

# Outdoor Play & Learning Environment

‘Thinking outside the box’



Riailtas na hÉireann  
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pobal

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Galway City Partnership  
Comhpháirtíocht Chathair na Gallímhhe

a tide for change  
an taidé arís casadh



CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES

Galway



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# Key Messages

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Outdoor learning has a positive impact on children's well-being and development.



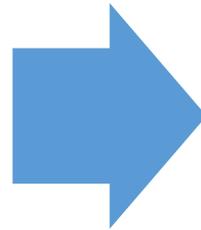
Children learning in the outdoor environment need the support of attentive, responsive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about the outdoors, can recognise, understand and extend the possibilities of learning in the outdoors.



Outdoor learning has equal value to indoor learning. Indoors and outdoors need to be viewed as one combined and integrated environment (Bilton, 1991). Ideally, if the provision offered is of a good enough quality, a child could do all their learning in the outdoor environment.

# Key Messages

The outdoor environment has unique characteristics and features



Learning opportunities offered can be the same as those offered indoors but on a different scale and expectations can be different. For example, the provision can be different; construction opportunities offered in the outdoors may be using big crates or boxes to construct on a large scale rather than bringing Lego out which could get lost outside; mark-making outside may be with sticks and mud, giant paint brushes and water, or using rollers and big paper hung/ pegged along a wall.

# Key Messages



An approach to outdoor learning that considers experiences rather than equipment or 'activities' places the child at the centre of the offer being made.

Learning in the outdoors is built upon all that children do, see, hear, feel and experience in their outdoor environment.

Play and learning that flows seamlessly between indoors and outdoors enables children to make the most of learning opportunities and to develop their ideas without unnecessary interruption.

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# A Walking Tour:

## Ideas for the Outdoor Learning Environment

*by Helen Bolton, Owner of Muddy  
Boots Preschool & Afterschool,  
Clarinbridge, Co. Galway*



Please click [here](#) to view the video



# Guidance for Reopening

- Outdoor shelters and transforming spaces –

With Carol Duffy, Early Childhood Specialist, Early Childhood Ireland, and expert on creating opportunities for outdoor and nature play in early years settings. From Early Childhood Ireland webinar, 24th June, 2020. **Click [here](#) to view videos**





## Guidance for Reopening

# Adapting Environments for Practice during Covid-19



[Resources for Parents](#) [Resources for Practitioners](#)



Guidance for Reopening



# Guidance for Reopening



## Risk Assessment –

## Go to page 9

## When Adapting Environments for Practice during Covid-19

### Appendix 1 - Sample Risk Assessment for Environmental Changes to Early Learning and Care Services in Response to the Covid-19.

Service Name and Address:  
 Location of Proposed Change:  
 Risk Assessment Undertaken by:  
 Date:

All proposed changes to the internal and external environment should go through a process of risk assessment prior to implementation:

- 1) Record and keep, using photographs, evidence of the pre-COVID environment.
- 2) Consider fire safety and exit routes as a priority. Blocking or potential obstruction of fire exits or exit routes are an unacceptable risk.
- 3) Describe the proposed change including its impact on the rest of the space.
- 4) Complete the risk assessment for each space of proposed changes identifying the level of risk.
- 5) High risk plans are to be discarded.
- 6) Identify control measures for medium and low risk changes
- 7) Reassessment of Risk: Once changes have been made a risk assessment is under taken again to ensure the risk level is managed.
- 8) Changes that lead to a high level of risk are to be discarded.

Provide a Description of Proposed Changes to Environment	Tick the relevant risk level		
	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Changes to Service Entrance/Doorway			
Changes to Service Exit			
Changes to Room Entrance/Doorway			
Equipment Added			

# Guidance for Reopening

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## Cleaning and Infection Control Routines for the Outdoor Learning Environment

- Tusla - [Guidance Document for Early Years Services](#) : **Page 16**
- Tusla- [Early Years Services Self-Assessment Checklist](#) : **Page 6 , 9, 12**
- Tusla- [Inspection tool for Early Years Services Covid-19](#): **Page 21, 25, 27**



**TUSLA**

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

# Reflect on Practice

Practice will remain child-centred. This means children are at the heart of all policies and practices and involved in decision-making where appropriate.



