a challenging world. Building resilience has never been more important in society."

Improvement and support questions

What concerns do we have about children's safety?

What can we do to ensure we don't limit children unnecessarily when participating in more adventurous play?

How do we overcome our anxieties and those of parents regarding children's safety?

What approaches do we have to build resilience in our children and ourselves?



Bear hunt

Gillian Brand and Julie Wasiak are two childminders who live and work in Dunfermline.

They were concerned that parents were missing the opportunity to be involved in their child's care during the lockdowns. To address this, they created a film around the popular children's story *Going on a Bear Hunt*, by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, that they shared with parents. The aim was to keep families involved but it also demonstrates how using popular stories or rhymes can be used to get children moving.

The film shows that you can encourage movement in different environments as we see the children in the woods, on the beach as well as outside in the snow. It was also a great way to show parents that you can have fun in all weathers. Children were involved in choosing where the adventure would take place and picked whether they would go to the woods or the beach.

Gillian and Julie tell us that they understand and promote the positive benefits of spending time outdoors in the fresh air. This is particularly important while trying to limit the spread of Covid-19, however the benefits of being active outdoors are much more than infection prevention.

Gillian and Julie tell us: "Since the pandemic we have embraced the outdoors, sharing the many benefits with our children. We regularly take the children to the woods and other places such as the beach. On our walks children often talked about going on a hunt and one day Julie started reciting the story. Since then it has become a favourite.

"We have also used other stories to encourage activity, such as the *Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson, which we used to create a treasure hunt by hiding different animals in the forest for the children to find. During our adventures we talked to the children about how they were feeling and got them to be aware of their heart beating faster. This helped them become aware of the importance of a healthy heart.

"We found that children's movement skills became better as they learned what they could do with their bodies and this helped to build confidence and a sense of achievement when they did something they had previously found tricky. Turning a walk into a story adventure also encouraged the younger children to be less reliant on their pushchair and they are now able to walk much further. This in turn means that they are sleeping much better.

"Being out in the natural environment supports the children's wellbeing as they are generally calmer and more content outdoors. Some of the children find being in a confined indoor environment

challenging and being outdoors helps them immensely as they are able to express themselves and move. Going out for a walk, during lockdown, helped children meet other people safely and helped to reduce isolation.”

You can view the video made with the children on our [Hub website](#).

Improvement and support questions

How could we use our children’s love of literature to encourage physical activity in our service?

What other interests might children have that we could use to develop a love of being active?



Inclusion and activity

Down's Syndrome Support Group

We were delighted to have the opportunity to meet with children and families who are members of the Down's Syndrome Support Group at one of their monthly get togethers. The group all have a child with Down's syndrome and meet regularly to have fun and offer support. Our visit took place at the Because Everyone Counts (BECS) soft play centre. BECS is a charity that aims to "provide children aged 0-12 living in the North East with a number of exciting opportunities to keep them active, have fun, meet new friends and develop an understanding about why we are all different. By offering public play as well as working with many local charities, schools and groups we aim to increase inclusion through play."

During our visit, children were enjoying climbing and sliding on the equipment with their friends and siblings. Younger children could enjoy some tummy time on the floor or toddler section or experience the sensory activities in the quiet space. We spoke with the parents about why physical activity matters to them and their children.

Holly's mum says: "There are the obvious physical health benefits to being active but for me it is the mental health benefits to being active. Allowing the kids to be free and out of the confines of our living room, to discover new things and places and see other kids, which as an only child she doesn't get exposure to at home."

Daniel's mum, Sonia, tells us: "It's great for my son's gross motor skills and his mental wellbeing. Having the opportunity to run and tumble in a safe environment builds his confidence too. Seeing other children and copying them seems to be how he learns best, being in a mainstream nursery has really improved his confidence and physical abilities."



While visiting the group, we also asked parents, who had children attending childcare services, about what staff did well to ensure their children were included along with their peers.

Holly has the opportunity to attend a number of local activity groups and her mum tells us what the staff do well to ensure Holly is included and can participate fully in activities.

"Tailoring the class to abilities of the babies rather than their ages, so instead of saying younger babies or older babies, staff use different language such as those sitting or those unable to hold their heads. Holly is one of the oldest, but she is small and cannot sit. It's a language change but it includes us.

