

# Argyll and Bute Early Years - Learning and Development Framework



**‘Three Assets Approach’: Curriculum  
Design and Pedagogy in the Early Years**

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## Argyll and Bute Three Assets Approach: Outdoor Play and Learning, Culture and Partnerships – Introduction

When developing the Argyll and Bute Delivery Plan for the expansion of ELC, there was a strong desire to see the expansion as an opportunity to achieve transformational change in how we provide Early Learning and Childcare in Argyll and Bute - children should not just experience 'more of the same' in this expansion of ELC. Additional time will allow delivery to be even more innovative - even better reflect opportunities and meet the needs within each community, within each setting and within each family.

In planning for the expansion of ELC, it was also important to recognise some of the challenges families face in today's society:

- Physical and mental health issues
- Poverty gap
- Social / rural isolation
- Financial challenges
- Work related pressures
- Time to talk and switch off
- Global issues such as migration and global warming

In order to help our children overcome these challenges as they grow up, Professor Ferre Laevers talks of the need to focus on each child's

- **health and wellbeing,**
- build their **competencies and life skills** and
- strengthen their **exploratory drive**



These competencies are promoted within national policy through Curriculum for Excellence within the Four Capacities, Pre-Birth to Three within the 'Four Rs' and Building the Ambition.

Curriculum for Excellence Values: **Wisdom, Justice, Compassion, Integrity.**

Vision: 'The curriculum must be inclusive, be a stimulus for personal achievement and through the broadening of experience of the world, be an encouragement toward informed and responsible citizenship.'

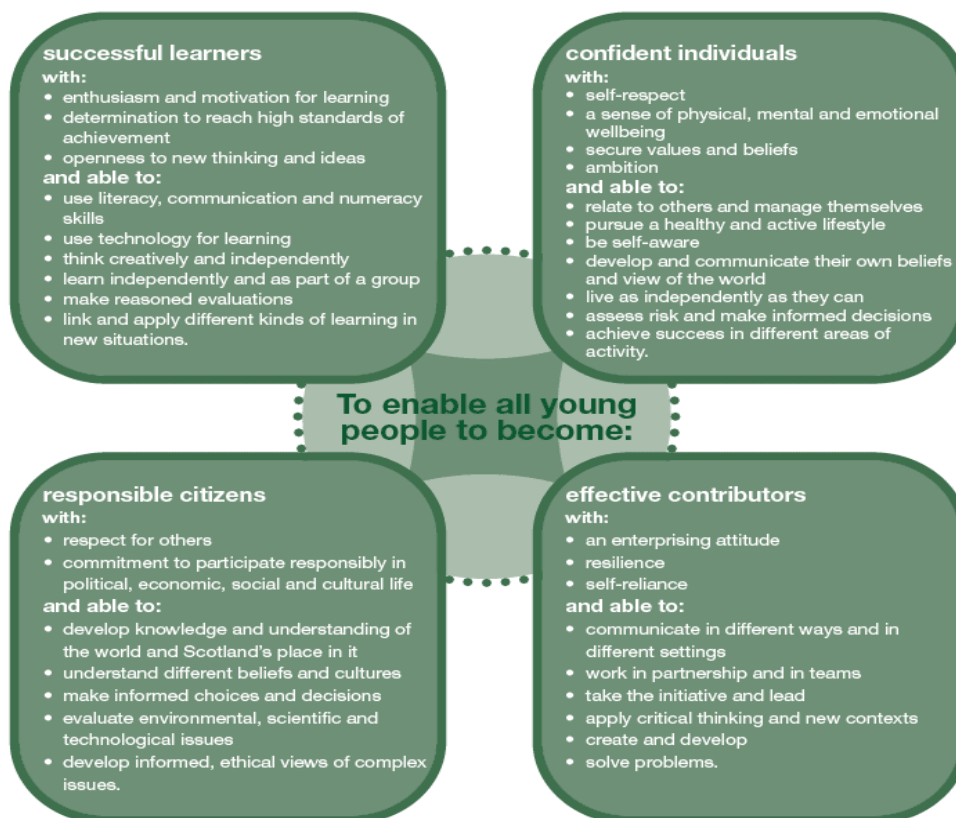
As can be seen from its values and vision, Curriculum for Excellence is designed to offer opportunities for all children and young people to develop capabilities and attributes within the four capacities:

- **Effective Contributors**
- **Successful Learners**
- **Responsible Citizens, and**
- **Confident Individuals**

In exploring deep and rich learning opportunities, ELC settings and schools are also encouraged to make effective use of the four contexts for learning:

- **Ethos and Life of the (setting) as a community**
- **Curriculum areas and subjects**
- **Interdisciplinary learning**

- **Opportunities for personal achievement**



### Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

In order for children to learn well, they have to feel well, which is why children's health and wellbeing is at the heart of high quality ELC. Both national and local policy is built around the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, as can be seen from the Care Inspectorate's publication, 'Gender Equal Play'-



To become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens all of Scotland's children need to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. These indicators are an effective way of assessing and improving how services are making a difference to children in their care. The eight indicators of wellbeing are a key tool in realising the Scottish Government's vision to make Scotland 'the best place to grow up'.

In Argyll and Bute, we have developed a '**Learning and Development Framework**'

around the key competencies within Curriculum for Excellence and the wellbeing indicators within GIRFEC which support practitioners to monitor progress in children's health and wellbeing (with a focus on developmental milestones and SHANARRI wellbeing indicators), literacy and numeracy. Progression frameworks combined with a sound understanding of how children learn and develop will support practitioners to make well informed judgements around children's progress,



leading to appropriate next steps for each child. In line with national and local priorities, practitioners are encouraged to have a strong focus on children's **health and wellbeing** in order to build resilient and happy children. There is an equally strong emphasis in working closely with our families, focusing on **family learning and engagement** – to ensure families are at the heart of our ELC provision. This will support us to take a more holistic approach to outcomes for children.