## **Pods : An opportunity to further develop the Key Person Approach:**

We know children thrive from a base of loving and secure relationships. The key person approach is about building and developing positive relationships with the families and children in their group. By becoming the consistent and familiar face for these families and their children, the key person is able to understand what is important to the child and learn how to respond sensitively to the children's feelings and emotional needs.

## **Useful Resource Tip for Practitioners**

**Grab & Go Bags...**Practitioners have grab and go bag each (similar to a bum-bag) which may include an observation notepad for recording children's conversations and interests, a pen/pencil , perhaps some adult sanitiser (for personal use) etc.



## Guidance for Reopening

### The Key Person Approach

- Webinar looking at the key person approach: Supporting Relationships in the Early Years Setting During Covid-19, (Barnardos)
- The Key Person Approach: Supporting Relationships in the Early Years Setting During Covid-19 is a recording of a free webinar looking at the key person approach – what it is, why it is important and how it works in practice in early learning and care. [\[Register here\]](#).
- **[Click here - Ebook - The Key Person Approach: Positive Relationships with Children in the Early Years](#)**



Home to Parents Home to Practitioners Search



Guidance for Reopening

# Reflect on Practice

## Creating Transitional Spaces in the Outdoor Learning Environment

Consider the creation of a usable and tranquil transitional space that will encourage the natural flow between the indoor and outdoor environment. These type of spaces can support important transitions such as settling-in, collection time and getting dressed for outdoor play.

**How can this transitional space be used?**

- *Think about how the outdoor environment can be used to welcome, settle in and get to know new and existing children and families.*
- *Think about storage space or an area for hanging coats ,change of clothes, outdoor wet gear and wellies.*
- *Think about a display area to share children's ideas, inquiries and projects.*