"They adapt moves to suit Holly's development without excluding her from anything. We are able to stay in classes at the hydro pool so it's easier for Holly, they have agreed to hold an extra level in the heated pool for her class, so she wasn't separated from her wee friends.

"We have had excellent experiences at all the groups we have been involved in, we really have been made very welcome and included."

Daniel's mum, Sonia, tells us: "My son has one-to-one support at nursery, and they support and encourage him to take part in all activities. Stepping back when they can see he is able to do things on his own and stepping in when he needs a little extra help. They have a weekly community walk, and although they will take his pushchair as backup, he's given the opportunity to walk when he can, and they have Widgit symbols* and know Makaton* so he can easily communicate when he is cold or tired and ready to get back in pushchair.

"Last term they had weekly visits to our local woods. He was encouraged to take part in puddle jumping and had help and support to try the rope swing which he loved. On his first sports day at



nursery, he wasn't walking confidently, he would choose to crawl mostly, but could walk with support, either holding hands or with his walker. The nursery introduced a crawling race that year, and all the children absolutely loved it. All the races were inclusive, and my son had the biggest smile on his face each time he crossed the finish line."

Sonia also tells us a bit more about the importance of helping Daniel communicate so he can understand what is expected and can make his needs known.

"Our nursery has really embraced Makaton signing and using symbols (now and next/visual timetables). These have been invaluable in helping my son communicate and understand what is expected of him. Most staff wear widgit symbols on a lanyard, and I notice a huge difference in his behaviour if he's with someone who hasn't worn their lanyard (he can be really cheeky or swipes things), compared with a member of staff who wears the lanyard and uses Makaton signing. Being able to communicate is key to ensuring he has a positive morning in nursery."

*Widgit is a symbol-based language used predominantly for people with learning disabilities. It uses pictorial symbols, either as an alternative to text, or to accompany it. For more information, visit the [Sensory Trust website](#).

*Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression. For more information, visit the [Makaton website](#).



Kintore Nursery

Charlotte works with us as an inspector and has twin girls, Grace and Flossie, who were four when we first met them. Charlotte helped us to contact the families and children we have included here and spoke about the support she has had from Kintore Nursery, Aberdeenshire, where both girls attend.

"Grace has Down's syndrome and when she first started, she couldn't walk and only bottom shuffled. It was nursery sports day and socially she loved being included. They had all the usual races and a member of staff helped her compete. For the sack race, they helped her into the sack and then with help she bounced to the end. Then they made up a new race especially for Grace. Children had to bottom shuffle or crawl for a whole race and having come last in all the previous races, Grace won!! She was absolutely delighted and grinned from ear to ear.

"It also inspired the other children to include Grace and it gave them a window into her world, being unable to walk. The other children loved doing the bottom shuffle race and interestingly found it very difficult. It showed the other children that although Grace couldn't walk, she had other strengths that they didn't. What I loved most was how the children seemed to figure that out for themselves without an adult feeding them the information. Then in the next sports day Grace could walk, albeit slowly. Once again, she was fully included and had the assistance of a member of staff using Makaton to keep Grace on track.

"I think there's huge benefits for her being included. Socially she made friends, she learned to take turns and cheer on her classmates. She was part of the school and the wider community. Since that time lots of other parents have come and spoken to me about Grace, whereas before maybe they felt too unsure how to approach Grace's differences. In fact, she's become a bit of a celebrity. It really boosted her confidence and it made her focus on developing her skills. Now she's climbing trees and causing chaos like the rest of her peers. Plus, it's healthy living at its best."

We contacted the nursery during the Covid pandemic to find out how they had continued to include children in their activities. They told us that Grace is now participating fully in their nursery sports. They created different races where all children could choose how they moved (for example, crawling, bottom shuffling, crab walking). This meant that she was fully able to engage in all the races and only needed a little support and guidance from a staff member. Her parents were so pleased that she had been able to participate and that it was such a positive experience for her. They have shared

their experiences with the other support groups they are involved in.