## Connecting the Learning

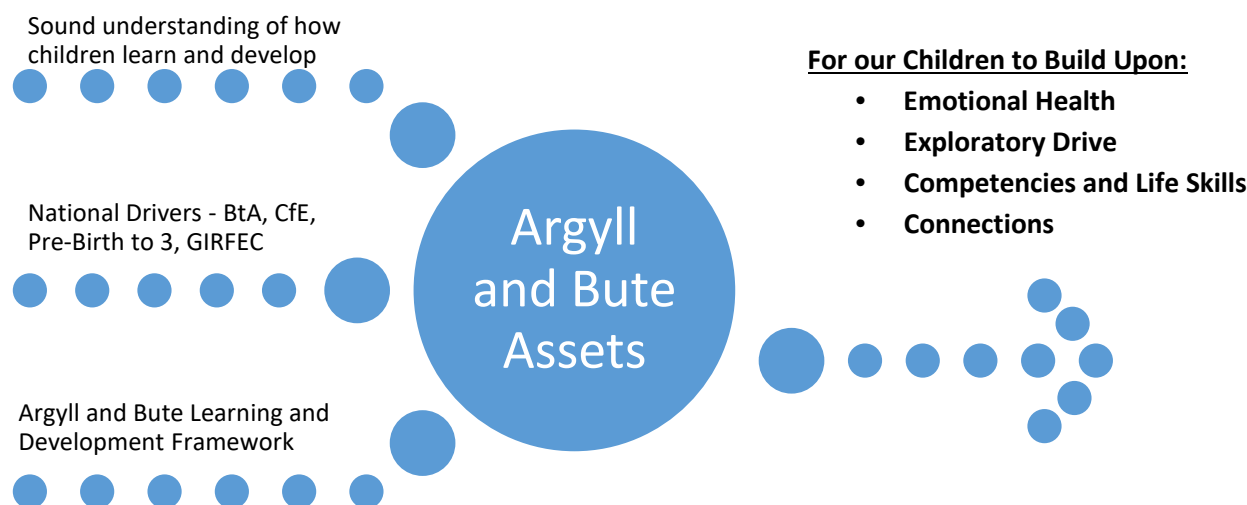
Our children do not learn in isolation and there is one other vital element which supports deep and meaningful learning – connecting the learning to what is meaningful and relevant to the child. Ferre Laevers talks of a fourth key competency - the importance of **'linkedness'** – making connections in life.

**'The basic attitude of linkedness – feeling connected with ourselves, the people around us, with nature and the world. Through this we feel satisfaction.'** Ferre Laevers

In order for our children to build connections and experience 'linkedness', learning has to be experiential, with children engaged in a wide range of rich opportunities for deep learning. ELC providers in Argyll and Bute are well placed to offer an exciting range of experiences for children. Our geographical location means that some settings are located in areas rich in biodiversity, offering natural assets such as beaches, fields and forests on our doorsteps. Settings in our towns and villages have rich stories to tell of famous residents, past and present. In addition to this, our culture is diverse, with traditional music, Gaelic and storytelling. We also have the opportunity to learn about cultures from across the world as members of our communities bring with them their own stories, cultures and traditions. Our communities are also skilled in problem solving and working together to overcome the challenges of living within a remote location, promoting collaboration, interdependence and perseverance.



As children spend longer in ELC, we have to ask ourselves what we can do to provide more opportunities for our children to make more connections and to deepen those connections with one another, with where they live and with the wider world. As we have identified above, Argyll and Bute has much to offer in relation to the wider world – through a child's communities, cultures, traditions and the local land. If we use these Argyll and Bute 'assets' wisely, combined with our 'Learning and Development Framework' and a sound understanding of how children learn and develop, we can work towards providing 'the best start' for our children in Argyll and Bute.



## Quality of Provision

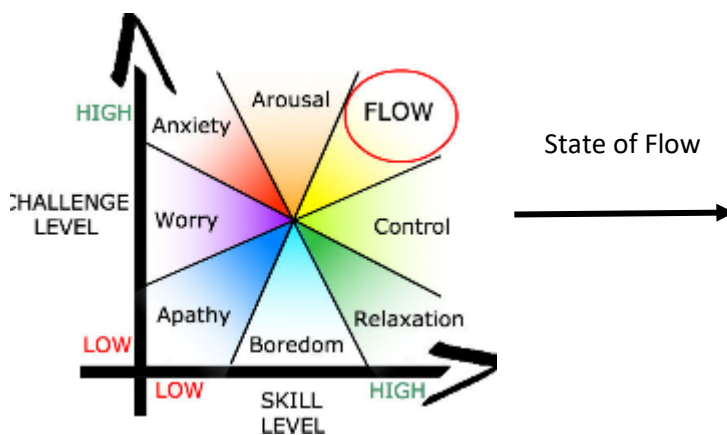
How do we ensure our children experience high quality Early Learning and Childcare? Despite carefully thought out learning experiences and access to the wider community, there is the possibility that children may not be connected to the learning experience and so may not be challenged appropriately. Building the Ambition states:

Where uncertainties for the practitioner can arise is where there are well-meaning intentions to conform by providing activities which are not necessarily developmentally appropriate or actually relevant to the child's context or world around them – Building the Ambition 2014

How will we know that we are providing rich and deep learning experiences for our children that are developmentally appropriate? Let's go back to Building the Ambition:

If we accept that in order for young children to take part in and enjoy their world, they need to acquire a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills. If we believe that a young child's concern is to be an active, busy learner, trying to make sense of the world around them in order to take part and enjoy it, we can say they are learning all of the time from all of their experiences. In essence, this is their curriculum – Building the Ambition 2014

Earlier, reference was made to **Exploratory Drive** – intense mental activity and the 'state of flow'.



When children are immersed in their learning, they are so engrossed that they are not distracted by anything around them – they are completely involved in their learning, as can be seen from the above diagram and picture. This will strike a chord with all practitioners – a welcome sight during our observations of children at play! However, when children are either anxious because the challenge is too great, or bored because there is not sufficient challenge, opportunities for deep learning are missed. How do we achieve this 'state of flow'?

- Offer a range of contexts for learning that children feel connected to – promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity
- Understand how children learn and develop
- Appropriate and timely interactions
- Appropriate challenge
- High quality observations of children to ensure involvement in their learning and to inform next steps

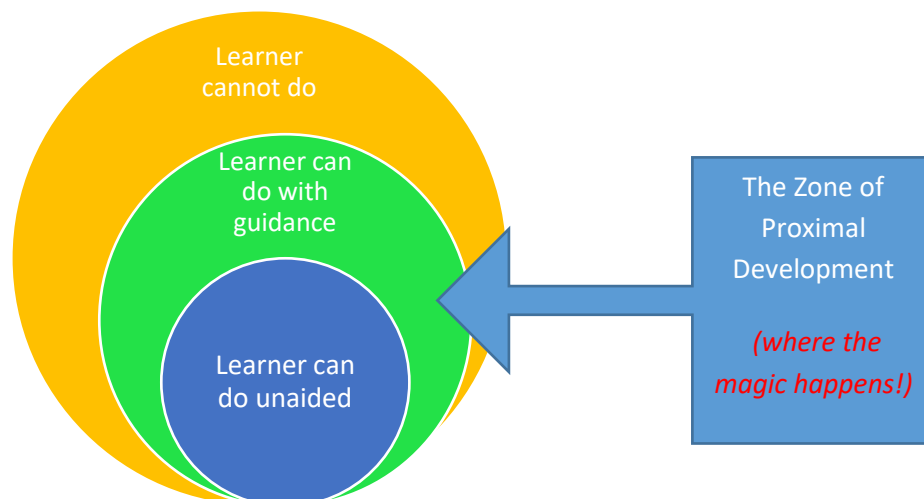
## Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

The Design Principles of Curriculum for Excellence provide practitioners with firm foundations for high quality pedagogy and practice as described in this document. In the planning for children's learning there should be:

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance

The optimum point in learning is understanding when a child 'can do *with guidance*'. What do you need to do to facilitate this magical point in learning and development?

