

## **Executive Summary**

After reviewing the existing training calendar and taking into consideration the current climate surrounding COVID-19, it was determined that additional training courses, both on-line and face-to-face held outdoors, were required in order to meet the needs of settings in Moray. Between September and December 2020, 48 practitioners will have been trained in Outdoor Paediatric First Aid and 90 practitioners will have taken part in formal Outdoor Play and Learning opportunities. Additionally, basic on-line courses have been extended to all practitioners and childminders including child protection training.

The creation of Moray Council's Outdoor Learning and Play Toolkit, which was designed to help nursery settings and childminders embrace the outdoors confidently, was a foundation to build on training opportunities as a direct result of the Outdoor Workstream. The work from this toolkit has been recognised and cited by the Scottish Government as an example of good practice. Long term plans are also underway to assist settings in developing their outdoor play spaces and make use of local green spaces as well.

The future of ELC training opportunities in Moray is very much in tune with advice from the Scottish Government which highlights the importance of outdoor play. This is key in part due to COVID-19 but primarily to ensure the viability of outdoor play at the centre of early years learning for many years to come.

## **Virtual Training Opportunities**

The training calendar for 2020/2021 was published and emailed to all settings and partner childminders in February 2020. Initial thoughts were to refresh the opportunities available to practitioners and look at the delivery method of training courses.

Due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19 and the cancellation of all face to face trainings held indoors, the requirement to look at alternate delivery methods was accelerated. Essential training was identified and methods were determined to make this training virtual. We have been successful in creating a virtual Child Protection course which has been undertaken by a number of settings with positive feedback:

*"For me personally I found that I was able to listen more actively as I had no distractions. This kind of training is more beneficial to my setting as staff can do it in their own time (obviously paid) and it does not encroach on work staffing as quite often is the case. I definitely think it is the way forward for nurseries as it*

*grabs your attention, not too long and to the point. The survey then ensures that your staff have completed it and you are not waiting for space on a course”*

*“I know that on-line training does not suit all, but when we have long days, being able to do this at home is a bonus. Short courses also help focus for staff or when done in parts.”*

*“The video format of the Child Protection Training via Loom is a comprehensive and accessible means of providing staff in our nursery with legitimate and Local Authority led training. We feel it is a fantastic format that should be utilised further for other means of training such as infection prevention, play pedagogy and quality assurance training.”*

As suggested above, virtual training courses have been created on the following topics and these will be sent out very soon:

- Self-Evaluation and Reflection
- SYC – Supporting Your Child with Resilience and Calm – in partnership with Moray Wellbeing Hub
- BAGS – Being a Good Supporter (principles of Mental Health First Aid) – in partnership with Moray Wellbeing Hub
- Play on Pedals – Train the Trainer training in partnership with Cycling Scotland and Outfit Moray
- Getting Ready for 2’s – in partnership with CALA

Discussions with tutors around the possibilities of creating virtual training opportunities are also being held currently for the following topics:

- Introduction to Autism
- English as an Additional Language

Providing opportunities to access core training at a convenient time for settings and individuals is crucial. Virtual training can also provide a platform to allow managers to train their whole staff team together and better address staff needs with formal training opportunities.

## **Outdoor Play and Learning Training**

The current trend, in line with the National Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare, has been moving towards a more natural experience with play based learning for young children to encourage independence, self-direction, imagination and daily access to outdoor play. COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to encourage our settings to embrace the outdoors. As part of the Outdoor Learning COVID-19 Recovery Workstream, we created the Moray Outdoor Learning and Play toolkit. This was emailed to every setting and partner childminder and 30 hard copies were sent out to those who requested paper versions. The toolkit was designed to give practical support to settings to explore the outdoors with their

children. To back up the information in the toolkit and to ensure practitioners were confident in embracing the outdoors, we organised formal training on these outdoor topics:

- Outdoor Paediatric First Aid
- Introduction to Fire and Learning with Fire
- Getting Started with Tools and Tool Use Projects
- Outdoor Learning, Play and the Curriculum for Excellence

It was fundamental to offer an Outdoor Paediatric First Aid course as the outdoor element allows practitioners to treat and be familiar with the common first aid incidents that occur in the outdoors. Two dates were scheduled originally however due to high demand, this was increased to four courses which are now all full. This equates to 48 practitioners being trained in Outdoor Paediatric First Aid between September and December 2020. One of each of the remaining courses mentioned above was scheduled in October and November; however again due to demand, two of each course has now been scheduled and all courses are full. This equates to 6 opportunities to take part in formal training on outdoor play and learning topics with 90 practitioners taking part.

