



The Natural Health Award
Early Years

Foreword

The Natural Health Award was developed by NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association. We would like to thank all the partners who took the time and made the effort to help develop this Award.

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NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service
May 2025



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Introduction

There has been increasing recognition in recent years of the health benefits that occur as a result of getting outside into nature. This is the case for all of us, but in particular for children. Play Scotland recognise that “[contact with nature for as little as ten minutes, can have a positive impact on childrens’ cognitive functioning.](#)” (1)

If you work with children, you are probably already carrying out many of the activities. The award offers a framework for these activities to sit within and supports you to expand on them and encourages group work. In this way each activity can maximise the child’s wellbeing.

Families can be encouraged to become involved through participating in activities carried out at home. This highlights the positives of taking part and the benefits ripple out to parents, carers and siblings.

You can play a significant part in increasing children’s physical and mental wellbeing by developing and nurturing an interest and love of nature. Not only does this improve their health now, but also their future health; what they learn as children follows them into adult life.

“We know the benefits of outdoor learning, exercise and play for young children in terms of their health and wellbeing and their physical and cognitive development. Playing, learning and having fun outdoors helps to improve wellbeing and resilience, increase health through physical activity and allows children to use the natural world to help develop curiosity and science skills.” ~ Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland 2020 (2)



Welcome to the Natural Health Award

The Award is flexible and self-regulated. It provides a framework and the goal of achieving a certificate on completion from NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service. It is suitable for all ages and can be adapted to suit the needs of the individuals or groups taking part. Working as part of a group is to be encouraged wherever possible.

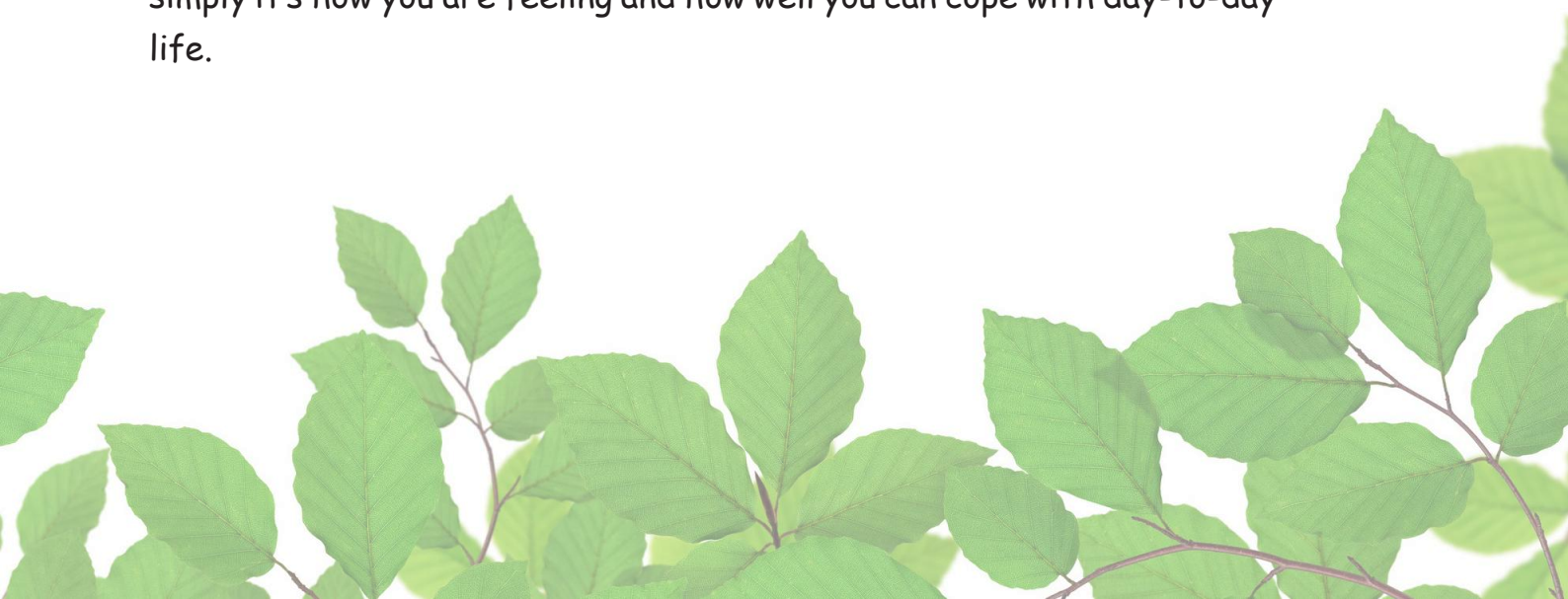
The purpose of the award is to:

- Increase physical activity
- Get people outside and connecting with the natural environment
- Promote mental wellbeing
- Increase resilience

The Award focuses on taking part in fun activities which gets us more physically active outside and at the same time, closer to the natural world. Whatever our age, there is strong evidence that being physically active can help us lead healthier and happier lives (3). Further information on the importance of physical activity is on pages 35-36.

The 'five ways to mental wellbeing' are set at the heart of this new award. These are explained on pages 32-34. The Centre for Wellbeing at the New Economics Foundation developed the 'five ways to mental wellbeing' which are evidence-based activities to improve people's wellbeing based on worldwide research (4).

Mental wellbeing can be defined as 'feeling good and functioning well'. Put simply it's how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life.



The Award also recognises the growing evidence of the beneficial effects to our mental wellbeing that contact with the natural world can have (5) particularly so for children and young people (6) (7). The activities should, therefore, take place outside whenever possible.

Finally the importance of developing resilience is acknowledged and embedded into the award using the Resilience Framework developed by Boingboing (8). Resilience is the ability to cope with what life throws at us. This is further explained on pages 40-41.

Increasing resilience is also known to reduce the negative impacts on health from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Please see pages 37-39 for more information on ACEs (9).

Improving social and emotional wellbeing in early years is recognised as one of the most effective means of addressing health inequalities (10).

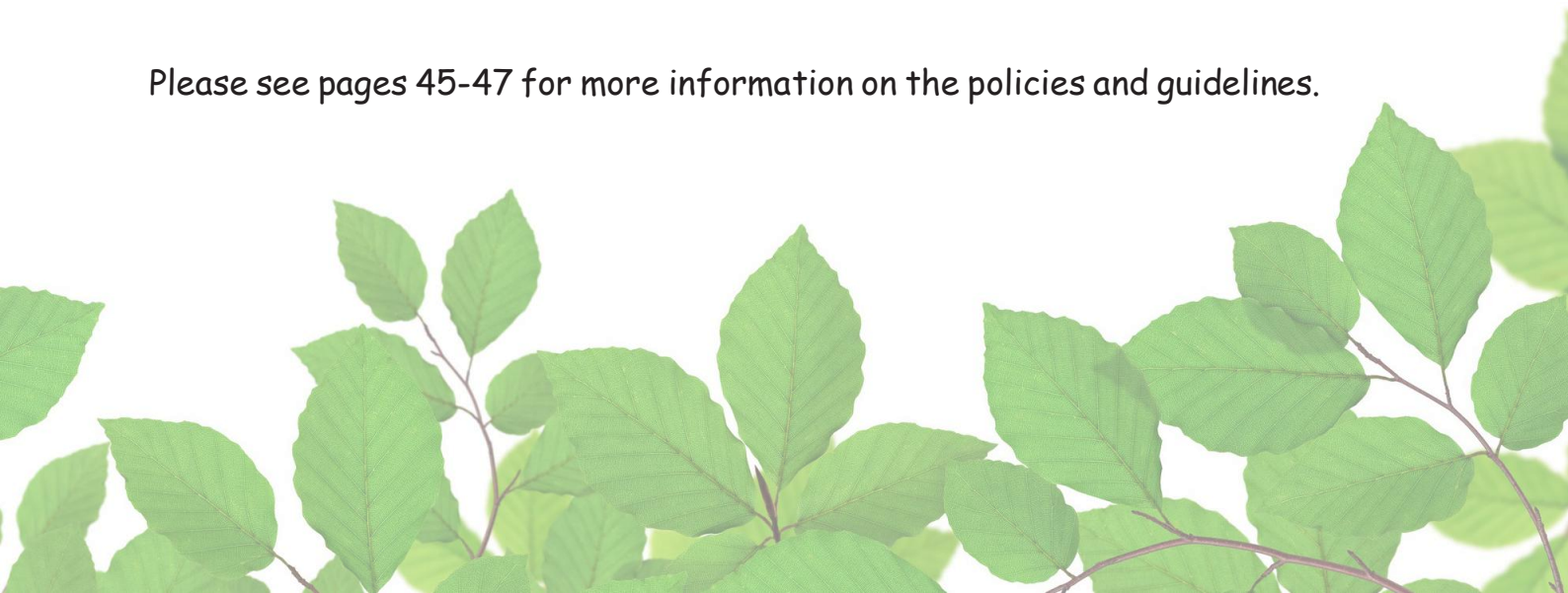
The Award is written in line with current Scottish Government policies and guidelines. It links the following relevant publications and blends theory into practise:

- Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Health and Social Care Standards
- Realising the Ambition
- Curriculum for Excellence



It provides a practical tool which promotes active and fun learning in the outdoors and gives structure to these activities in line with the expectations of organizations, such as the Care Inspectorate.