This is where your understanding of how a child learns and develops is critical – does this require you to do something different to the environment? Do you need to offer a new experience? How about your interactions – are they appropriate? Are they facilitating or leading the learning?



*Zone of Proximal Development - Vgotsky*

Building the Ambition states:

The curriculum is also about what the practitioner wants children to learn within a caring, nurturing environment – the **intentional promotion** of experiences and interactions which are important for young children to learn. These intentions must be supported by the environment, the experiences and the interactions which are developed and these descriptors are used as a common framework throughout this guidance– Building the Ambition 2014



**Time to Reflect...**

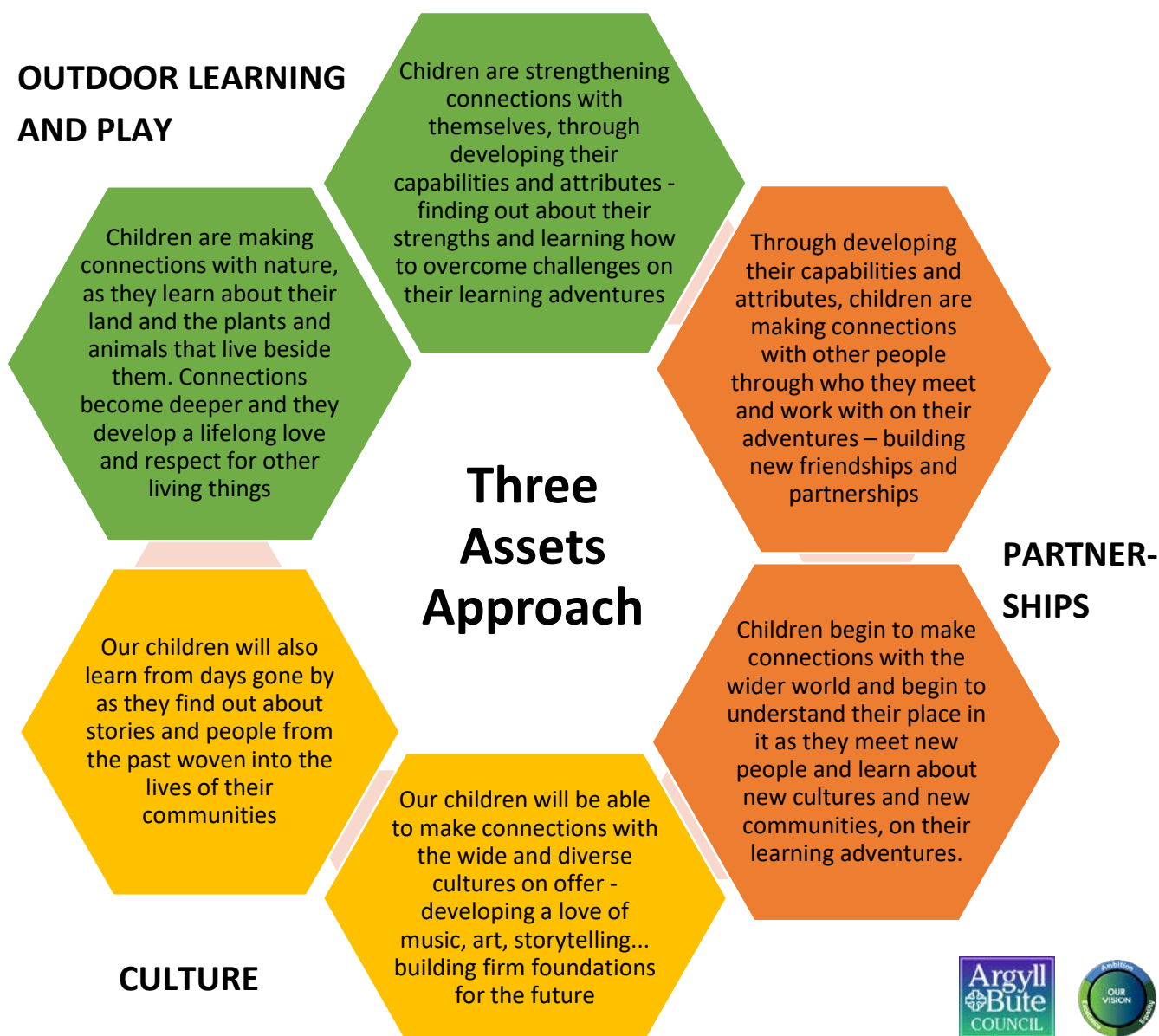
- How well do we consider the **environment**, the **experiences** and the **interactions** which support the curriculum and the process of how our children learn and develop within our settings?
- How effective are our observations in identifying appropriate and relevant next steps for each child?
- How well do we offer a range of contexts for learning that children feel connected to – promoting curiosity, inquiry and creativity?
- How confident are we in knowing when our children are in a 'state of flow' within their learning?

**Argyll and Bute Three Assets Approach**

In order to provide a focus on deep and meaningful contexts for learning for our children through effective use of the **environment**, **experiences** and **interactions**, we have identified three key Argyll and Bute assets for settings to explore with their children, families and communities – as outlined below:

- Outdoor Learning
- Partnerships
- Culture

The key features outlined within each section of the diagram are not exclusive to each asset – indeed when children are outdoors, they will be making new partnerships and learning about the stories of the land they are exploring.





## Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

By taking forward our 'Three Assets Approach' and combining this with high quality pedagogy, our children will be given opportunities to experience rich and deep learning through connections made with:

- themselves,
- the people around them,
- the natural spaces that they play and learn in, and
- the wider world about them.