To create a community of practice, we initiated a TEAM using Microsoft TEAMS on GLOW where the tutor of the outdoor training courses was available to answer questions and the practitioners could share practice, pictures etc. Handouts from the training courses were also made available on the TEAM and circulated to every setting in Moray.

As winter approaches, the following opportunities are being considered to ensure the progress made exploring the outdoors does not stop during the colder months:

- Winter Outdoor Activities
- Winter ID and Nature Connection
- Storytelling

Several activity sheets were included in the Outdoor Learning and Play Toolkit which provided kit lists and suggested activities. Practitioners have requested more of these, so it has been decided to continue producing outdoor activity sheets based around the seasons. As a result, a Winter Activity sheet is currently being developed.

Following on from the Outdoor Learning and Play Toolkit, every setting in Moray was offered £500 and every partner childminder £200 to spend on resources to help them explore the outdoors. As the majority of the orders have been fulfilled, visits to settings will take place to see how they are getting on using the new items and advice and support can be offered with regards to getting the most from their new materials and outdoor space. The plan is for the Early Years Officers to visit Local Authority settings to advise on minor work projects to improve/re-design existing outdoor space. Partner Provider settings can be supported through site visits and followed-up with site reports which will detail suggested improvements and potential

funding sources. An example of a site report has been included for information purposes.

Moray Outdoor Learning and Play Toolkit was picked up by Education Scotland as an example of good practice and has led to an invitation from the Scottish Government to be included on their Outdoor Play and Learning Improvement Practicum which is taking place on the 17<sup>th</sup> November. Moray Council has also been asked to participate in partnership plans with Aberdeen Council and Juliet Robertson from Creative Star Learning to develop a Mud, Mess and Magic handbook for naturalising an outdoor space on a shoestring budget.

### **Booking Courses Administration**

Over the last few months, the administrative duties relating to facilitating training have been undertaken by the Early Years Officers. This has enabled training to continue during a difficult time despite insufficient staffing levels and resources. However, this has also identified that the current method of booking onto courses is antiquated and the administrative time this entails is huge. The Early Years Officers are currently investigating a method of booking courses which will cut down on the administrative time involved in this and hopefully make it more user-friendly for practitioners.

### **Potential Lockdown Preparation**

In preparation for the potential of further lockdowns happening in the future, activity sheets have been developed in partnership with the Early Years Intervention Team. These sheets will be distributed to all settings in a format ready to share on social media for families to engage with during a period away from school.

### **Conclusion**

Although the updated training calendar has only recently been expanded to include an emphasis on outdoor play and learning, participants and managers alike have welcomed this approach and have provided positive feedback and comments on these new opportunities. Future plans are to ensure that the training on offer is relevant and needs based and as accessible as possible despite current restrictions. Further down the line, consideration could be given to the viability of courses being delivered directly to individual settings thereby allowing comprehensive training for all staff members in an area that needs improvement. This would ensure the knowledge from the training would be used effectively and allow staff teams to discuss and address concerns or questions related to their setting.

In relation to virtual training, the future plan would be to create a bank of online training resources using SharePoint where practitioners, managers and childminders

can access what they need when they need it. Further on-line support will utilise Microsoft TEAMS to address daily enquiries to offer advice on outdoor learning and training courses previously held. Additional support will be offered to settings through site visits where outdoor play space can be viewed and suggestions made for improvements. By providing access to Activity Sheets, introducing a wider variety of formal training, improving outdoor opportunities and infrastructure for Local Authority and Private Partner settings, the Early Years Officers aim to engage settings throughout Moray in quality outdoor play and learning on a daily basis.

Authors of Report:                      Laura Russell and Jennie Ordonez (Early Years Officers)