Please see pages 45-47 for more information on the policies and guidelines.



What's in the Award

The Award has 15 activities in total. You can complete each activity in one go. It can be done in short slots throughout the day or over several sessions, whatever suits you best. The Award can be condensed into a few days or spread out over several weeks.

The amount of time spent on each activity should be varied according to the age and ability of the participants. For example, activities for a toddler may last half an hour whereas an activity aimed at an adolescent may last two hours or longer.

All activities are designed to be flexible enough to enable the Award to suit the needs, interest, ability and age range of the group taking part.

Physical activity should be built into the activities as much as possible. The activities can be used to encourage people to meet the daily recommended levels for physical activity through active play.

The activities should be appropriate for the people taking part i.e. age, stage of development, mental and physical ability.

If working with children each activity should have free play added at the start and/or end. This is known to promote exploration, imaginative play, discovery, freedom, curiosity, enquiry, creativity and independence. This, in turn, 'performs a crucial role in children's resilience, ability to deal with stress, anxiety and general wellbeing' (11).



Creativity and free play should be promoted through activities whenever possible. Where practical, work as a group. Findings from the evaluation of the Pilot Award displayed that participants found working as part of a wider group encouraged participation, motivated them to complete it and was simply more fun for everyone. It is known that regular active participation in group play and/or group activities is beneficial to all ages.

Resources are available through the Health Improvement Resource Service (HIRS) at NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service. You can borrow these to help you choose, organise and carry out activities.

You can also download lots of ideas for activities from:

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/activities/search/>

There are other sources of ideas, activities and support available from various organisations - see pages 50-51.



A word about the Award guidance

The only form that has to be completed is a certificate request (see page 11).

Please note:

- Most of it is optional, you can decide if it is useful to you or not.
- You don't need to use any of the forms if you don't want to.
- They are there to help you, they provide ideas and examples.

The examples are written in far greater detail than is required. These offer full explanations as a guide if you are struggling to come up with ideas.

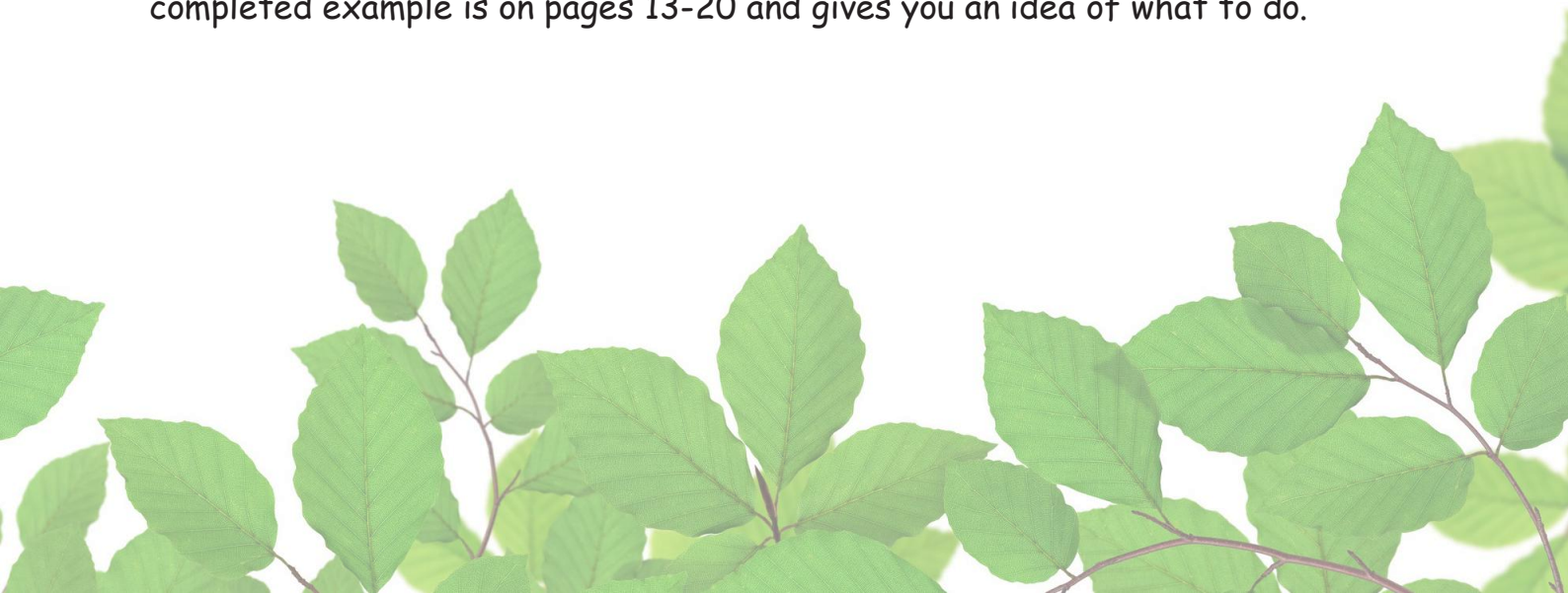
Background information is available on the evidence behind the content of the award. It is there for anyone who likes to fully understand why they are doing something.

You can find alternative ways of documenting the award e.g. plan with an ideas board or record using a photo board or memory book of photos, drawings, quotes and descriptions.

Examples of completed forms are available to assist you, followed by blank copies for you to complete, if you find them useful.

If you do decide to use them, please feel free to put bullet points with brief summaries of what you intend to do. You will see illustrations of both approaches in the 'proposal example'.

An Award proposal is supplied which you can use to write your ideas down. A completed example is on pages 13-20 and gives you an idea of what to do.



A blank form is provided on pages 21-24 which can be used to evidence your work for organisational audits or Care Inspectorate requirements.

If you decide to use the form it can be hand written or typed. We will not be overseeing what you do, as this is a self assessment award.

The information provided is there to make things easier for you, not to make things harder. Please use it in a way that helps you.



What you need to do to get the Award

There are three activities under each of the 'five ways to mental wellbeing', two are 'core' and one is a 'free choice'. So in total the award consists of 15 activities to be completed.

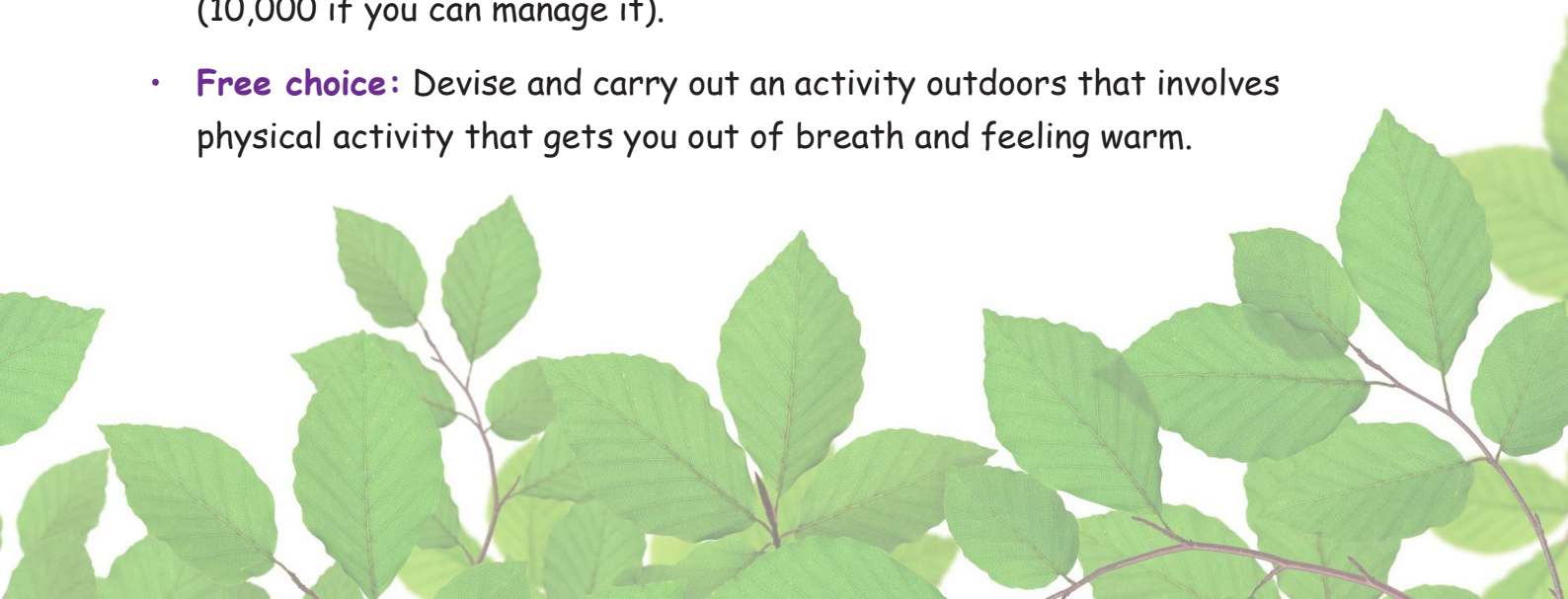
All activities should take place outside wherever possible and should include as much physical activity as is suitable to the group taking part. Try and incorporate free play and creativity whenever you can. Working as part of a wider group is encouraged where practical.