In order to help you consider how to explore the 'Three Assets' within your own settings, the next section will help you to think more deeply about each of the assets – exploring the rationale for each context for learning and development, along with guidance shaped around national and local drivers, case studies from Argyll and Bute settings and reflective questions and statements:

- **Rationale** – this will outline why each asset is an important part of ELC provision in Argyll and Bute
- **Guidance** – the guidance will outline what should be in place for each asset
- **Case Studies** – each asset comes with two case studies to provide examples of how different settings have taken learning and development forward
- **Reflective Questions / Statements** – these questions and statements will support each provider to take the learning forward within their settings, with their children and community

### **Argyll and Bute Three Assets Approach – Outdoor Play and Learning**

Outdoor play is central to how children grow and develop but also to how they learn, engage with, and become empowered by, their interactions, environments and experiences.

The provision of opportunities through which children can enrich their relationship with places, landscape, people and nature are essential to their wellbeing, their sense of belonging and inclusion and their feelings of safety, health and happiness.

Every child has the right to meaningful outdoor experiences through which they can connect with nature, explore and learn their place in it and understand the role that the outdoors has in the enjoyment of their childhood, their health and their development.



For this reason, **Scotland's Outdoor Play and Learning Coalition** recently committed to the following:

- **All children and young people have the right to play and the right to learn as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.**

- **Playing outdoors enhances learning and is fundamental for children and young people to thrive in health, wellbeing and development.**
- **It is our shared responsibility to support and enable all of Scotland's children and young people to access our diverse greenspaces and natural landscapes and to empower them to enjoy these spaces for the purposes of playing and learning.**



In support of these ambitions, The Care Inspectorate's [My World Outdoors](#) exemplifies good practice in provision of outdoor play and learning. Additionally, [Out to Play](#) provides practical guidance for creating high quality outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare.

**The National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers** outlines expectations for outdoor provision:

*'Criteria 3 – the Physical Environment, Sub-criteria 3.2 - Children have daily access to outdoor play and they regularly experience outdoor play in a natural environment as part of their funded ELC offer.'*

For children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems or struggling in a traditional formal setting, immersion in a natural setting can be therapeutic and releases their potential.

The **Play Strategy for Scotland** Action Plan (2013) makes clear the 'profound benefits for children in terms of psychological well-being, buffering life stresses and boosting resilience.'

Within **My World Outdoors**, Davy states 'There is a growing body of research that shows that young children's access to nature and outdoor play is positively associated with improved self-esteem, physical health, development of language skills and disposition to learning.'

In Argyll and Bute, we want children to have the best start in life and to be well equipped with everything they need to thrive and be successful, both now and in the future. As part of our ELC Delivery Plan, we have an ambitious aim for our children to spend at least half of the time in ELC outdoors:

***80% of ELC settings in Argyll and Bute will spend at least 50% of their funded time outdoors by the end of August 2020***

Crucial to these ambitions is the aspiration that *'every child, regardless of their background, should have regular access to inspirational and challenging outdoor play and learning, where they can enjoy first-hand experience of their cultural heritage and natural environment, as part of a full and complete childhood.'* *Real World Learning Project, 2015*

### **Early Years Outdoor Learning and Play – Guidance**

Our aim to ensure all children spend at least half of their funded ELC hours outdoors is as a result of the extensive evidence of the benefits of being outdoors and due to the rich and diverse outdoor spaces within our local authority. For some ELC settings, it will be a daunting prospect to spend increasing amounts of time outdoors. This is understandable, as getting outdoors more requires a change in ethos and vision for ELC learning communities.

## Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

Practitioners, parents and children all need to have a shared vision for their outdoors experiences – whether that be making better use of their own ELC outdoor space, or travelling further afield to learn more about the natural spaces near them.

Towards the end of 2018, the Care Inspectorate and Inspiring Scotland worked together to produce 'Out To Play' - guidance on how to develop high quality ELC outdoor provision.

*'Embedding outdoor play into the fabric of young people's lives will require us all to work together. Nurseries, schools, councils, community groups and families all have a role to play in supporting our children to get outside but we recognise that many people don't know where to start. In producing this how-to-guide, we hope to equip you with the skills and knowledge that you need to make playing and learning outdoors an everyday experience for our children.'* – Celia Tennant, Inspiring Scotland



The guide is intended to provide good practice examples of how to use outdoor play to promote high-quality learning experiences, and to support providers through the Care Inspectorate's registration process for outdoor provision. This document provides guidance on all key practical issues while recognising that many users may only require advice with some aspects.

The guide is divided into the following four key sections:

- **Finding the right outdoor space**
- **Creating your space**
- **Using your space**
- **Staffing**

Within these sections, teams are supported to overcome perceived barriers such as how to provide snack and going to the toilet outside, risk assessment, appropriate clothing and kit - and lots more!

'Out To Play' has been added to the appendices of the 'Argyll and Bute Early Years Learning and Development Framework'. This document will be extremely useful to refer to when making improvements to your outdoor provision.

However, in order to develop a shared vision for getting outdoors more, hearts and minds have to be won. It is understandable that enthusiastic members of the team will be tempted to jump straight to getting everyone outdoors without spending time to explore *why* it is a vital part of how a child learns and develops.

When developing your approach to getting outdoors, it is important to address the key points outlined in the table below:



Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

Who?	What?	How?
Practitioners	Professional development to further develop understanding around the importance of outdoor provision as part of children's learning and development. Children require high quality experiences, interactions and environments outdoors as well as indoors.	Argyll and Bute CPD catalogue ELC Cluster Lead Practitioners provide 1-1 support for teams Source own training providers – e.g. Stramash, Wild Things, Creative Star, Wild Things, Mindstretchers, Learning Through Landscapes Make effective use of guidance such as 'Out To Play', 'My World Outdoors' and 'Space to Grow'
Practitioners Children	Access to the right kind of clothing and kit	All ELC practitioners and children should have access to appropriate clothing as funded by the Local Authority Your local ELC Cluster Lead Practitioner will provide support and guidance around core kit for visits to natural spaces outwith the ELC setting. 'Out To Play' provides guidance on appropriate resources – including 'Loose Parts Toolkit' and Learning Through Landscapes resources.
Parents Children	Building confidence and understanding around the importance of children spending time outdoors. Some children will have spent very little time outdoors before they come to your ELC setting. It is very important to encourage them to spend increasing amounts of time outdoors.	Work with families to understand what their concerns are and help to alleviate them through offering shared sessions outdoors and parent sessions to explore why getting outdoors is so beneficial to their child/ren. Invite local 'outdoor leaders' (ELC Cluster Lead / outdoor nursery practitioner, etc) to share their knowledge and understanding with parents. For some children, it may be beneficial to bring the 'outdoors in' for a period of time to become used to different textures and experiences and to help the transition to outdoors.
Practitioners Parents Children	Weather conditions	Professional development and working with parents and families in different weather conditions will be able to show the learning opportunities which they are able to offer. In more extreme weather, risk assessments and effective use of the weather forecast can be used to assess whether it is safe to be outside and what alternative plans can be put in place. Access to Stramash 'Four Seasons' training.
Practitioners	Finding a natural space	As outlined in the National Standard, there are expectations that all children will have 'regular access' to a natural space. This will require teams to work together with parents and the local community to find appropriate natural spaces to access with their children. This is where 'Out To Play' will be particularly useful in supporting teams to secure appropriate permissions and to make best use of the space.
Practitioners Children	Ownership of ELC outdoor space	In order to make the most of your outdoor space, you and your children need to feel ownership of your space and feel empowered to make changes to it. Use 'Out To Play' to understand key features to support learning and development. Think about how you can involve families and wider community members in helping you to develop provision. Make sure your children are at the centre of these developments and are helping to shape changes made.

