

Playful Schools:

Toolkit for delivering Loose Parts Play in Covid-19

September 2020 | Play Scotland Toolkit

“Playing and learning outdoors is life-enhancing. It promotes mental, social and emotional wellbeing by helping to reduce stress, increase self-esteem and confidence, develop emotional resilience, and build children and young people’s confidence in their own capabilities and ability to manage risks and deal with uncertainty.”

Scotland’s Outdoor
Play & Learning Coalition
Position Statement



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The purpose of the Toolkit is to support organisations to plan and deliver Loose Parts Play. It is the responsibility of each organisation to ensure that all their procedures meet the requirements laid out in the latest Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland Guidance. The Risk Benefit Assessments provided are intended to be a guide and are not exhaustive.



Section 1: What is Loose Parts Play?

Loose parts resources are everyday objects that can be used in an endless variety of ways. Playing with loose parts requires imagination, making it an inherently creative activity. The term 'loose parts' first emerged during the 1970s after the publication of Nicholson's (1971) article 'The Theory of Loose Parts: How NOT to Cheat Children'.¹

Nicholson argued that we are all born creative but that education and culture restricts the natural urge to invent, explore and discover. In contrast, loose parts or the 'variables' in life such as materials, shapes, smells, fluids, sounds, motions, fire and plants, enable children to **'play, experiment, discover, invent and have fun.'**

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it."
(Nicholson, 1971: 30).

The aim of Loose Parts Play is to increase the range of objects children have to play with, providing a space for them to explore everyday items and use their natural creative instincts to discover new ways to play. Loose parts are not toys, but rather objects with endless possibilities. Each object will be viewed in a unique way by each child - it will be interpreted or understood differently depending on the 'affordances' given to it by each child in a particular moment. 'Affordance Theory' (1979)² was developed by an American psychologist James J. Gibson and suggests

that environments and objects within them have values and meanings that are unique to the person perceiving them. For example, a car tyre in a Loose Parts Play session may represent the wheel of a taxi, or a base for a den, a mode by which to roll down a hill, or part of an obstacle course. The key is that any object can be interpreted in a limitless number of ways depending on the symbolic world created by the person playing with it. This is the aim of Loose Parts Play - to provide a wide variety of objects that children do not usually interact with and provide them the freedom to create, interpret, and understand these objects in any way they wish.

More recently, Loose Parts Play was described by Casey and Robertson (2019)³ in the 'Loose Parts Play Toolkit' as an activity that creates a richer environment for children, allowing them to do what they need to do, to follow their interests and go where their curiosity takes them. They describe environments full of loose parts as blurring of distinctions between learning and playing, allowing children to experiment, enjoy and find things out for themselves.

Why is Play Important?

The Right to Play

Play is a fundamental right of childhood and is central to children and young people's wellbeing and development. Play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

The Play Strategy for Scotland⁴ recognises play as essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood. Scotland's former Chief Medical Officer, Professor Sir Harry Burns asserted that investing in children's play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children's health and wellbeing in Scotland. At a national level, it is therefore recognised that children must be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, ability and preference.

Children's right to play is embedded in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁵. When they play, children drive their own development. We know that play has a critical role in building:

- **the structures of the brain;**
- **stronger, healthy bodies;**
- **resilience – children's ability to cope with stress, challenges and setbacks;**
- **skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking;**
- **children's sense of identity;**
- **close family relationships;**
- **strong connections within communities.**

Children need time, permission and space to play. They need opportunities to experience risk and develop resilience through play. Play is a powerful builder of happy, healthy, capable children. In short, play builds children. (Children's Play Policy Forum, 2019).⁶

Role of the Adult in Loose Parts Play

Loose Parts Play is generally a free play activity. Free play means that play should be 'freely chosen'. In other words, it should be spontaneous and unpredictable. It should be performed for no external goal or reward but rather something that the child chooses to engage with for no motivation other than the enjoyment of play. However free play does not mean that the adult has no role. As the play and learning expert Tina Bruce highlights child-led play can be initiated by a child or an adult and adults can work in partnership with the child or children in their play⁷. The crucial – and very challenging – balance to find is ensuring that the child remains in control of the activity.