They also told us that Grace is also fully involved in outdoor woodland sessions. A buggy is used for the walk up to the woods and this means that she is not too tired by the time they get there. With appropriate adult support, Grace is able to take part in activities which involve balancing and climbing on fallen tree trunks.

The nursery is using an intensive interaction approach with other children who have different additional support needs. This approach involves mirroring behaviours to get in the child's inner world, letting them know you can see them, and they are important. It encourages communication, interaction and can involve promoting physical activities. Part of this approach has helped the setting introduce bouncy hoppers, a small trampette and other things to help support children to be physically active.

Improvement and support questions

What do we need to do to ensure we see the child and their abilities first?

How well do we know our children's abilities and what changes could we make to ensure all our children are included?

What further reading or training might support us to increase our knowledge and understanding further?

Other
relevant
indicators



Working within restrictions

Eassie Early Years

Staff at Eassie Early Years in Forfar have made exercise a key part of their daily routine, supporting children to have fun and develop an intrinsic love for exercise. All members of staff are trained by Angus Council in physical literacy, which is training to promote confidence and competence in physical activities in order that they become a routine part of a healthy lifestyle. Working with staff to ensure they are having fun and role modelling to the children was recognised as the key to the success of the programme with children and their families. Staff also use the Chief Medical Officer's guidance to promote the levels of activity within their setting across the children's day.

Pat Small, manager, tells us: "Children are beginning to understand how exercise makes them feel and how it helps our bodies to stay healthy, grow and develop. As we exercise staff share the different ways the exercises are helping our bodies. We share how warming up and cooling down are important to keep our muscles healthy and how different types of exercise work different muscles, organs and help our bones to be strong.

"The children have developed an awareness that being outdoors exercising helps us breathe fresh air and that there is less chance of spreading germs as we sing and dance in open spaces. Through this work, we have supported our children to develop their ability to work as a group/team and to understand that being first is not important. We do most of our routines in a circle, so there is no first or last. The children have developed their sense of what they are able to do and set their own goals for what they want to achieve. They grow in self-esteem and confidence with each session.

"Initially we used bubbles at the end of each session as a reward for taking part. This has never been taken away. They love the bubble session at the end. They wait patiently for their name and individual praise for their efforts and then a group bubble session to finish. This in itself is another exercise where they run around, bend and stretch to reach the bubbles. The sessions are so much fun that we don't have an issue with levels of engagement from any of our children."

Individual programmes of exercise have also been developed where children had a particular identified need but could also be enjoyed by all the children. This was particularly important during lockdown when access to some health support services was not routinely available. By seeking guidance and using children's interests staff were able to encourage activity in a safe way. One example was the use of video game characters that children could emulate. By putting the children into the game, children were running, jumping and moving quickly to mirror the actions of the video characters.

Opportunities were also built in to support moving slowly in a more concentrated way.

The staff at Eassie Early Years also recognise the importance of adapting and changing the activities as children require more challenge or begin to lose interest. They have included seeking parents' and children's views as integral to the success of their programme. During lockdown, packs were developed and sent to parents to encourage children to be active at home. These packs included tips for parents on how to motivate and engage children during lockdown.

Staff in the setting have also benefitted from the approach to increased activity. Pat tells us: "We realised the impact this was having on all of our physical and mental health and wellbeing and all staff enjoy the fun and excitement these sessions promote. Every child joins in at their own level and they are supported and encouraged to do their best and reach their full potential. Staff role modelling their enjoyment and commitment to happy healthy living is at the heart of children's engagement."

Improvement and support questions

How can we support our staff or ourselves to be positive role models for children in respect of physical activity?

What interests or skills do we have that could be shared within our service to promote children's activity in a fun way?

Other
relevant
indicators



Smallworld Nursery

Alana Johnstone, Assistant Manager at Smallworld Nursery in Brechin, tells us about how their experiences changed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As we had to work with children in small groups, or bubbles, we had to re-evaluate how to use our garden safely, to stop the different groups mixing. Many of our children live in flats and don't have access to gardens. This meant looking around for places within our local community, as well as expanding the garden area by using some of the car park to create another garden.

"We created three new areas for the children. In the first, we introduced large cable drums and set up an obstacle course which encouraged climbing, jumping and balancing. Allowing the children to engage in this more active and risky play has been very popular.