## CASE STUDY AND EVALUATIVE STATEMENTS

*This section shares a case study from Gigha Primary School and Pre5 Unit, followed by 10 statements which outline the benefits of spending more time outdoors. The case study and reflective statements will help you to evaluate where you are now and to identify next steps in further developing outdoor learning provision.*

### Isle of Stories Curiosity and Imagination Case Study

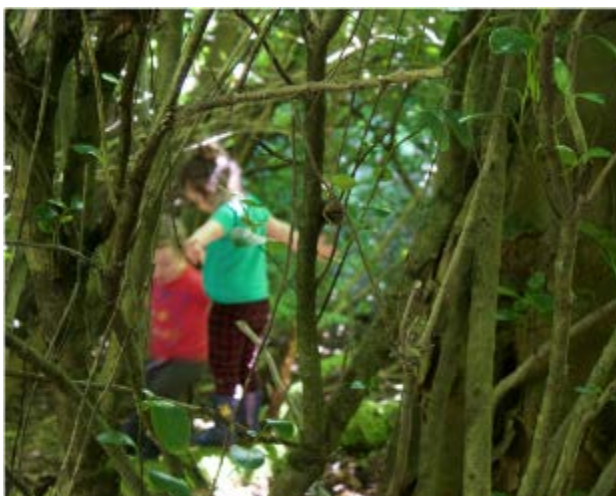
As a result of conversations and discussion activities with parents about developing a nature, place and community based approach to outdoor play and learning, Gigha's Isle of Stories adventures began when we hosted a family storytelling festival in May 2017. A large group of weekend visitors to our island enjoyed Shakespeare on the beach, explored traditional tales in our churchyard and created plant based potions, journey sticks, print making and musical stories in Achamore Gardens.



Out of this positive and impactful experience, children, parents and staff continued to work together to improve access to outdoor play and learning. We began by using the reflection tools in [Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning](#), [The Place Standard](#) and [Getting it Right for Play](#) to consider the benefits and imperatives for increasing and enriching outdoor play experiences on the island where we live.

As an intergenerational learning community, promoting children's growth and development is nested in our concern for the present and future economic, social and environmental well-being of our island and its population. The skills, attributes and dispositions of [Learning for Sustainability](#) are crucially important in this dynamic context: the formation of children's sense of agency, the confidence to take fair and wise decisions, to manage potential risks, to generate genuinely innovative solutions to entrenched problems, are all qualities which will enable children to create change for the better.

We were inspired by a quote from playwork guru [Bob Hughes](#) which talked about play being an 'evolutionary' and life-enhancing activity for children. It is through free play that we learn 'wondrous things that can't be taught', where we begin to reimagine the world and reshape things for the better. In response to these ideas we co-produced a 'playful outdoors' action plan for improving our practice and the quality of our service. Our emerging plan is called 'Growing our Future' as it promotes our belief in the power of nature based experiences to unlock children's potential to create sustainable change.



*'Our greatest asset is the minds of our children'.*

Walt Disney

## Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

We wanted to develop our practice in supporting children to lead, to reimagine the familiar and to explore the unexpected. We were looking for experiences which would build each child's resilience and sense of agency and would help them to find their own voice to express their ideas, thinking and enjoyment. We had the opportunity to use our local gardens to immerse the children in a playful, natural environment and to engage in activities which would help them to explore the power of their imaginations through playing with fantastical possibilities.

Our professional reading included [Igniting a Fuse](#), the story of a project to develop the creative practice of educators by Ruth Sapseed at the University of Cambridge. In partnership with [amywilsonarts](#), and in discussion with **Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination** artist Deb Wilenski, we began a series of [Wild Exchange Games](#) in the grounds of Achamore Gardens on Gigha.



The first series of creations was based on the theme of 'journeys' and involved the children in inventing their own pathways through woodlands by taking a ball of coloured string for a 'walk'. Putting the leadership challenge firmly into the hands of the children provided many benefits. By the end of the first session the children had not only explored their environment thoroughly, they were also able to lead adults along their different pathways with confidence and skill.

The process of discovering for themselves what was challenging and difficult enabled the children to take adults sensitively through the space. They were more mindful of potential hazards and, as a result, demonstrated greater empathy in reminding the grown-ups how to take care.



Children worked together to create a Cabinet of Curiosities, collecting natural treasures and choosing how best to arrange and present them for others to enjoy. Parents and carers were given a tour of the special finds and were encouraged to allow the children to be 'experts' communicating their knowledge and thinking. This provided a powerful affirmation of the children's abilities and competence as well as an opportunity for all the adults, including staff, to practise their active listening and responsive skills.

## Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

The children's 'Imaginarium' was a pop-up gallery which introduced us to video stories, artefacts, drawings and writings based on observations and inquiries. The children were keen to create pieces inspired by their journeys, found objects and inventions and were especially delighted at the opportunity to create characters, journeys and maps. We learned a lot about documenting children's experiences. The challenge of capturing the richness of the interactions, the play and the learning continues to be a focus for our thinking and professional dialogue. Playing in the outdoors was, of itself, beneficial to children's physical health but such close contact with and immersion in nature meant that children and adults also experienced a boost to their emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing. For those of us most captivated by the beauty of our outdoor surroundings, being absorbed in nature allowed us the freedom to connect with our world and with each other in new and unlimited ways. We made meaningful memories that will sustain us into the future.



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### **Supporting Critical Reflection and Practice Development**

The following feedback is adapted from reflective comments gathered from educators involved in nature-based practice development projects over the last ten years. Why not use these natural assets statements as stimulus for discussion about the benefits of play and learning in the outdoors?



