



Outdoor Learning and Education Recovery

As lockdown eases, and schools in Scotland make plans for the start of the new academic year, outdoor education providers are committed to supporting education recovery, alongside school and other partners to offer engaging learning experiences for young people. This document provides information on opportunities to collaborate with outdoor learning organisations in the Covid-19 recovery phase. It is intended to support local authorities and school leaders, reflecting Scottish Government guidance on working with partners, to plan and deliver **Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase** and ensure **continuity of learning**.

Why collaborate with Outdoor Learning providers?

It's already well understood that outdoor learning experiences can contribute positively to the learning journey of Scotland's children and young people. Research studies demonstrate that well-structured outdoor learning:

- Has direct health and wellbeing benefits – more crucial than ever at this time
- Supports learning in all aspects of the school curriculum, including priorities such as numeracy and literacy¹
- Provides opportunities for young people to guide their own learning and develop critical thinking skills
- Raises young people's awareness of environmental and sustainability issues
- Provides rich opportunities for the development of peer and pupil-teacher relationships that are central to young people's attachment and commitment to school more generally²
- Offers safe space for adventure, where young people can explore risk, test boundaries and build resilience.

Example: Generation Cashback

Generation Cashback is delivered by Scouts Scotland, Girlguiding Scotland, The Boys' Brigade in Scotland and Youth Scotland. Its aim is to grow the scale and reach of community-based youth work in areas of multiple deprivation to encourage young people into positive activities, with a particular focus on outdoor learning. In 2018-19, 3574 young people took part in the programme:

- 93% reported growth in confidence
- 88% reported increased skills
- 87% made new friends
- 83% are thinking more about the future
- 927 achieved accredited qualifications
- 100% of stakeholders reported increased aspirations in young people

Education Scotland also advocates for outdoor learning as an integral part of Learning for Sustainability³ to connect young people with nature, and raise awareness and understanding of environmental issues and encourage global citizenship.

¹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/sac87-curriculum-outdoors-attainment-challenge/>

² Christie, B. & Higgins, P. (2012). Learning for Sustainability and attainment in schools. Research into Action Briefings. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

³ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/whole-school-and-community-approach-to-learning-for-sustainability-lfs-self-evaluation-and-improvement-framework/>





How can the outdoor learning sector contribute to education recovery?

As schools plan for education recovery, outdoor learning is particularly well-placed to:

- Provide additional resources, including outdoor specialists and equipment to enable schools to access the outdoors safely and with confidence in school grounds and in green spaces close to schools
- Work collaboratively with teachers to design new approaches and resources to enhance the proposed blended approach to home, school and community-based outdoor learning
- Provide training / coaching support for educators who want to build confidence and skills to take more of their learning outdoors
- Design and deliver targeted support to mitigate the negative impact of C-19 on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have been disproportionately affected by the current crisis
- Provide access to outdoor learning centres – both during school hours and for after-school care.

Outdoor learning can provide:

1. Curriculum and Assessment support

- Enhanced support for young people in transition (from early years to primary – and from primary to secondary)
- Development of employability skills for young people at risk of leaving school without positive destinations – and impacted by a particularly tough labour market
- Accredited awards to support attainment (including adapting award criteria to adhere to current public health guidance).

The Awards Network <https://www.awardsnetwork.org/> is a great resource to find out about the

different awards available in Scotland, including those connected to outdoor learning. Youth awards provide valuable opportunities to recognise personal achievement, both in and outside of school.

Example: The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The DofE Scotland has recognised that current restrictions require a different approach to expeditions. With this in mind, the organisation is creating flexible new guidance to allow licensed organisations to reconfigure expeditions under different conditions, as evolving public health advice allows. The DofE has always been delivered as blended learning and it is understood that this is now more important than ever.



2. Programmes to nurture health and wellbeing

- Universal support to address the impact of C-19 on young people's physical and mental health and wellbeing - including developing resilience and remaining positive about the future.

3. Targeted support to effectively address the attainment gap

- Targeted support to re-engage young people in learning
- Targeted support to build confidence and resilience in young people who are – or have become – vulnerable as a result of the pandemic - including young carers, those with additional support needs and recently bereaved young people.

Example: SOEC Transition to Work

Scottish Outdoor Education Centres have several years' expertise in delivering tailored adventurous and environmental activities to support the development of skills for work in young people with autism.



Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance 2020 contains information on funding available to work with partners, including outdoor learning, to support young people in the Recovery Phase. Support and advice on Scottish Attainment Challenge activities through youth work, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors, is also available from YouthLink Scotland.

4. Workforce Development

- Training / coaching support for teachers who want to build confidence and skills to take learning outdoors
- Co-designing resources and programmes to support outdoor learning locally.

5. Critical and Early Years Childcare

- Venues, programmes and staff to support the ongoing childcare needs of key worker holiday childcare provision
- Out of school care
- Family wellbeing and support.

6. Safe and Flexible spaces for off-campus learning

- Outdoor centres and groups have an array of facilities (including 'learning under canvas' options) that could be used, when young people are not timetabled to be in their school building, to offer safe spaces for learning that support social distancing requirements.

Example: Venture Trust

Venture Trust is currently working with smart technology to offer one-to-one personal development support and counselling, with a particular focus on health, mental wellbeing and employability. As restrictions begin to lift, the organisation's outreach teams and 3 digital hubs will move to blended model of digital and outdoor, face-to-face delivery, also introducing outdoor activities when public health guidance allows.

Example: Learning Outdoor Support Team, East Ayrshire Council

Scottish Teachers' Dirty Weekend is an annual event for teachers who want to build skills and confidence to take learning outdoors. In March 2020, more than 100 educators attended workshops as diverse as Numeracy in the Outdoors and Snorkelling and STEM.

Example: Outdoor Education Centres (multiple locations and providers)

Scottish Outdoor Education Centres can provide expert instructors to offer a whole range of social and team building activities to develop skills and confidence in relationship-building, problem solving, teams work, leadership and resilience. The centres themselves offer flexible learning spaces – inside, outside and under-cover - where group activities can be offered safely, whilst social distancing advice is observed. The centres would welcome opportunities to work with schools and local authorities to support critical childcare over the summer, enhanced support for transitions as the new school year begins and /or to co-design blended learning approaches to deliver aspects of the core curriculum.

How to find out more?

If you would like more information about your nearest outdoor learning provider and the potential for support with outdoor learning in your school grounds, in green spaces close to your school, or in specialist outdoor centres, please contact Gill Gracie in YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work and Schools partnerships team – ggracie@youthlinkscotland.org



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