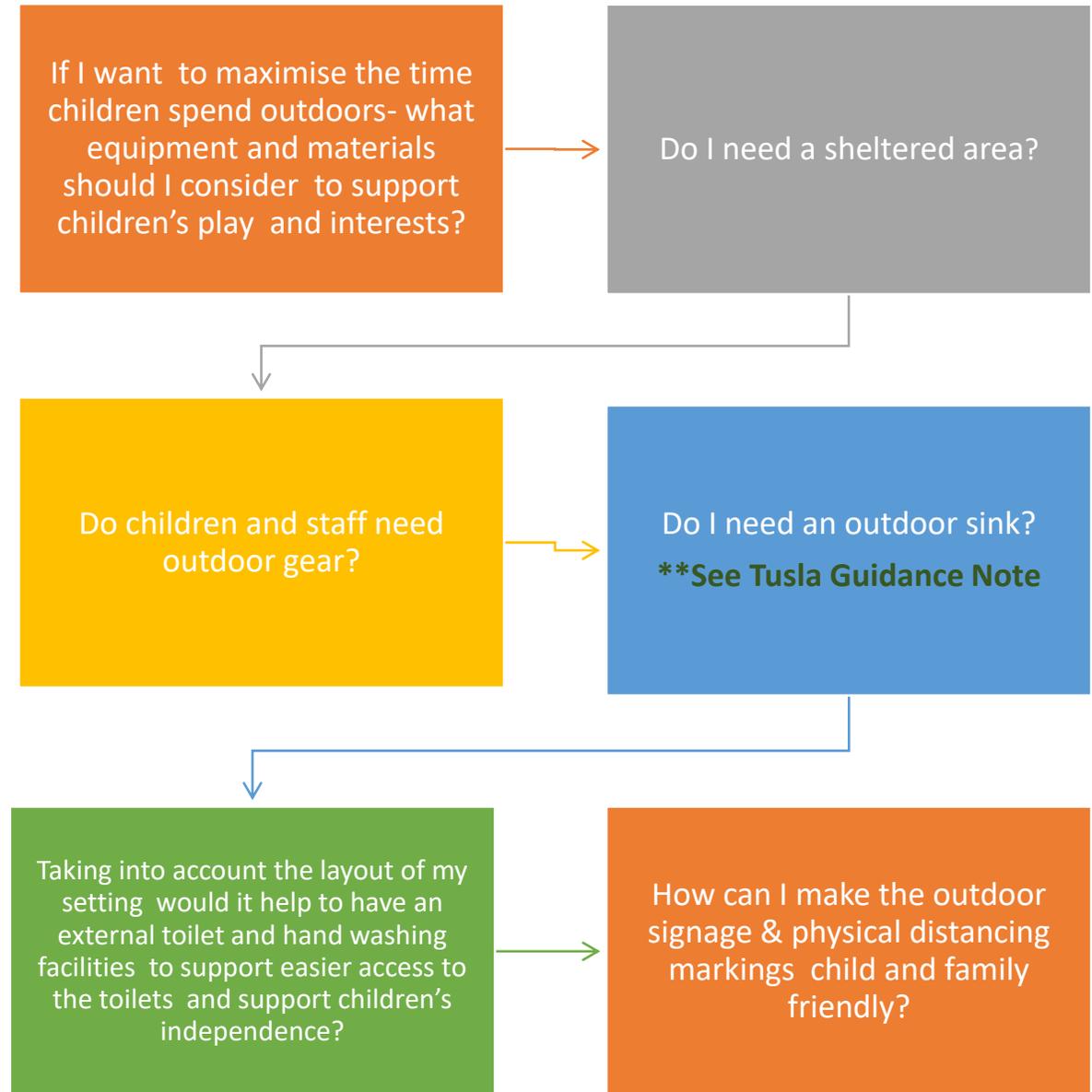


# Changes I may need to consider for my outdoor environment

**\*\*Tusla guidance note:** Hand sanitiser may be used as an alternative to handwashing where handwashing facilities are not readily available outdoors.

Hand sanitiser should be placed out of reach of young children. Children should always be supervised whilst using hand sanitiser.

Hand sanitiser should be available at all entrances and exits to the service and at the entrance to each room. The sanitiser should be used each time an adult or child enters and leaves a room.

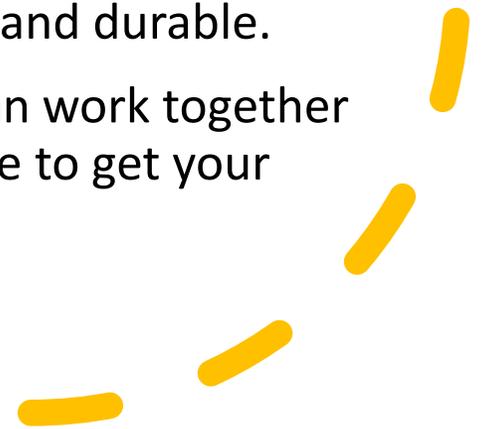




**An Industrial Canopy**  
**Sturdy/Waterproof/Easy to put up**

# Ideas to source resources

- There are lots of websites selling outdoor equipment which will give you lots of ideas but it also makes you realise you can get your own cheaper. It is a good starting point and remember to search charity shops.
- Creating a junk art music wall- ask parents to donate pipes, pot and pans and metal cups (camping ones).
- Bug house- pallets local shops will donate them.
- Mud kitchen- even if you have a hard surface and no grass. Buy a sink and build the rest of the kitchen using pallets or decking boards. Provide buckets of water and soil. Tyres and planks of wood equals hours of fun.
- Seating area- use “sleepers” they are treated and durable.
- Design a vision board with other staff, staff can work together on different areas - Pinterest is a good website to get your mind wondering about the possibilities.



# Toolkits

## Using natural open-ended resources and Loose parts

- [\*Loose Parts Play A toolkit\*](#) by Theresa Casey & Juliet Robertson
- [\*Early Years Outdoor Learning A Toolkit for Developing Early Years Outdoor Provision\*](#)

# Areas to Consider: A Vision Board for the Outdoor Learning Environment



Puzzles





Thank you and best wishes  
reopening your service

If you have any questions or need support  
please don't hesitate to contact us @

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**091 752039**

*Thank you again to Helen Bolton for her  
invaluable contribution to this presentation.*