**1 - We are happier and more hopeful when outdoors especially when in contact with wildspace and nature.** *How often do your children access wild spaces? What opportunities do you have to access wild spaces?*

**2 - We are more focused, more attentive and more engaged for longer outdoors and our learning and play is more self-directed.** *How much time do you spend outdoors every day? At least 50%? If not, how can you increase the length of time spent outdoors daily?*

**3 - We learn better in the real world, in real life contexts, where we can make meaningful sense of our experiences.** *What is your understanding of experiential learning? What opportunities do you have within your outdoor space and within your community for children to experience meaningful learning and connections?*

**4 - We are better connected to places and people outdoors with a stronger sense of interdependency, identity and purpose.** *What opportunities do you offer your children to connect to one another, to the land and their community outdoors?*

**5 - We are more relational outdoors and our learning is more collaborative and shared.** *What experiences can you provide outdoors to promote collaboration and shared learning?*



**6 - We are more inclusive outdoors, deploying different ways of knowing and learning.** *What opportunities can you offer outdoors to promote different ways of learning?*

**7 - We are more adventurous, adaptive, flexible and reflexive outdoors and feel more empowered to take positive actions to deal with change.** *How well do you take a 'risk benefit' approach to play and learning outdoors?*

**8 - We are more curious, ask more questions, build stronger cognitive pathways and use higher order thinking strategies more readily outside.** *Consider your interactions with children outdoors – how well do you facilitate learning and make effective use of higher order questioning?*



**9 - We are co-creating limitless journeys outdoors, which supports the breaking of old habits, the realisation of possibilities and the empowerment to regenerate our professional practice with children and young people.** *How confident are you in providing rich and meaningful experiences outdoors? What opportunities are there to further develop your knowledge and understanding of outdoor play and learning?*



**10 - We are cultivating genuinely new ways of doing things outdoors. Innovation, resourcefulness and emerging resilience are natural assets best promoted through self-directed, open-ended and immersive experiences outside.** *What can you do to ensure your children spend longer each day outdoors to further develop the capabilities and attributes as outlined within the Four Capacities?*

### Argyll and Bute Three Assets Approach - Culture

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 30), all children in Argyll & Bute have the right to access and enjoy their own culture. Engagement in the arts and culture helps children to know who they are, engage in the world around them and navigate choices as they get older. Our rich cultural heritage in Argyll and Bute includes the Gaelic language, Fèisan, music, arts, local festivals, sports, agricultural events, history, castles and clans. Our land and seascape supports the fishing, farming, forestry and tourism industries. Our ferries provide the connection to our islands and link up our journeys. We are a multilingual, multicultural society. This diversity lends itself to a wide range of cultural partnership opportunities and opens up a wealth of cultural resources for Early Years settings to experience and enjoy. Engaging with and exploring our own culture, as a key local asset, will nurture an inclusive sense of family, community, and connection to society. This in turn will help develop our knowledge of the world and Scotland's place in it.





## How does 'Culture' link to national guidance documents?

### Health & Social Care Standards, My support, My Life

'Be Included – I am supported to participate fully and actively in my community'

### National Standard for ELC providers

Criteria 2 – 'Development of children's cognitive skills, health and wellbeing'

### Curriculum for Excellence

The four capacities, enabling children to become responsible citizens, with respect for others and a commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life

### How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?

- 2.2 Curriculum, skills for life and learning
- 2.5 family learning
- 2.7 partnerships

### Building the Ambition

- 3.3 - Involvement of the family
- 7.1 - What do we mean about pedagogy?

'Young children's experience of learning must be integrated, in meaningful contexts and developmentally appropriate.'



## What needs to be done to deliver high quality ELC around our key asset of culture?

**We have an aspirational aim** - All children accessing Early Learning and Childcare in Argyll and Bute will have the opportunity to experience at least one cultural experience per term. This is not to be seen as a 'one off' theme or topic but an important contribution in the development of high quality ELC delivered over 1140 hours. It will be enriched by our own community assets and with contributions from partnerships with parents, carers and members of the wider community.



### What will this look like in practice?

Staff within ELC Settings know their own children, families and communities best and are well placed to find out more about their local customs and ways of life to provide relevant, engaging, cultural experiences for their children.

Links might be made with our partners 'Live Argyll' or other local heritage organisations. There will be opportunities for family engagement, family learning, and intergenerational work with grandparents and older members of the community; what customs have changed? How has play changed? What songs/rhymes/games did our grandparents enjoy?

### Case Study One – Port Ellen ELC

#### ***Embracing the Sea: Learning about Local Environment and Culture, Port Ellen ELC***

Living on an island, the sea is very much part and parcel of daily life. Children are aware of the coastline and make every opportunity to be outdoors at the beach or exploring the rocky shore. When they experience the weather they can see its impact on the waves and they know when ferries are cancelled. It is therefore not surprising that this learning extends into the ELC at Port Ellen to provide some rich opportunities for learning.



Last year the children made a visit to the village Community Garden and they were talking about the mast and the anchor that they saw there. They were curious. Where had these things come from? How did they get into the garden? Who could they ask about them? Staff in the setting followed the children's lead using a floorbook approach to support children's thinking, planning and documentation of their learning.

This led to the children contacting a local volunteer in the coastguard, who met them in the garden and showed them old newspaper cuttings and pictures of the Lochiel, a former Islay mailboat which operated on the island until 1970. The



children were fascinated to find out that in the 'olden days', cars were lifted onto the ferry by a crane, rather than the roll-on-roll-off service that they are used to on the island's current ferries, the Hebridean Isles and the Finlaggan.

This prompted a flurry of building works in the ELC using their newly acquired wooden blocks. At that time the whole school was involved in a large engineering project as part of the 'Rolls-Royce Science Prize' and the children knew that engineers solve problems from reading about Rosie Revere Engineer. Plans were drawn up, measurements made and designs took lots of different forms, inside and out. They built cranes and ramps to lift their cars and trucks into the ferry and had to work out how to make it bigger to fit more of their friends on board. They investigated floating and sinking, building their own ferries to play with in the water tray.



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Learning about their local environment is a relevant and meaningful context and every opportunity is taken to involve the parents and the local community. The children visited the ferry and the ferry office. Some dads who are fishermen visited the setting to talk about their work and they provided a fantastic boat for the children to play in, as well as a number of creels. At first the boat was indoors, inspiring lots of imaginative role play as well as becoming a fantastic 'story ship.' It was then moved into the outdoor area where the children have to bale out all the water using their ramps, drainpipes and buckets.



