



Children in Scotland
every child - every childhood



Media Release

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Parking the kids

Conference shows how to make the most of the outdoors for children

Children who have the chance to play outdoors – even in urban settings – are healthier, concentrate better and show more imagination and self reliance, a major conference will hear.

Balancing risk with safety to make the most of an educational resource that is universally accessible and mostly free of charge is the theme of *Playing Outside*, a Children in Europe special conference supported by Fife Council in Markinch on Thursday 16 September.

Keynote speakers include Susan Deacon, Early Years Advisor to the Scottish Government; Ronnie Hill, Director of Children's Services Regulation at The Care Commission; Kenneth Greer, Executive Director of Education for Fife Council; and Frederika Martenssen, Professor of Environmental Psychology at Sweden Agricultural University.

Scottish practitioners such as Cathy Bache, of the Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery in Fife, and Liz Mahindru, of Marylee Primary School in Glasgow, are joined by practitioners from Italy, Denmark, Norway and Wales to look at how outdoor space can be used more effectively to boost children's learning, development and wellbeing.

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, said:

"Outdoor, physical play can make a real difference to children's health, wellbeing and development – building their confidence, self esteem and their ability to assess risk. It also helps develop children's imagination, creativity and social skills. That's why we have been working to increase opportunities for play through the Go Play Fund.

"This event brings together many key organisations across Europe with an interest in play to explore how best we continue to build and improve outdoor play opportunities for our children."

Ronnie Hill, Director of Children's Services Regulation at The Care Commission, said:

"The Care Commission wants regulated children's services to ensure that children and young people benefit from physical activity and from the opportunities which can be gained from being outdoors. We know that children's learning and development can be enhanced through involvement in outdoor activity, and through their involvement in managing any risks they may encounter."

Carrie Lindsay, Area Education Officer for Fife Council, said:

“Outdoor play is where children experience adventure and become masters of their own surroundings. Children are designed for a natural environment and in Fife we encourage our children to learn in the outdoors from the earliest years. In Fife we have a range of outdoor learning experiences for all ages, including Forest Kindergarten, school allotments, Natural Connections and a wide number of outdoor play activities.”

Notes to Editors

1. *Playing Outside: Play, nature and services for young children* is on 16 September 2010 at Balbirnie House Hotel, Markinch, Fife. It is run by Children in Europe and Children in Scotland with the support of Fife Council.
2. Issue 19 of **Children in Europe** magazine, published this week, is on the theme *Playing outside: why does it matter?* and brings together articles from across Europe to highlight different approaches to outdoor play. It includes a focus on playing outdoors in Scotland by Carrie Lindsay, area education officer for Fife Council.
3. **Children in Europe** is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0 to 10 and those interested in children's issues. It is published simultaneously in 15 languages and 18 countries across Europe. It provides a forum for ideas, practice and information and to contribute to the development of policy and practice at European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland. For more information visit www.childrenineurope.org.
4. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk.

To order a copy of Children in Europe magazine *Playing outside: why does it matter?* telephone 0131 222 2400 or visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk/publications

For further information contact Tracey Francis
Email tfrancis@childreninscotland.org.uk / tel 0131 222 2419