Give...

- **Core:** Take part in an activity which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. make and put up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, clear a pond, plant wild flowers for bumble bees or butterflies etc.
- **Core:** Bring out your creative side and make something involving natural materials and give it as a gift to someone.
- **Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors which incorporates the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'.

Be active...

- **Core:** Visit a wooded area - devise an activity which explores the area and involves at least 30 minutes of physical activity.
- **Core:** Be an explorer, walk 1,000 steps observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. See how many 1,000 steps you can do, (10,000 if you can manage it).
- **Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors that involves physical activity that gets you out of breath and feeling warm.



Keep learning...

- **Core:** Choose a creature, plant or tree, get outside and study it and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject.
- **Core:** Learn about an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, see page 46 for further information. Put into practice some of what you have learnt.
- **Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors which incorporates the 'natural world', 'learning' and 'physical activity'.

Take notice...

- **Core:** Make a piece of natural art and take photos to record it.
- **Core:** Choose an activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world.
- **Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors which incorporates the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'.

Connect...

- **Core:** Take part in an activity which enables you to share some of your experiences with other people.
- **Core:** Take part in a group activity outdoors.
- **Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors which incorporates the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'.

You can read about why these five areas can make a real difference to our health and wellbeing on pages 32-34.



Sample Award Guidance



Sample Award Guidance

The following provides guidance which you may find useful for planning, recording and reflecting on experiences whilst working on the Award.

Some of the forms have been developed by childminders to help provide evidence for care inspection purposes. These have links to the Scottish Government Policies: GIRFEC, Health & Social Care Standards, Realising the Ambition and Curriculum for Excellence see pages 45-47.

However, it can be used by other organisations but may require some adaptation to ensure it meets the needs of the individual organisations.

There are examples of completed forms and also blank copies to assist you. The only form that has to be completed is a certificate request. It gathers information on the number, age and postcode of the people who took part. The request form is a separate document and should have also been given to you along with the pack. If not please get back in touch with the original supplier.

The proposal example has been completed in more detail than is required, in order to fully explain how each activity can be achieved.

If you decide you would find it useful, it can be completed in less detail by using bullet points as an example

The Award guidance provided is there to try to make things easier for you not to make things harder, so please use it in a way that helps you.



Award proposal - example

This proposal is to help you put your ideas down. You can complete it in a way that suits you or decide not to use it at all. It can be hand written or typed. You may find it to be a useful tool to document activities for using as evidence at care inspections.

Name of group:

Age range:

Number in group:

Postcode of group:

How many males:

How many females:

Name of contact person:

Address:

Phone number:

Mobile:

Email:

Start date:

End date:

Total hours to be spent on activities:

Be active...

Core 1: Visit a wooded area - devise an activity which explores the area and involves at least 30 minutes of physical activity. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Visit park
- Tree run
- Finding worksheet
- Keeping safe

Or: We will visit the park and play a game where the adults identify a tree that the children are to run to, they will then point to a second and third tree and so on.

We will then use a 'Finding Worksheet' to direct the children to find items listed on the sheet. This will involve them first finding sticks for markers and then discussing and identifying the boundaries of the area that they will stay within for the activity before marking it with the sticks.

We will discuss 'keeping safe' - this will include not putting anything in their mouth except snacks, keeping adults in sight at all times, not picking anything that is growing, identifying plants that could hurt them etc.

The children will then run around the area, taking responsibility for finding items. Both activities will help them to explore the park and trees in a fun way.

Core 2: Be like an explorer, walk 1,000 steps (10,000 if you can manage it) observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Walk in the park
- Count steps
- Take photos every 50 steps

Or: We will go for a walk in the park and count our steps by using a pedometer borrowed from the Health Improvement Service, NHS Forth Valley. Every 50 steps we will stop and the children will look for something e.g. a plant, insect, stone, flower or bird to take a photo of.

Each child will take a turn to take a photo of the item that they have decided on. We aim to have a minimum of 20 photos at the end of the walk. We will count the total number of steps we take throughout the day.

Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity outdoors that involves physical activity for at least 30 mins. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Play 'hide and seek'
- Play 'tig'

Or: We will play 'hide and seek' and 'tig' outside for at least 30 mins and until we are out of breath and feel warm.

Take notice...

Core 1: Make a piece of natural art outside and take photos to record it. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Make a hedgehog
- Take photos

Or: We will collect natural materials from around the park and bring them together and make a hedgehog as a group activity.

We will search for items that could be used for spikes, smooth dark objects to make the nose and eyes, pale items for the face and something that we can make feet from.

Once we have finished, we will leave the hedgehog for others to enjoy, take photos and have them printed so that everyone gets a copy.

Core 2: Choose an outdoor activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Find leaves
- Sort leaves
- Leaf rubbings

Or: We will search for as many different leaves as we can. We will then lay them out into groups:

- Leaves that have the same shape
- A row of leaves from smallest to biggest
- Leaves that are the same colour
- Leaves that have spots on them
- Leaves that have been eaten by insects
- A row of leaves from the lightest to the darkest

We will take some leaf rubbings to take home with us.

Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Make a 'journey stick'
- Journey stick 'show and tell'

Or: We will make a 'journey stick'. We will go for a walk and find a good strong stick each at the start of the walk. We will find objects that we like along the way and tie them to our stick with wool or string. We will tie them on in the order that we find them.

When we go home we will each take a turn to talk about the things we have on our stick and what we like about them.

Keep learning...

Core 1: Choose a creature, plant or tree, get outside and study it and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Topic of owls
- Borrow resources
- Group stories
- Owl sounds
- Owl plates
- Owl hunt

Or: We chose the topic of owls. We will borrow some books, soft toys and an owl whistle from the Health Improvement Service, NHS Forth Valley.

We will have group stories and we will each have a chance to use the whistle to make an owl hoot and press the button on the bird song book to hear an owl hoot.

We will make paper plate owls (google 'paper plate owls' to see ideas), the adults will hide them in an outside area. The children will close their eyes while an adult hides near one of the owls and makes an occasional 'twit twoo' sound to guide the children to the area each owl is hidden. The children then run around and hunt for the paper owls.

Core 2: Choose an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, see page 47 and describe how you will put into practice what you have learnt. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Gather information on the Code
- Make picture and word cards
- Matching game
- Discussion
- Use the Code when we are out

Or: We will look up information on the Code on the Internet. We will make up a set of cards with key messages on them. Each message will have a card with a picture for the younger children and a card with a written message for the older children.

The older children will read the word cards and the younger ones will find the picture cards. The adults will then facilitate discussions on each message.

When we go out we will help the children to remember the messages as situations come up e.g. closing gates behind us.

Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural environment', 'learning' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Bug hunt
- Photos
- Bug identification
- Study the bugs

Or: We will go on a bug hunt outside and either collect bugs or take photos of them. We will then try to identify the bugs using books or the internet.

We will borrow magnifying glasses and an insect study box from the Health Improvement Service, NHS Forth Valley, to study the insects closer.

Give...

Core 1: Take part in an activity which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. making and putting up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, clearing a pond, maintaining a path etc. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Make fat balls
- Hang them in the garden

Or: We will make fat balls with seeds in them and hang them up in the garden for the birds to feed from.

Core 2: Bring out your creative side and make something involving natural materials and give it as a gift to someone. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Plant bulbs
- Give them to someone

Or: We will plant bulbs into pots and give them to someone at home.

Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Litter pick

Or: We will go to an area of land near us and pick up litter and bin it.

Connect...

Core 1: Take part in an activity which enables you to let other people find out about what you have been doing. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Invite family etc. to a 'get together'
- Display photos etc.
- Support children to talk about what they've done

Or: We will host a get together. We will invite family and/or other childminders along to show them the things we have made and the photos we have taken.

The children will each be encouraged to talk about what they have made and what they are doing in the photos on display.

Core 2: Take part in a group activity outdoors. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Outdoor story
- Leaf storm
- Pair leaves
- Play leaf snap

Or: We will have an outdoor story and use an activity sheet from The Woodland Trust called 'Leaf Storm'. We will collect lots of leaves and pile them up and then make a storm by kicking and throwing them in the air.

We will then search for lots of pairs of leaves, we will share them out and have a game of 'leaf snap'.

Free choice: Devise and carry out one other outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this, you can simply write it as:

- Build a giant nest
- Bird story

Or: We will build a giant nest. We will use an activity sheet from The Woodland Trust called 'build a giant nest'.

We will look for a big flat space outside. We will search for sticks of all different sizes and make them into a circle overlapping them and building them up to make the sides of the nest. We will fill the middle with soft things that we find, such as dead leaves, grass & feathers.

We will sit inside the nest and have a story read to us about birds.

Please remember these are examples and ideas, you can choose whether you want to use these activities or not. You can have a look at the many websites and books for suggestions or come up with your own ideas.

You can match activities to your group's needs, the resources you have, the local area and/or the season. This is your award and it's important that it meets your needs.



Award proposal - blank

This proposal is to help you put your ideas down. You can complete it in a way that suits you or decide not to use it at all. It can be hand written or typed. You may find it to be a useful tool to document activities for using as evidence at care inspections.

Name of group:

Age range:

Number in group:

Postcode of group:

How many males:

How many females:

Name of contact person:

Address:

Phone number:

Mobile:

Email:

Start date:

End date:

Total hours to be spent on activities:

Be active...

Core 1: Visit a wooded area - devise an activity which explores the area and involves at least 30 minutes of physical activity. Describe how you will do this:

Core 2: Be like an explorer, walk 1,000 steps (10,000 if you can manage it) observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. Describe how you will do this:

Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity outdoors that involves physical activity for at least 30 mins. Describe how you will do this:

Take notice...

Core 1: Make a piece of natural art outside and take photos to record it. Describe how you will do this:

Core 2: Choose an outdoor activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world. Describe how you will do this:

Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:

Keep learning...

Core 1: Choose a creature, plant or tree and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject. Describe how you will do this:

Core 2: Choose an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code see page 47 and describe how you will put into practice what you have learnt. Describe how you will do this:

Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural environment', 'learning' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:

Give...

Core 1: Take part in an activity which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. making and putting up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, clearing a pond, maintaining a path etc. Describe how you will do this:

Core 2: Make something involving natural materials and give it as a gift to someone. Describe how you will do this:

Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:

Connect

Core 1: Take part in an activity which enables you to let other people find out about what you have been doing. Describe how you will do this:

Core 2: Take part in a group activity outdoors. Describe how you will do this:

Free choice: Devise and carry out one other activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:



Activities achieved - example

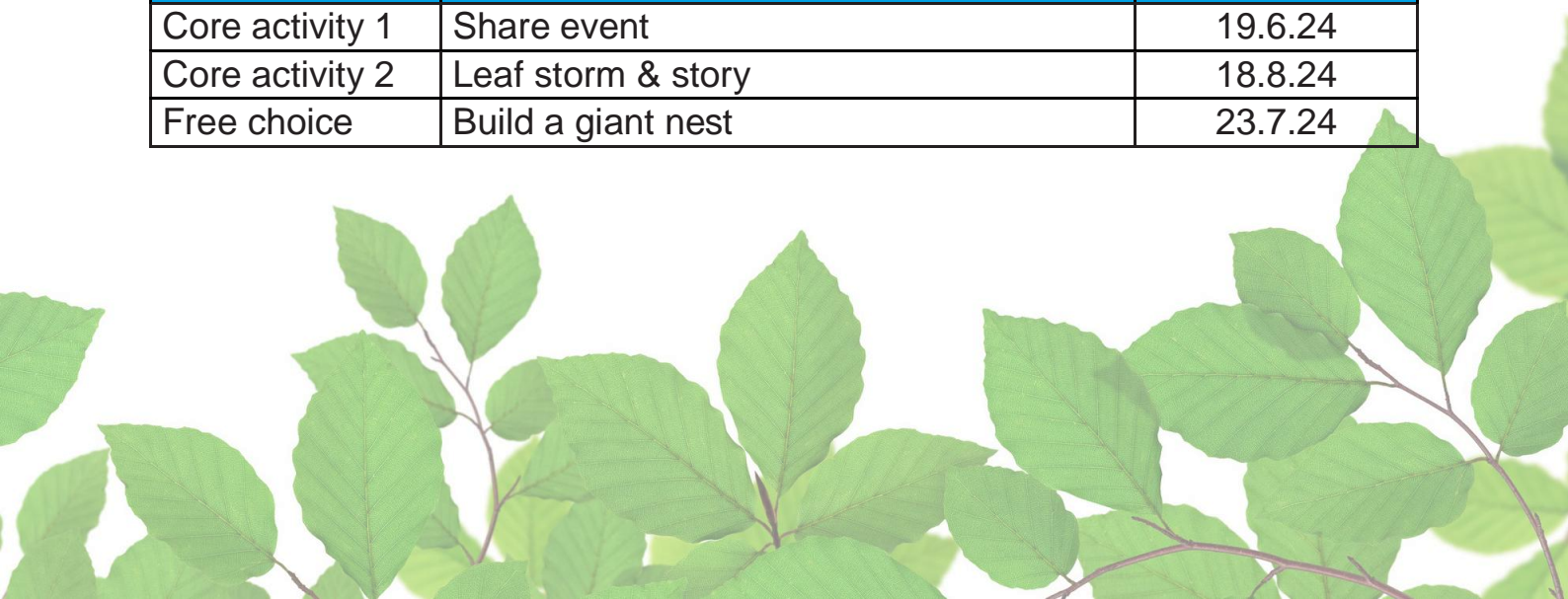
Be active	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Park - tree run and finding worksheet	3.5.25
Core activity 2	Photo steps activity	3.4.25
Free choice	Playing "hide and seek" and "tig"	12.4.25

Take notice	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Made a hedgehog from natural materials	15.4.25
Core activity 2	Searched for leaves and put them into groups	16.4.25
Free choice	Made a journey stick	7.5.25

Keep learning	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Learn about owls	28.9.24
Core activity 2	Outdoor Access Code matching game	15.8.24
Free choice	Bug hunt	23.6.24

Give	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Made fat balls to feed birds	15.6.24
Core activity 2	Planted bulbs into pots	18.6.24
Free choice	Litter pick	15.6.24

Connect	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Share event	19.6.24
Core activity 2	Leaf storm & story	18.8.24
Free choice	Build a giant nest	23.7.24



Activities achieved - blank

Be active	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Take notice	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Keep learning	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Give	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Connect	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		



Natural Health Award

Outcomes & reflection (example) Date: 26/7/24

Child and age	Activity	Risk/benefit assessed	Potential outcomes
Joanna - 3 Edward - 4 Samantha - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit park • Art using natural resources • Finding items worksheet • Group games 	Yes ✓ No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun • Discovering • Exploring • Communication • Group work
Outcomes - Health and Social Care Standards. My support, my life.			
If you want to document how you are working within the Health and Social Care Standards, please document the Standard and how it is being achieved here: e.g. Standard 1.25: took part in an outdoor activity			
Outcomes - SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators - How did the children benefit?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took part in assessing risks and benefits of activities (Safe) • Fresh air, active, played, fun, discovered, freedom, better mood (Healthy) • Found items, made a hedgehog, proud of hedgehog, learnt skills (Achieving) • Praised, encouraged, appropriately dressed, interacting (Nurtured) • Ran, climbed, energetically played, explored, balancing, hunting for items (Active) • Listened to, involved, communicated, made choices, consulted (Respected) • Found specific items, helped each other, listened to instructions (Responsible) • Worked and played as a group, everyone involved, contributed ideas (Included) 			
Outcomes - Curriculum for Excellence			
If you want to document how you are working within the Curriculum for Excellence, please document the relevant Indicator and how it is being achieved here: e.g. Indicator HWB 0-24a: I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play.			