The children also learned about coastguards, visiting the coastguard hut and trying on lots of safety gear. It was quite usual to see squads of children wearing high-vis vests and safety hats within the setting! They found out about all the lights which guide the ships into the port and built their own lighthouse.

Islay was the focus of an important WW100 celebration last year, commemorating the sinking of two troop ships off the coast of Islay during the last year of the war. The ELC, together with the rest of the school, had been working with the Islay Quilters to produce an American State Flag which was used at the service. As well as becoming aware of the ships which sank long ago, Port Ellen Primary School was also the command post for all the emergency services on the day – and representatives of all the emergency services came into the ELC to speak to the children, which was very exciting.



### Case Study Two – Port Ellen ELC

#### ***Accessing and enjoying learning about our Culture in Bowmore Primary School Sgoil-Àraich (incorporated within an Early/First Level Class – ELC and P1-3)***

The island of Islay has a rich cultural heritage which the children of Bowmore Primary School Sgoil-Àraich frequently have the opportunity to experience.

Sgoil-Àraich is the start of the Total Immersion Phase where children are solely taught through the medium of Gaelic. For most of the children in our setting, Gaelic is not their first language and is therefore not spoken outside of the setting, it is for this reason that it is important for them to not only be immersed in the language, but also within Gaelic culture on Islay.

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A focus in the Total Immersion phase is **Relevance** as this helps children and practitioners to plan around meaningful contexts that will help children to develop fluency in Gaelic to apply their knowledge and skills socially in everyday situations. This again stresses the need for children to access and enjoy the culture which surrounds them and for learning to be relevant and meaningful.

Both within and out-with the setting, children have fun with the Gaelic language, engaging with traditional and modern stories and folklore, saying rhymes and singing songs. We often invite Gaelic speakers and experts from Islay and around Scotland to support this. Bookbug sessions are held in the Sgoil-Àraich and at the local Gaelic College where children have the opportunity to interact further with Gaelic stories, songs and rhymes.



The annual Local Mòd is a festival which celebrates the Gaelic Language and traditional music. Our Sgoil-Àraich work with their P1-3 classmates to learn a Gaelic action song then perform this in front of adjudicators and an audience of family, friends and people from the local community. The action song links Gaelic and Music with Drama, where the children portray the meaning of the song through their actions.

We are very fortunate to have a wealth of cultural opportunities within our local community for our Sgoil-Àraich children to experience and to learn from. Recently we followed our children's lead when they decided to learn about castles and we explored their significance in Scotland and Islay's history. The children visited local buildings, including Dunlossit Castle, where they learned about clans, artefacts, roles, coats of arms and about the history of the castle and the surrounding area. It was important for the children to experience the castle first-hand rather than within the setting, ensuring learning was relevant, meaningful and experiential.



### Reflective questions

- What is your understanding of culture? – It may help to do a brainstorming exercise with staff and a mind map
- What cultural partnerships do you already have?
- What cultural partnerships might you develop?
- How could you support children to have greater access to and enjoyment of their own culture?
- How might cultural experiences be enriched by contributions from partnerships with parents, carers and the wider community?



### Argyll and Bute Three Assets Approach - Partnerships

***A partnership is an arrangement where others, known as partners, agree to strive to ensure the best possible outcome for our children.***

Our core partnerships begin with our families - these positive relationships alongside strong community and multi-agency partnerships will make valuable contributions to a child's learning experiences and opportunities. The World Health Organisations states *'The nurturing qualities of the environments where children grow up, live and learn – parents, caregivers, family and community – will have the most significant impact on their development. In most situations, parents and caregivers cannot provide strong nurturing environments without help from local, regional, national, and international agencies.'*(WHO, 2012)

It is important that children get to know the community that they live in and the people that live there to give them a sense of belonging – a sense of 'linkedness'. Young children benefit from an increased motivation to learn from their engagement with a wider range of partners. This in turn has the potential to improve outcomes for our children. Partnerships increase family engagement in children's learning



and this involvement has a positive impact on children's progress in key areas of learning and development- including health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Through effective partnership working, we can also build strong, respectful relationships with families and with the wider community which promote interdependence and reciprocity- developing skills for learning, life and work.

Partnerships should be embedded in your self-evaluation processes and are highlighted in the follow National Documents;

### How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (Education Scotland, 2016) Quality Indicator 2.7 Partnerships

- Quality Indicator 2.2 Curriculum

### National Care Standards (Care Inspectorate, 2017)

- 1.10 - 'I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.'

### Building the Ambition

- 3.3 Involvement of the family



**A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland. Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for ELC Providers: Principles and Practice**

- Criteria 5 – Parent and Carer engagement and involvement in the life of the setting

**Partnership Guidance**

**“It takes a village to raise a child” - African Proverb**

Partnerships offer opportunities to establish meaningful relationships - they support, promote and encourage children to enjoy various learning and development pathways, giving them the best possible start in life. Successful partnerships can help us plan and deliver relevant, real-life opportunities for young children for life-long learning. Partnerships should be beneficial to all parties and have the potential to be sustained throughout the learning journey of the children in your setting – and beyond!

As ELC providers we must remember that parents and families are the first and on-going educators of their own children. At the planning stage we must consult our children, parents and families to decide what mutual partnerships would be most valuable for practitioners to take forward for all stakeholders.

*‘Parents, carers and families are by far the most important influences in a child’s life. Parents who take on a supportive role in their child’s learning make a difference in improving achievement and behaviour.’* (Guidance on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006)

In creating a partnership and engaging with your children and families you are respecting UNCRC Article 29 – developing skills and teaching children about their own and others rights whilst enabling talents and abilities of the child and preparing them for adult life.

**Where are the potential partnerships within your community?**

Our families and communities can offer a wide range of exciting partnerships that will enhance our children’s learning experiences and introduce them to how a community works – thus preparing them for the real world.

With a more focused emphasis on responsive planning and leadership of learning, practitioners find themselves almost in the role of a magician – being able to ‘magic up’ a response to the child and parent that brought in marshmallows for ‘bonfire night’ and asked to toast them. To further enhance this partnership, let’s take forward a simple calculation:

**Local food store + donation of food + invite to event planned by children = partnership**



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Other partnerships will be ongoing and support the planned learning within the setting. Examples of this kind of partnership can be seen in the case studies listed below, where a partnership built up over time can enrich and strengthen planned and unplanned learning and development.

