

MEDIA RELEASE

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Scottish Government should include ‘nurture through nature’ agenda in early years framework, conference hears

The Scottish Government has been urged to include a “nurture through nature” agenda as an explicit part of its new early years framework and strategy, amid concerns that children’s relationship with the natural world is under threat.

Addressing delegates at Children in Scotland’s international conference *Nurture Through Nature* yesterday, Karen Mountney, head of programming and practice development at Children in Scotland, explained the need to re-connect young people with the world around them.

She called on ministers to embed this ethos in the early years framework, due to be launched later this year, in order that local authorities will be in a stronger position to build it into service provision and to prioritise the creation of opportunities for outdoor learning.

Mountney said: “Children’s inactivity, a decline in green space, the growth of car dependency, and anxiety about child safety are all elements of modern life that are causing children to become disconnected from the natural world, which is a vital tool for fostering creativity and learning, and which plays a key role in shaping adult attitudes.”

“There are many examples of local activities throughout Scotland, as well as some very impressive work happening at an international level, that could inspire new ideas here that use the natural environment to create powerful educational and character-building experiences for young children,” she explained.

“But we believe there is a need to pull together to create a national movement which connects innovators and practitioners in Scotland and internationally.”

Children in Scotland would like to see a national agenda that:

- Connects and co-ordinates the current activity happening both across Scotland and internationally, enabling joined-up thinking, sharing information and good practice
- Builds national awareness and understanding of the ethos and benefits of outdoor education and play, creating a collective identity and building momentum;
- Allows nationwide action to enable nurturing young children through nature to be seen as a viable and real choice, in the context of the Curriculum for Excellence and the Early Years Framework;

- Means that using natural resources in the early years becomes easily accessible to all those who wish to take this step forward.

The conference was held at Crieff Hydro in Perthshire on 17 June.

***Adventures in Nature*, a publication showcasing an international perspective on the discussion, was launched at the conference and is available to order from Children in Scotland. Focusing on a project in the Italian city of Verona to reconnect nursery school children with nature, *Adventures in Nature* explores a fascinating and inspirational project that makes the most of the local natural environment to develop children's sense of independence, confidence and self-esteem, with all the inter-related skills of communication and cooperation. *Adventures in Nature* is translated from the Italian 'Avventure in natura' (Edizioni Junior srl). For further information contact Nicola Pay on 0131 222 2448 or Chris Small on 0131 222 2419.**

For further information and case studies, contact Chris Small, Children in Scotland on 0131 222 2419.

Notes for Editors

Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisation and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provision are of the best possible quality and able to meet the demands of a diverse society. For further information visit www.childreninScotland.org.uk