Provision for Outdoor Play in the EYFS - State of the Nation Report: how little is enough?

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A new report suggests that many nurseries, schools and playgroups are struggling with inadequate outdoor space or in some cases have no outside space at all. The report calls for the Government and Ofsted to affirm and strengthen the statutory requirement for children in the EYFS. The report further calls for the Government and Ofsted to provide better guidelines for pre-schools, schools and nurseries, and to information for parents about what they should expect for their children.

Nearly 400 early years providers from the Early Years Sector responded to the survey initiated by the Early Childhood Forum and the national charity Learning through Landscapes.

The report is a strong call from the Early Years field for more staff training in this area and for help for teachers and childcare workers to engage with parents about the importance of outdoor play for young children’s development.

Juno Hollyhock, Chief Executive of Learning through Landscapes said:
“There is plenty of well-documented research about the benefits of play and learning outdoors for young children, including their physical development, which is an area of current concern for public health in the UK. So why are so many children in Early Years settings still not getting enough outdoor time?”

The survey found continued strong support for outdoor play and learning in the early years, with many settings making improvements in their outdoor provision over recent years. But there is also clearly a wide variation in what children are offered in terms of daily outdoor experiences as part of their core early education provision.

Of key concern is that the planned Government expansion of free childcare for working parents over the next few years might also have a further negative impact on the space available for outdoor provision.

Melian Mansfield, chair of ECF said, “We are keen to work with the Government and with Ofsted to ensure that outdoor play and learning is high on the agenda, and that the guidance is clear – particularly as childcare services are expanded. There is strong evidence that time spent learning and playing outdoors in the early years can help prevent obesity, help with mental health and even address rising myopia in early childhood. There is historically a good understanding of the importance of learning outdoors in the UK , which has led with examples of excellent early years practice outdoors in the UK and internationally – but, as this report shows, it is far from being available to all young children here.”

View report here >>

About the Survey and Report
In 2015 the national charity Learning through Landscapes (LTL) working with the national Early Childhood Forum (ECF) and other partners conducted a UK-wide survey to ‘check in’ with the state of outdoor play in early years across the UK.
About the Early Childhood Forum (ECF)
The Early Childhood Forum (ECF) [www.earlychildhoodforum.org](http://www.earlychildhoodforum.org) is a coalition of nearly 40 of the key national professional associations, voluntary organisations and interest groups (Early Education, Preschool Learning Alliance, Early Years – the organisation for young children, 4 Children, Montessori International Centre, National Association of Headteachers etc.) ECF unites the sector in the common interest for the well-being, learning and development of young children from birth to eight, their families, and the practitioners who work with them.

About Learning through Landscapes (LtL)
Learning through Landscapes [www.ltl.org](http://www.ltl.org) is the UK charity dedicated to enhancing outdoor learning and play for children. LtL’s vision is that every child benefits from stimulating outdoor learning and play in their education.

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