"Secondly, we set up a gardening area where the children are independent in filling up the soil, planting and watering the plants. We have grown our own vegetables which we aim to use for a food to plate journey, so that the children learn about healthy eating as part of their active lifestyle.

"Our third area has had grass added to it for the children to experience different terrains. This part also has our construction area including a variety of loose parts materials with tools for the children to transport and create. We also make good use of our bike shed in the garden so that the children can be on their bikes in the garden.

"Our 'welly wanders' have got the children out and exploring the local green spaces. These areas enable the children to participate in moving their bodies – doing things such as climbing trees and walking on different types of surfaces. We have made use of a nearby den area where the staff have organised activities including scavenger hunts.

"We have really focused on children's mental wellbeing, engaging actively in nature and talking about how this makes us feel. We have seen that children are more settled and forming friendships. All the children have shown great resilience in the past year and we truly believe this is due to increased confidence through risky play such as climbing and jumping on the cable reels and tree climbing.

"Parents have given us great feedback about developing our garden areas and getting the children outdoors. We have had parents who weren't able to take their children out and about as much and have appreciated us taking their children outside every day.

“We have worked as a team throughout our nursery to ensure that energetic activity is accessible to everyone in the building, including our babies and toddlers. Before this, we were in a cycle of telling children to be careful and we have now broken that habit after seeing the benefits of developing self-confidence, resilience, motor skills and risk management skills which in return has actually reduced the risk of accidents. Now staff are engaging in the outdoors and allowing more child-led play. We reviewed our risk assessments and shared these with parents so that they could also see the benefits of activities such as climbing to children’s physical development and confidence.”

Improvement and support questions

What positive changes have we made in our service to children's access to physical activity as a result of the pandemic?

How might we build on this to ensure physical activity is a routine part of our day?



4. Moving more with small tests of change

Care About Physical Activity

Culter After School Club moving more project

The Care About Physical Activity (CAPA) programme was a Scottish Government-funded programme to support and promote older adults to move more often each day in meaningful ways. The project ran from 2017 to 2020 with the aim to support providers of older people's services across Scotland to encourage movement based on the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Breakthrough Series.

This approach supported staff to come up with their own ideas and to try them out against the Model for Improvement. For further details on the programme, including the reports produced by UKactive, go to the [CAPA website](#). Colleagues within our Improvement Team have also undertaken work with older people's services and children's services to promote intergenerational work across children and adults settings. The resource Bringing Generations Together, is available on [The Hub website](#).

We thought it would be a good idea to use the principles of the programme to support activity in a children's setting and as part of this resource we asked our CAPA team if they could find a willing participant. They agreed to run a small test of change with children within an out of school club to see what ideas they could come up with, after identifying periods of time when the children are usually sitting.

Culter After School Club based at Culter Primary School, Aberdeen, was approached and asked if they would like to take part.

Karen Pether, manager, explains: "My initial reaction was 'Oh, my goodness! Why us? What are we going to do? How are we going to achieve this?' We thought that we were already a very active club and we couldn't think what else we could do. I was also concerned as to how much time it is going to take up and that it might be hard for the staff to motivate children on a regular basis.

"CAPA delivered a short improvement training session for the club staff to help them understand the approach and to start exploring what could be tested.

Model for improvement

What are we trying to accomplish?

How do we know that a change is an improvement?

What changes can we make that will result in improvement?



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"The ideal opportunity to support more movement was quickly identified as the time before the children went for their snack.

"We had a discussion around the use of movement sticks, lolly sticks with movements printed on to them, which has worked well in older people's services. From this discussion, the staff quickly developed this idea into something which would work well with the children."

What are we trying to accomplish?

To encourage the children attending the out of school club to be more active for 10 minutes prior to snack.

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

With all improvement projects it is important to know that it is making a difference and not just change for the sake of it. Collecting a simple form of data over a period of time makes it easier to assess the impact of improvement changes. For this project, the children used a scale based on smiley faces to indicate how they felt before the movement and again after the movement session. They selected either a happy, sad or in the middle face to answer the question 'How do you feel?'. The staff monitored and recorded any comments and observations each day and reviewed the findings at the end of each week.