Natural Health Award

Outcomes & reflection (example) Date: 26/7/24

Reflection	
The children's experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the area to stay within and marked it. • Explored the woodland and found chestnuts. • Smelt different items, wood, grass, leaves. • Made an amazing hedgehog with leaves and twigs. • Climbed trees. • Played hide and seek.
The children's communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joanna - This leaf smells funny like Daddy's socks. • Edward - This tree is wrinkly, I think a crocodile would feel like this. • Samantha - We were careful not to go past the sticks.
The children's feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed the activity. • Wanted to research chestnuts and where they come from. • Talked about not climbing any higher to stay safe. • Samantha - the best bit was finding the leaves to make the hedgehog. • Joanna - I liked climbing the tree, I was the highest. • Edward - I liked the feel of the tree.
Childminder's reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children really enjoyed the activity. • Research chestnuts and write and draw what we find out. • Will go back and do tree rubbings and use the rubbings to make crocodile pictures. • Children were calmer and kinder to each other after the activity. • An activity definitely worth repeating.

Outcomes & reflection (blank)

Date:

Child and age	Activity	Risk/benefit assessed	Potential outcomes
		Yes No	
Outcomes - Health and Social Care Standards. My support, my life.			
Outcomes - SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators - How did the children benefit?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Safe) • (Healthy) • (Achieving) • (Nurtured) • (Active) • (Respected) • (Responsible) • (Included) 			
Outcomes - Curriculum for Excellence			

Outcomes & reflection (blank)

Date:

Reflection	
The children's experience	
The children's communications	
The children's feedback	
Childminder's Reflection	

Further information

- The 'five ways to mental wellbeing'
- Physical activity and active play
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Resilience
- Children and young people
- Risk in play
- Scottish Government policies & guidelines overview
- Illustrations of links between Scottish Government policies and guidelines
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code



The 'five ways to mental wellbeing'

Most of us know that we can improve our physical health by eating '5 a day' of fruit and vegetables, but did you know there are five ways to improve our mental wellbeing? These are **Give**, **Be active**, **Keep learning**, **Take notice** and **Connect**.

They are research based, yet simple ways, that we can all try to increase our sense of wellbeing and get the best out of life (4).

Give... Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

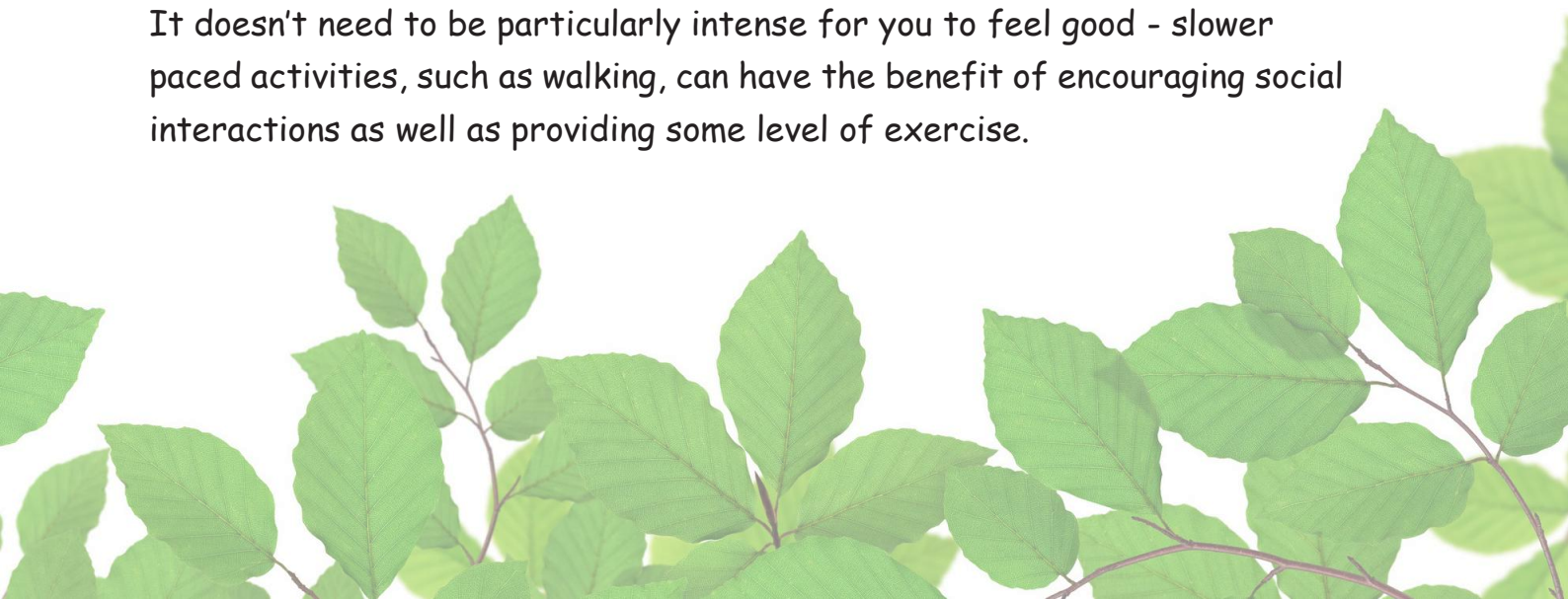
When we are kind and generous to others it triggers the reward mechanisms in our brain. This increases our own sense of happiness whilst spreading happiness to others.

Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Do something nice for a friend or even a stranger. Giving is not just about things that cost money. It can be giving your time, a compliment, a smile or a thank you, simply being kind to people. Remember and take time to treat yourself too.

Be active... Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

It doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good - slower paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well as providing some level of exercise.



You don't need to run a marathon or go to the gym - dance, swim, play a game, garden, cycle, anything you enjoy. Even 10 minutes of physical activity a day can make a difference to your mental wellbeing. It is especially good if it's with other people, having a laugh and having fun.

Keep learning... Lifelong learning improves self-esteem and promotes positive social relationships and a sense of interest in the wider world.

Learning makes us more confident. Working towards goals can give a sense of achievement. Try something new or rediscover an old hobby.

Learn to cook, change a wheel or sign up for that class. Learning is much more than formal education, it is anything that supports curiosity and encourages discovery.

Take notice... Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and savouring 'the moment' can help to remind you of what's important in life.

Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

Take time out to really notice what's around you. Listen to the birds, watch the clouds, find out what 'mindfulness' is, be creative - anything that allows your mind time to calm down and be still. Thinking back on experiences can help you realise what really matters



Connect... There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world.

It's clear that an individual's social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

Feeling connected to people around us is a basic human need and is important for mental wellbeing. Put time and effort into building stronger relationships. Take up a hobby that involves other people. Volunteering is great as it gives a sense of belonging and feeling needed. Make time for friends.

Although these 'five ways to mental wellbeing' were originally developed for use with adults, research carried out by the Children's Society found that:

"... the five ways framework, originally proposed on the basis of research with adults, is also useful for considering the connections between children's everyday activities and their sense of well-being.

The research provides support for the relevance of all of the five ways to children's lives and also suggests some ways in which this framework might be extended in relation to children (e.g. the additional value of activities relating to play and creativity and the importance of autonomy)" (12).

Further information on the benefits of children taking part in the Award and considerations to be taken into account are laid out on pages 42-44.



Physical activity and active play

The Stay Active report was produced by the four UK Chief Medical Officers at the time (3). It recognises that there is a growing trend towards people spending more time indoors sitting in front of screens and other electronic equipment.