### Case Study One - Soroba Young Family Group Partnership with Eadar Glinn

**Our partnership started after seeing a video clip post on social media about a care home in America which had a kindergarten. We were impressed by the relationships and benefits that were visible from that small clip. We are now at the middle of our 4th year of partnership with our local care home Eadar Glinn.**

The process of initiating the partnership was easy. We contacted the manager of the home and presented her with our proposal. The manager asked us to send our risk assessment and procedures. When everything was in place, we arranged the first visit date, and 4 years on our partnership is blossoming.

We shared information about the partnership with our parents - what we aimed to do and what the benefits for both the residents and children would be. Parents were then given the opportunity to consent to their child participating in our partnership. To date, no one has refused this consent. We visit every week with a group of 8 children and they attend for 4 week blocks to enable them to have time to build confidence and relationships with the residents. The children walk to the home with 2 staff members and this is risk assessed as the children's groups change.

Each week we take an activity to share with the residents and lots of them are very happy to join in with us if they can. We also share a group time story, and they love nothing more than to sing along with us for song time and ring games, sometimes teaching us new songs or new verses of familiar songs. When we have any special occasions, we invite our friends from Eadar Glinn and some are fit and well enough to attend. They have joined us for Graduation, Nativity, Christmas Party, MacMillan Coffee Morning and the celebration of our garden opening. Each year we go in full costume and perform our Nativity and Graduation, so those who are not fit to join us on the day, do not miss out.



The development of this partnership has helped us to meet many of the Health and Well-being outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence - supporting our children to learn about being respectful, considerate, caring and helpful to others. Children develop their confidence in new situations, encouraging them to value their own contributions to our community and to build new and somewhat unlikely friendships. We also learn about keeping ourselves safe when we are walking to and from Eadar Glinn - learning about road safety, following the nursery rules and looking after ourselves and each other. This enables the children to build resilience, confidence, and self-worth. We have opportunities to meet some of our Literacy and English outcomes as we share stories, talk and listen with the residents, and sometimes learn new songs and nursery rhymes or additional verses from the residents.

This enables the children to be confident in their interactions with others, to join in and initiate conversations, to develop effective listening skills, to be able to gain information from others and use any new information as appropriate.

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In relation to Religious and Moral Education outcomes, we are developing the importance of being respectful, learning about what is fair and unfair, and sharing and cooperating with others out with our own setting and on a regular basis. We learn that we are guests in the home of the residents - we are mindful of noise and our own conduct. The children are able to adjust their behaviours to different situations, they are mindful of others' needs and views and are able to cooperate and share with others in a range of situations.

Through this partnership, we are learning about our community and what it is made up of. This provides us with opportunities to explore our Social Studies outcomes. We learn how people have come to reside in Eadar Glinn and what life was like for them as children. We also consult the residents to find out what aspects of our visits they like best. We also learn how the staff in Eadar Glinn help the residents. Through these experiences, the children show consideration for others, take on roles of responsibility, learn to self-regulate and learn to ask for any information they may need to help things make sense in their own minds.

As each group takes its turn, we see our children grow from shy, sometimes uncomfortable children in a new situation, to feeling very much at home in Eadar Glinn. They are confident in reaching out to residents and interacting with them - singing and dancing with the residents and actively encouraging their involvement in play. The conversations, hugs and kindness shared between the two groups adds to the benefits of this partnership for everyone involved.

### Key Points to Consider:

- Ensure the staff member leading is the right person for the job - they are comfortable in making conversations and promoting the relationships between adults and children and they help to boost the children's confidence in interacting with the residents by being supportive and encouraging.
- Ensure robust Risk Assessments are in place - travel, incident, accident.
- Ensure permission is granted from parents/carers for children to attend.
- Ensure permission for photos is granted from all involved-including residents and staff from the home.
- Ensure correct procedures for social media posting of photos is followed and permission from resident's families has been given.
- Be prepared - organise activities where the children and adults can work together.
- Try to get ideas for activities from residents themselves or their key workers.

### Case Study Two – Apple Tree Nursery Approach to Partnerships

There is a wealth of free talent and knowledge waiting to be used in our 'partnership pedagogy'. We asked one of our parents who was of Chinese background to do a cookery session with our children. The parent feedback was so positive that we held twilight cook workshops and one of our artistic parents even developed recipe cards. One of our current partnerships is with construction workers who are working on a building site close to the nursery.





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They are our neighbours and we daily see a vision of 'high viz' and hard hats. The construction company are keen for their workers to engage with the local community, so our view was, 'If you don't ask, you will never know'! As a result of our new partnership, the construction workers have engaged in the following fantastic activities:

- Football coaching
- Landscaping our greenhouse
- Judging competitions
- Providing high viz vests and hard hats for loose parts

Being actively involved in your community creates an aura of belonging and recognition. Developing partnerships provides opportunities for us to pull resources and plans together to provide a unique portfolio of high quality memories and experiences for our children.

Listed below are further examples of potential partners in your community. However, this list could go on and on...

### ***Who are your potential partners?***

### ***How are you going to make those connections which will provide even greater breadth and depth to children's learning experiences?***

- Children
- Parents/Carers/Families
- Management Board/Committee/Parent Council/Stakeholders
- Staff Teams
- Multi – Agency e.g. Health Visitor, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Children's Health Team, Local Authority Departments
- Intergenerational – links with older people in the community
- Services – ferry, bus, train, library van, police, fire, ambulance
- Community – e.g. businesses, charities, shops, supermarkets, places of worship, local trusts, tradesmen, artists, Fair Share providers, food banks
- Community groups – book clubs, historical, nature, art, music
- Sport and Recreational – e.g. mini kickers, swimming pool,
- National groups – Grounds for Learning, Bord na Gaidhlig, Bookbug, Play, Talk, Read
- International Links – e.g. Mary's Meals, Fair Trade, Save the Children, UNICEF
- Other Educational Settings – e.g. colleges, schools, nurseries, childminders
- Governing Bodies – e.g. Care Inspectorate, SSSC, Education Scotland



**To help establish successful partnerships please consider these reflective questions to evaluate your setting's progress and development:**

1. What approach do you take to actively seek out, promote and respond positively to potential partnerships which will lead to better outcomes for children?
2. What makes your partnerships successful and how do you learn from what is working well?
3. What evidence do you have of the added value partnership working brings and what difference it makes to your children?
4. In what ways do you share the purpose of your curriculum framework with children, parents, practitioners and partners? What difference does this make to your practice?
5. What do you do to encourage a child's sense of belonging and increase their knowledge within their wider community?
6. Have you thought about using help from colleagues in the community? If so, what are the possibilities?

Argyll and Bute Early Years Quality Action Group  
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Argyll and Bute Early Years 'Three Assets Approach'

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