What change can we make that will result in improvement?

After discussion between staff and children they decided to introduce a dance such as Baby Shark before snack time.

What were our ideas? What did we do?

The staff at the club decided to focus on the younger children who had their snacks in a separate area from the older children. The older children had to come into the younger area to collect their lunch bags just as the dance was starting. The staff noticed that this affected the participation and confidence of the younger children, so they delayed the start of the dance until after the older children had left the area.

During the planning stage, the team included the children's likes and preferences in relation to the choices of the dances. This led to lively discussions and demonstrations of lots of dances and some on

the spot made-up dances too. A list of dances was developed which included Macarena, Conga, Baby Shark and Cha Cha Slide. All the dances had lots of actions and movements.

The choice of dances was limited to two each day because if it was left open it led to too much time being wasted. The children used the corners of the room to decide the most popular choice by allocating one corner to one choice and another corner to the other choice.

The scoring system was simple and straightforward with the children putting a piece of Lego into a jar with the appropriate smiley face at the start of the session then a marble at the end of the session. One member of the team asked the children how they felt, which was a simple question that even the youngest child could understand.

What worked well? What were our challenges?

Initially the children were reserved and hesitant when the older children came into the room, so they delayed the start of the dancing. However, staff observed that some of the older children would hang around so that they could also take part.

The self-scoring had to be set up in the same order each day to ensure consistency of voting. The staff made up A4 laminated smiley faced and placed the jars with the same smiley faces behind it. The addition of the laminated images helped the children select the right emotion.

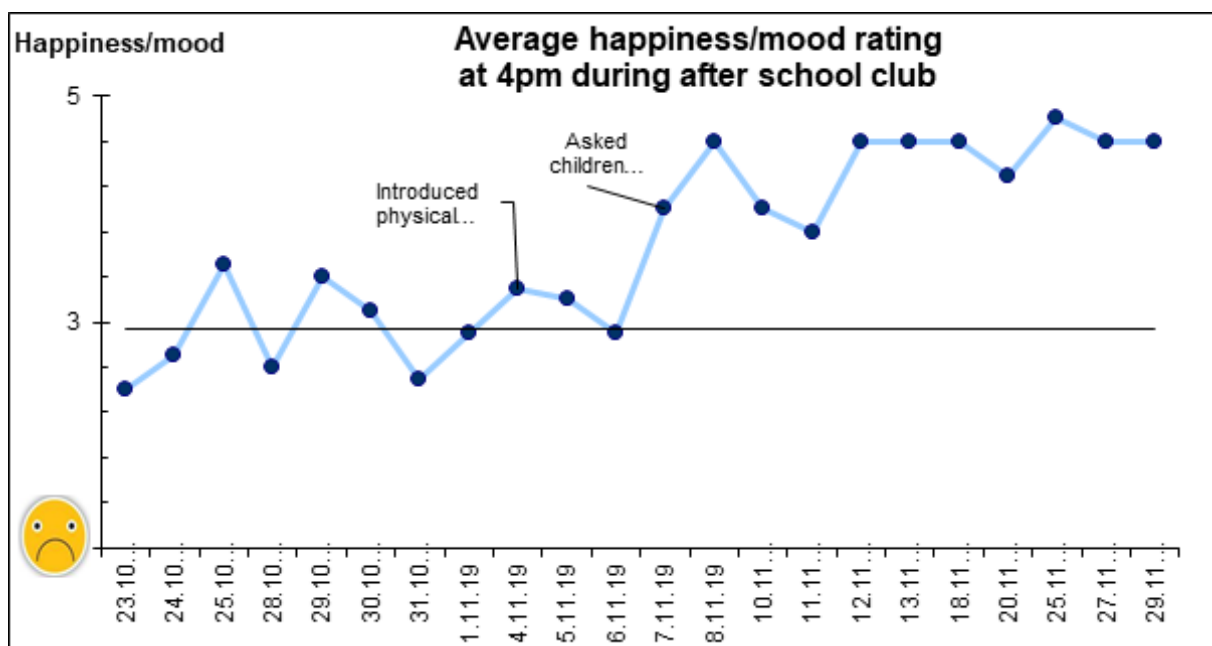
After the first few days the staff observed that friends were selecting the same emotion and decided to change the voting process to one at a time. This small tweak ensured that the individual child selected a more accurate emotion rather than going with the crowd.