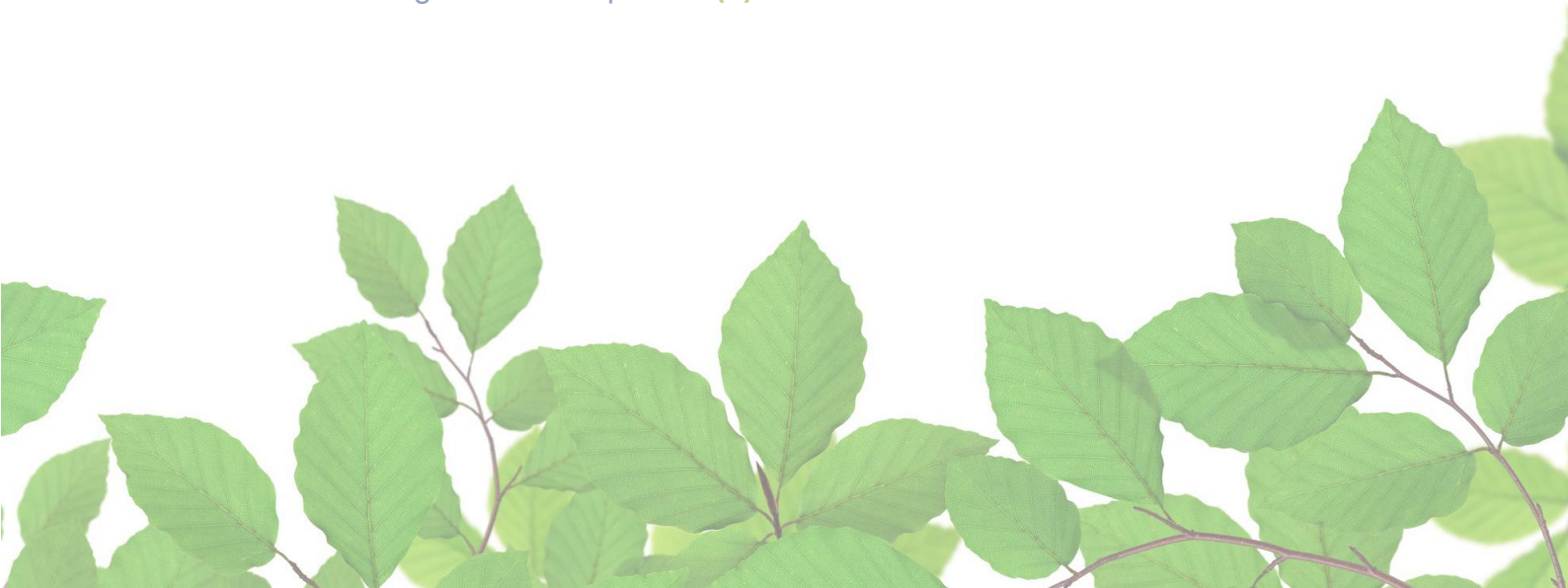
It highlights that through increasing our physical activity and getting outside we could all improve our physical and mental health and we could live longer. It states that “physical activity has very low risks for most children and young people; however, the risk of poor health from inactivity is very high” (3).

The report acknowledges the importance of children having positive experiences of physical activity, as it increases the likelihood of them remaining active as they get older. It recognises that children need a chance to assess and manage physical risk for themselves as this promotes development of their social and physical skills.

It reflects growing awareness that creating healthy patterns of behaviour early on, has a positive impact upon our health as adults.

Play Scotland's - Getting It Right for Play (GIRFP) reports that “children who are active as toddlers and grow up enjoying physically active play, especially in natural environments, may have better health and a longer life than those who are sedentary from early childhood” (1).

Physical activity reduces the risk of obesity for all ages. Evidence is emerging that sedentary behaviour in the under 5s “is associated with overweight and obesity, as well as lower cognitive development” (3).



Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

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



BUILDS
RELATIONSHIPS
& SOCIAL SKILLS



MAINTAINS
HEALTH &
WEIGHT



CONTRIBUTES TO
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
& LEARNING



IMPROVES
SLEEP



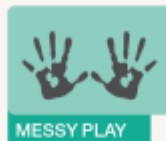
DEVELOPS
MUSCLES
& BONES



ENCOURAGES
MOVEMENT
& CO-ORDINATION

Every movement counts

Aim for at least
180
Minutes
per day
for children 1-5 years



Under-1s
at least
30 minutes
across the day



Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

[UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines \(13\)](#)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are traumatic and harmful experiences in childhood. They include abuse, neglect and adversities within the family home. See the infographic on page 43 for more information.

Substantial research has indicated that ACEs, particularly in the early years, can lead to considerably harmful levels of stress. This can seriously impact on healthy brain development, decreasing the ability of the child to think, learn or interact with others and producing lasting detrimental effects to mental and physical health (14).

The effects of ACEs should not be seen as inevitable. We can all help in reducing the impact ACEs have on children. It is recognised that building children's resilience can lessen the impact of ACEs on children's health now and in the future (9).

The resilience section on pages 40-41 describes how the Award can be used to increase resilience.

Play Scotland have reported that the most vulnerable of Scottish children face the greatest inequalities in accessing safe outdoor play. The Award will hopefully help to motivate and encourage adults caring for children to spend more quality time outside in the natural environment (1).

It is highlighted that traumatised children can struggle to develop the capacity for creative play, leading to a lack of problem solving skills and affecting their ability to socialise. These children need maximum opportunities for creative play.



It has been shown that being amongst nature can foster play, inspire creativity and 'stimulate children's imagination' (1).

Playing in natural environments 'gives children a sense of freedom, healthier personal development, increased cognitive functioning, emotional resilience and opportunities for self discovery' (1).



For children subjected to recurring stress, being amongst nature can reduce their anxiety and increase their sense of self-worth. It has also been shown to have a positive effect on children diagnosed with ADHD. There is expanding evidence that children's mental wellbeing is positively impacted by spending time outside with nature, including playing (15).

This award can be used to encourage children who have had ACEs to experience nature and promote physically active play, creative play and free play. It can support children to experience activities in a group environment and have fun. In addition, the opportunity to achieve a certificate, sticker and attend an award ceremony gives vulnerable children an extra chance to shine.



THE TRUTH ABOUT ACEs

WHAT ARE THEY?

ACEs are
ADVERSE
CHILDHOOD
EXPERIENCES

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse

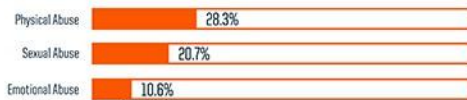


Divorce

HOW PREVALENT ARE ACEs?

The ACE study* revealed the following estimates:

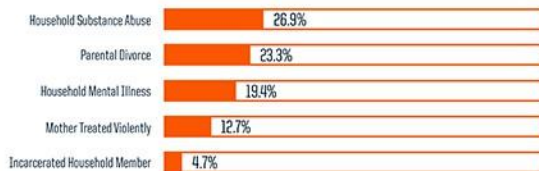
ABUSE



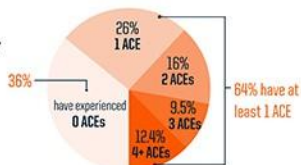
NEGLECT



HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

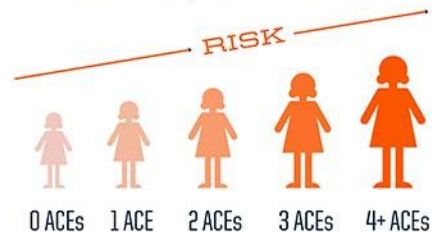


Of 17,000 ACE study participants:



WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



Possible Risk Outcomes:

BEHAVIOR



PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



Resilience

Resilience is simply our ability as humans to bounce back from whatever life throws at us and do better than could be expected in the circumstances. It is recognised that some people have greater resilience than others and seem to be more able to cope with life's ups and downs.

Increasing resilience is recognised as one of the key means of reducing the impact of ACEs (9).

Resilience can be improved and built on. Practical ways of increasing resilience in adults, children and young people are provided in a clear and concise framework developed by Boingboing (8).

The Resilience Framework visually shows you how Boingboing split their ideas under five headings - Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping and Core Self. Within each of these is a selection of evidenced based ideas to improve resilience.

There is a copy of Boingboing's Resilience Framework for children and young people on page 39. The ideas which have a yellow star next to them are the ones that should happen naturally through the delivery of the Award activities. They should not incur any additional work for you but it's worth keeping them in mind when taking part in your activities.

A similar framework designed for increasing adults resilience can be downloaded at:

<https://www.boingboing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/resilience-framework-adults-2012.pdf> (8)



Resilience Framework

<https://www.boingboing.org.uk/use-resilience> (8)

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2015 – adapted from Hart & Blincow 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk

SPECIFIC APPROACHES									
BASICS		BELONGING		LEARNING		COPING		CORE SELF	
Good enough housing	Enough money to live	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong		Make school/college life work as well as possible		★ Understanding boundaries and keeping within them		Instil a sense of hope	
		Help child/YP understand their place in the world		Engage mentors for children/YP		★ Being brave		Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings	
★ Being safe	Access & transport	★ Tap into good influences		Map out career or life plan		★ Solving problems		★	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
		Keep relationships going		Help the child/YP to organise her/himself		Putting on rose-tinted glasses		★	
	Healthy diet	The more healthy relationships the better		★	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	★ Fostering their interests		★	Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself
	Exercise and fresh air	Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope				Calming down & self-soothing		★	
★ Enough sleep	★ Play & leisure	★ Focus on good times and places		★	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day		★	Foster their talents
		Make sense of where child/YP has come from				Lean on others when necessary		★	
		★ Predict a good experience of someone or something new		★	Develop life skills	★ Have a laugh			There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination	★ Make friends and mix with other children/YPs							
NOBLE TRUTHS									
ACCEPTING	CONSERVING			COMMITMENT			ENLISTING		

Children and young people

The Care Inspectorate states that:

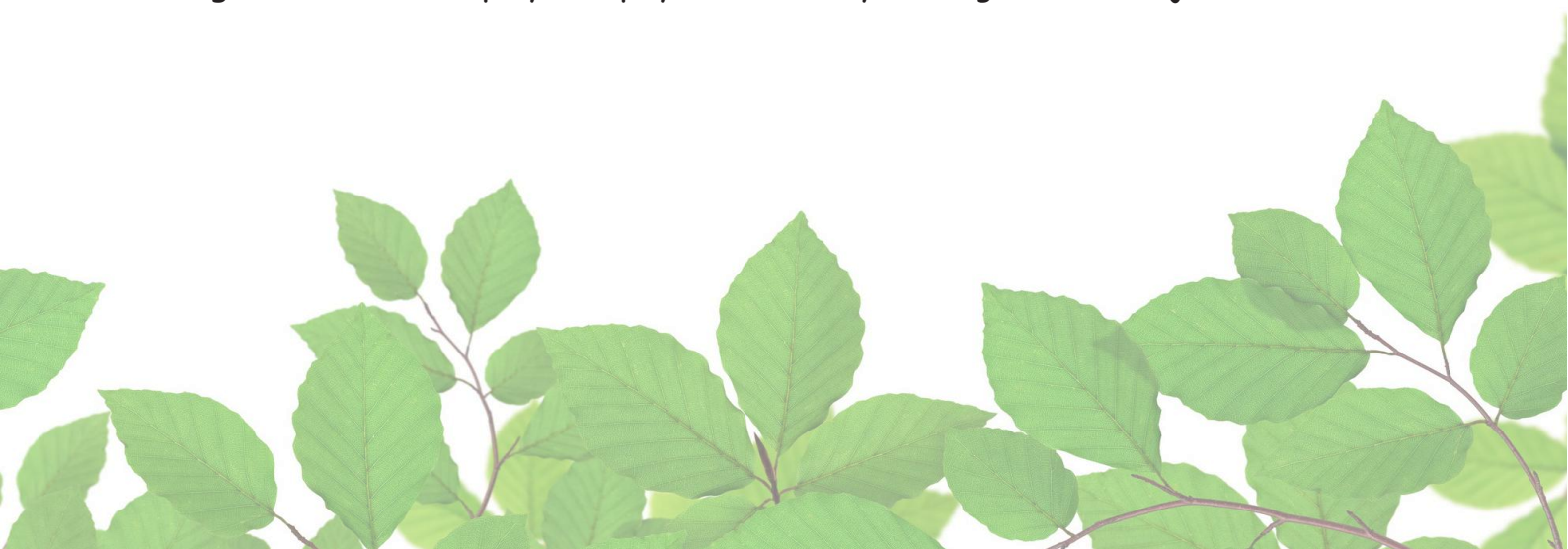
“Children’s experiences and their capacity to learn and develop are enhanced by being able to experience nature first hand. Simply being outside in fresh air is beneficial, but when children are helped to actively explore nature themselves the dividends for improving outcomes are exponential. If staff help children to develop their own free-flow play activities outdoors and learn through nature, then we are seeing children flourish. Many children become more confident, co-operative, calm and content” (7).

If the Natural Health Award is being used with children and young people, it can focus on the holistic wellbeing of the child, incorporating the eight SHANARRI wellbeing indicators as described in *Getting It Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC)

(17). Consideration should also be given to Curriculum for Excellence (23) and Health and Social Care Standards (20), if they are relevant to your role. Please see pages 45-47 for further information and why the documents are relevant. Research has also displayed that for children’s mental wellbeing, in addition to the ‘five ways to mental wellbeing’, play and creativity are essential (12).

“The fun and pleasure of playing is a vital part of a happy childhood as well as being crucial to children’s development as individuals and members of society” (18).

‘Improving outcomes and children’s quality of life through play’ is one of the 10 elements of transformational change set out in The Early Years Framework. Outdoor learning and outdoor play are identified as medium-term priorities along with increased play and physical activity as longer-term objectives (19).



Creativity, appropriate to the age of the child or young person, should be incorporated into all the activities you decide to do.

Free play should be built into the beginning and/or end of each activity. This promotes imagination, exploration, discovery, freedom, choice and independence which in turn “... performs a crucial role in children’s resilience, ability to deal with stress and anxiety and general wellbeing” (11).

Play Scotland - *Getting it Right for Play* cites:

Dietz (2001) “... opportunities for spontaneous play maybe the only requirement that young children need to increase their physical activity”.

and

Brockman (2011) “... these opportunities may be an exceptional way to increase physical activity levels while promoting optimal child development” (11).



Risk in play

Risk is no longer viewed as something that should be totally avoided. The risks must be balanced against the expected benefits.

It is accepted that for children to learn how to keep themselves safe, they must gain the ability to judge how risky a situation is.

In order for them to do this they need an opportunity to take part in activities where there is an element of risk. The award provides this type of activities.

Please see below what the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government's views are on risk in play.

The Care Inspectorate "... supports care service providers taking a positive approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. This means moving away from a traditional deficit model that takes a risk-averse approach, which can unnecessarily restrict children's experiences attending registered services, to a more holistic risk-benefit model. For example, we encourage services to use risk assessment to support children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities such as woodwork using real tools, exploring nature and playing in the mud and rain. We do not expect written risk assessments to be carried out for daily play activities" (7).

The Scottish Government "... aims to ensure all children and young people can access play opportunities in a range of settings which offer variety, adventure and challenge. They must be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, stage, ability and preference" (18).



Scottish Government policies & guidelines overview

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

There are eight GIRFEC wellbeing indicators. These should be taken into account if the award is being delivered with children or young people.

Every child or young person should be **Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible** and **Included**. The eight wellbeing indicators are collectively known as the **SHANARRI** indicators.

These eight **SHANARRI** indicators help make sure everyone: children, parents, and the people who work with them, have a common understanding of wellbeing. Everyone working with children and young people should be working within the **SHANARRI** indicators (17).

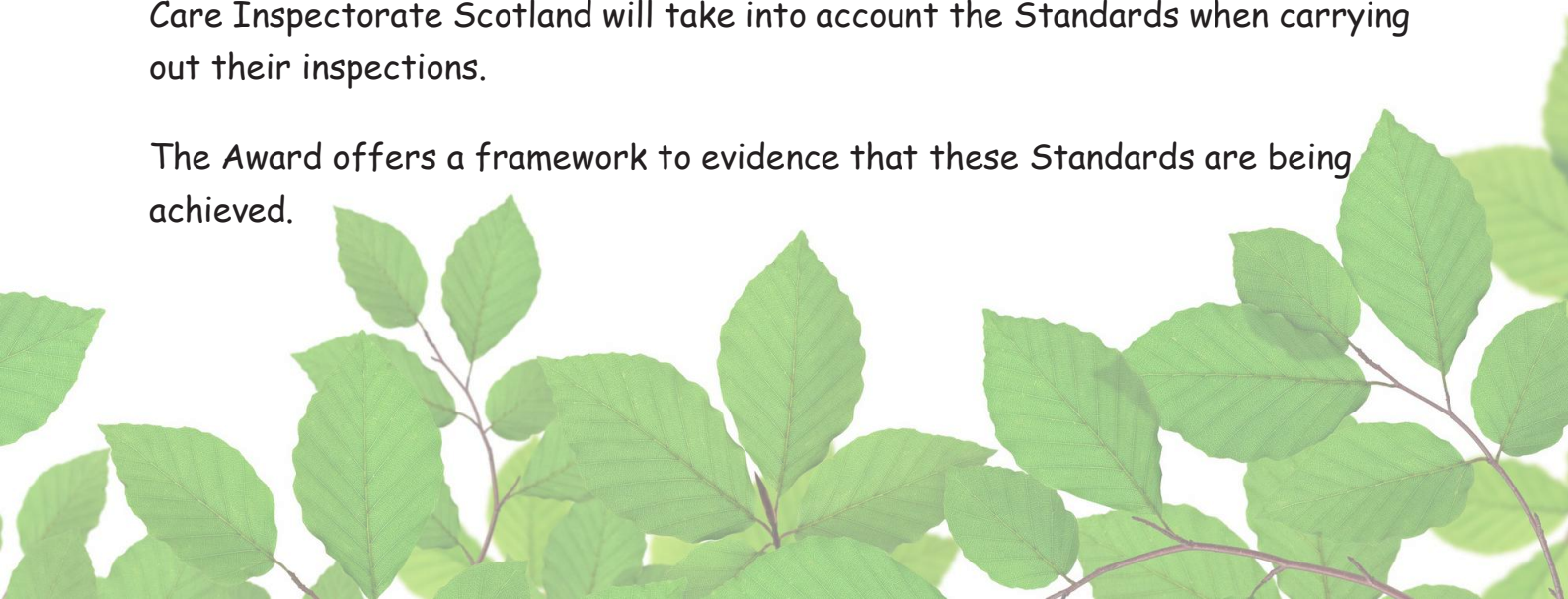
Health and Social Care Standards

The headline outcomes are:

1. I experience high quality care and support that is right for me.
2. I am fully involved in all decisions about my care and support.
3. I have confidence in the people who support and care for me.
4. I have confidence in the organisation providing my care and support.
5. I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises.