Sometimes the children couldn't decide what two dances they wanted so the dances were sometimes interchanged with games, such as musical statues or duck, duck goose, with the children choosing the music. Recording the children's participation each day on a chart helped the staff to study what worked and what didn't work so well.

What was the outcome?

The self-scoring over the four-week period indicated that the children felt happier once they had completed the dance or game. The children come each day and immediately get ready for the dance. This is a shift in their behaviour as previously they would have just sat down. The feedback from the children has been positive with an unexpected bonus of getting the older children active as well. Comments from the children include: "It's fun!" "I like the conga." "It was good fun."

Karen Pether explains: "We were surprised at how much the children enjoyed it and how keen they were to continue it on a regular basis. Continuous evaluation and listening to the children, as well as making changes as needed to improve the activity were essential to making it work. The children are all taking part in an extra 10 minutes of exercise every day. We observed through the evaluation that children seem to be happier after the activity and are certainly livelier after the activity."



What are our plans for improvement now?

After participating in the improvement activity, the staff were keen to continue to identify areas which could be developed and improved to support more movement each day.

The club plans to continue with the dancing or games prior to snack time as both the staff and children have enjoyed the opportunity to burn off extra energy. They have decided to use the scoring system periodically to monitor if it is still having a beneficial effect of the children's moods.

Karen explains what the club plans for promoting more movement in the future. "We will try to implement this with the older children and encourage them to join the younger children in the games and dancing. Maybe we will try one minute's skipping or 'keepy uppy' as something different or some other sort of physical challenge. We would consult the children, they are competitive."

5. Your Quality Framework improvement toolkit

We hope that you've enjoyed this resource and it's inspired you to plan lots of different way to help children be active in your setting. To help you do that, we have developed an improvement toolkit which is available on our [Hub website](#). This toolkit has improvement and support questions along with the relevant key improvement resources. We look forward to seeing your examples and sharing the learning with others. So, if you have an experience you would like to share you can email us:

myactiveworld@careinspectorate.gov.scot

Relevant Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.1 I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health status, race, background or sexual orientation.
- 1.2 My human rights are protected and promoted and I experience no discrimination.
- 1.6 I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.
- 1.8 If I experience care and support in a group, the overall size and composition of that group is right for me.
- 1.9 I am recognised as an expert in my own experiences, needs and wishes.
- 1.10 I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.
- 1.15 My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.
- 1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.
- 1.27 I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.
- 1.28 I am supported to make informed lifestyle choices affecting my health and wellbeing, and I am helped to use relevant screening and healthcare services.
- 1.30 As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.
- 1.31 As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials.
- 1.32 As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.
- 2.2 I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be.
- 2.3 I am supported to understand and uphold my rights.
- 2.22 I can maintain and develop my interests, activities and what matters to me in the way that I like.
- 2.25 I am helped to understand the impact and consequences of risky and unsafe behaviour and decisions.

- 2.27 As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.
- 3.1 I experience people speaking and listening to me in a way that is courteous and respectful, with my care and support being the main focus of people's attention.
- 3.5 As a child or young person, I am helped to develop a positive view of myself and to form and sustain trusting and secure relationships.
- 3.10 As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure.
- 3.14 I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.
- 3.15 My needs are met by the right number of people.
- 3.16 People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me.
- 3.17 I am confident that people respond promptly, including when I ask for help.
- 3.20 I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.
- 4.1 My human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me.
- 4.2 The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.
- 4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.
- 4.14 My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event.
- 4.27 I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.
- 5.19 My environment is secure and safe.
- 5.22 I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes.
- 5.23 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.

Summary of UNCRC articles

Article 1 (definition of the child) Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

Article 2 (non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Article 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 6 (life, survival and development) Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

Article 13 (freedom of expression) Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect) Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 23 (children with a disability) A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.

Article 24 (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29 (goals of education) Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

([Unicef website](#))

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