The Standards are underpinned by five principles: dignity and respect, compassion, be included, responsive care, and support and wellbeing. These are relevant to childminding and daycare for children in their early years (20). The Care Inspectorate Scotland will take into account the Standards when carrying out their inspections.

The Award offers a framework to evidence that these Standards are being achieved.



Realising the Ambition

Realising the Ambition is a document which provides national practice guidance. It is designed to help those involved in early learning and childcare put theory into practice (21). The Award links the current policies and guidelines and creates a practical tool from the theory.



Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence provides a flexible and enriched educational curriculum for all children and young people from 3-18. This includes all experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated.

The curriculum links closely with the Pre-Birth to Three framework, Building the Ambition guidance and should be referred to and considered when planning for children's overall, continuous development through the use of the Award (22).



Illustration of links between Scottish Government Policies and Guidelines

The example used in the Outcomes and Reflections grid on pages 25-26 is in line with The Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing and the Resilience Framework. The same example has been used below to illustrate how, without any additional work, Natural Health Award activities can also help to meet the various Scottish Government policies and guidelines.

Activity - visit park, art using natural materials, finding items worksheet, group games.

SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators (17)	Health & Social Care Standards (20)	Curriculum for Excellence indicators (23)
S (Safe) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> took part in assessing risks and benefits of activities 	2.24 - I make informed choices & decisions about the risks I take... 2.25 - I am helped to understand the impact & consequences of risky & unsafe behaviour...	HWB 0-16a I am learning to assess and manage risk... HWB 0-17a I know & can demonstrate how to keep myself & others safe...
H (Healthy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fresh air, active, played, fun, discovered, freedom, better mood 	1.25 - I can choose to have an active life... 1.32 - I play outdoors...	HWB 0-25a I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play HWB 0-27a I know that being active is a healthy way to be
A (Achieving) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> found items, made a hedgehog, proud of hedgehog, learnt skills 	1.31 - ... using open ended and natural materials 2.27 - ... direct my own play & activities... which stimulate my natural curiosity...	ExA 0-02a I have the freedom to discover & choose ways to create images & objects using a variety of materials SCN 0-15a Through creative play, I explore different materials
N (Nurtured) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> praised, encouraged, appropriately dressed, interacting 	3.10 - ... I feel valued, loved and secure	LIT 0-10a As I listen & take part in conversations & discussion, I discover new words.
A (Active) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ran, climbed, energetically played, explored, balancing, hunting for items 	1.25 - I can choose to have an active life... 1.32 - ... explore a natural environment	HWB 0-21c I am learning to move my body... control it... HWB 0-22a I am developing my movement skills...
R (Respected) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> listened to, involved, communicated, made choices, consulted 	3.10 - I feel valued, loved and secure	LIT 0-10a As I listen & take part in conversations & discussion, I discover new words.
R (Responsible) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> found specific items, helped each other, listened to instructions 	1.31 - ... my social & physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed ...	LIT 0-2a As I listen and talk in different situations, I am learning to take turns...
I (Included) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> worked and played as a group, everyone involved, contributed ideas 	1.11 - ... I can be with my peers unless this is unsafe...	HWB 0-14a I value the opportunities I am given to make friends & be part of a group in a range of situations HWB 0-23a I am aware of my own & others needs... taking turns & sharing resources...

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

“Scotland’s outdoors provides great opportunities for open-air recreation and education, with great benefits for people’s enjoyment, and their health and well-being. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ensures everyone has statutory access rights to most of Scotland’s outdoors, if these rights are exercised responsibly, with respect for people’s privacy, safety and livelihoods, and for Scotland’s environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights” (24).

Before taking part in any of your planned activities please refer to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The Code details information on your rights and responsibilities and offers advice on how you can protect our natural world.

For example it is really important that we all prevent the spread of diseases such as 'ash die-back' which kills trees and has been confirmed in the Forth Valley area.

Public access to woodlands is not restricted and the fungal disease is harmless to people and animals but we can spread it between woodlands.

Before we visit or leave woodlands we should scrape any mud and leaves off our footwear, pushchairs, bikes, cars and dogs and not remove any leaves, plants or wood from the area.

The Code website provides a practical guide to help everyone make informed decisions about what best to do in a wide range of situations. It is updated with information on current situations and is worth checking on a regular basis and be accessed at: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot>



Resource information and activity ideas



Resource information and activity ideas

- **NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Resource Service** has equipment, books and resources that can be borrowed free of charge which can help you to deliver the Natural Health Award. To borrow these resources you should login or register at <https://www.hpac.durham.gov.uk/HPAC/LoginPagev4.jsp> and follow the on-screen instructions. There are also drop in sessions on Tuesday between 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm, Wednesday and Thursday between 9.30 am - 12.30 pm at:

NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service, Unit 2, Colquhoun Street, Stirling, FK7 7PX tel: 01786 434867

<https://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/health-promotion>

- **Forestry Commission for Scotland Woodland Workout** aims to enable all children (aged 3-14 years), to participate in enjoyable learning experiences in local woodlands and other outdoor environments such as playgrounds and parks, that will develop enterprising knowledge, skills and attitudes and promote physical health and wellbeing. It can be used by anyone working with young people.
- **OPAL's national citizen science surveys.** Help OPAL scientists with valuable research, learn new skills, have fun. OPAL is running surveys across the UK to learn more about the state of our environment and they'd like everyone to get involved.

<https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2014/03/fcms112.pdf>

<https://www.opalexplorenature.org/surveys>

- **The Bat Conservation Trust – Scotland**

<https://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bctscotland.html>



- **The Woodland Trust** has developed a variety of activity sheets to download free, suitable for 0-2, 3-5 and 6+ years. Discover exciting wildlife activities to help kids explore nature! From spotter sheets to scavenger hunts.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/>

- **The Outdoor Classroom Day** website has produced a list of organisations and links to websites which you may find useful when you are looking for ideas for activities.

<https://outdoorclassroomday.org.uk/resources/>

- **Scotland's Outdoor Learning Directory** aims to provide a portal to services supporting outdoor learning which are provided by these Scottish organisations.

<https://outdoorlearningdirectory.com>

- **Learning Through Landscapes (operates in Scotland as Grounds for Learning)** provides training and resources to help children to connect with nature, become more active, learn outdoors, develop social skills and have fun.

<https://www.ltl.org.uk/index.php>

RSPB's Nature Prescription Calendar can be downloaded free through the Healthy Shetland website. There are suggested activities to encourage you to be outside all year round enjoying nature.

https://shetlandcommunitywildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/nature_prescriptions_calendar.pdf

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Practical ideas for physically active play provides activities aimed at under 5s and can be downloaded free through the website

https://soscn.org/downloads/resources/early_movers/Booklet_5_Practical_ideas_for_physically_active_play.pdf

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12.	The Children's Society Ways To Well-Being Report 2014 https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/82855/1/SCways.pdf
13.	UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d839543ed915d52428dc134/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf
14.	NHS Education for Scotland (NES) https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/rgxngvpv/nationaltraumatrainingframework-execsummary-web.pdf
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17.	The Scottish Government https://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright
18.	Play Strategy For Scotland: Our Action Plan. The Scottish Government 2013 https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00437132.pdf
19.	The Early Years Framework 2009, The Scottish Government https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/01/13095148/10
20.	Health and Social Care Standards. My Support, My Life https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00520693.pdf
21.	Realising the Ambition national practice guidance https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf
22.	Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf
23.	Curriculum for Excellence, Experience and Outcomes https://education.gov.scot/Documents/All-experiencesoutcomes18.pdf
24.	The Scottish Outdoor Access Code https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/



"Look deep into nature, and then you will
understand everything better."
~ Albert Einstein



Any adaptations to this Award Resource must be agreed with the Health Improvement Service, NHS Forth Valley - May 2025