Playwork is a distinct area of work with children and young people and facilitating play requires distinct skills. The Playwork Principles, developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group in 2005, were developed to provide a professional and ethical framework for playwork, including the role of the adult in facilitating play, and as such are worth referring to in full:

The Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles⁸ describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. **All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.**
2. **Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.**
3. **The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.**
4. **For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.**
5. **The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.**

6. **The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.**
7. **Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.**
8. **Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.**

“The power of Loose Parts Play is that it enables gradual, natural growth: “It's been a natural progression for the children. It's not been us pushing them to do anything, it's just letting them know that we're here for them if they need the support but letting them work it out for themselves. And you can totally tell that they're so much more confident.””
(Playful Schools Report)⁹

Section 2: Why is Loose Parts Play important in Covid-19?

The Play Strategy for Scotland identifies children's play as crucial to the nation's wellbeing. Investing in play is a social, economic and environmental investment. Play enables children to increase their range of experiences, understand the world around them and experiment how to interact with their environment, and the people and objects within it:

“The experiences children have in early life – and the environments in which they have them – shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society.”

(Harvard University, 2007)

There is growing evidence from paediatricians and child psychologists of the ‘collateral damage’ suffered by children within the Covid-19 pandemic:

“... we remain concerned about wider, perhaps less immediately visible collateral damage of strategies used against COVID-19 on vulnerable children.”¹⁰

(BMJ Paediatrics Open, 2020)

This includes concerns about social isolation, lack of structure as a result of school closure, increased anxiety and lower accessibility to statutory services like the NHS, education and social services. Leading child psychologists have highlighted serious concerns about children's emotional health and identified play as being a priority for supporting children as restrictions ease and schools re-open¹¹.

Initial evidence is now emerging that concerns about children's role in the spread of Covid-19 may be unfounded¹². It is now broadly accepted that most transmission occurs between adults. Studies indicate that children are less likely to become infected with Covid-19¹³, have milder symptoms when they are infected and are less likely to be the original source of infection (known as the ‘index case’) in households where Covid-19 is detected¹⁴.

The reasons for this are as yet unknown, but the evidence casts a shadow over the severe restrictions placed on children's socialisation. When looked at alongside the emerging evidence regarding the impact of restrictions on children's mental health, the balance of evidence favours prioritising children's mental health and wellbeing. As a consequence, current guidance is that children of primary school age are not required to socially distance¹⁵.

Given the evidence of the role of play in promoting health and wellbeing, our responsibility is therefore to also protect and enable children's opportunities to play.

The lack of access to outdoor play over the past six months has been highlighted as a further concern. For children play is exercise¹⁶. Play is also how children process their emotions, including their fears, and has been shown to help children deal with adversity¹⁷. Play is therefore fundamental for children's emotional and physical wellbeing.

In the recent Playful Schools Loose Parts Play project in Dundee, coordinated in partnership between Play Scotland and ScrapAntics, there was clear evidence that weekly Loose Parts Play opportunities supported children's mental health and wellbeing. The play sessions, held in the Community Hubs each week during the school summer break, provided over 1,000 Loose Parts Play opportunities for children of keyworkers. Through an action research framework, the sessions have demonstrated the profound positive impact of free outdoor play on children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.



Case Study

Playful Schools: delivering Loose Parts Play within Covid-19

The Playful Schools Project was a collaboration between Play Scotland and ScrapAntics CIC, funded by the Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund. It was a pilot project to explore the potential for Loose Parts Play to promote children's mental health and wellbeing in the context of Covid-19.

Playful Schools delivered Loose Parts Play sessions across Dundee's Community Hubs during the 2020 summer break. Alongside the delivery of play sessions, we conducted research to understand:

- a) the impact of Loose Parts Play on children's mental health and wellbeing; and,
- b) the potential barriers to provision of Loose Parts Play in the context of Covid-19.

Over the six-week delivery period, Playful Schools provided 1160 play opportunities. Due to the fluctuation in numbers of children attending the Hubs each day, there was a large variation in numbers with between 5 and 30 children per session. Across the eight Hubs we provided play opportunities for an average of 216 children per week.

There was a large age range among the children participating in the sessions, with children from the age of 4 years old to 14 years old choosing to take part. In the vast majority of sessions, children were not divided by age and there was therefore a mix of age groups playing in each session. In a few sessions, children were separated by age groups with younger (4-10) and older (11-14) children playing in separate sessions.

Playful Schools has demonstrated that:

- **Outdoor, free play is crucial to children's mental health and wellbeing;**
- **Children want to play and make full use of any free play opportunities offered;**
- **Loose Parts Play supports children to continue to achieve developmental milestones;**
- **Provision of free play opportunities within the context of Covid-19 is entirely feasible.**

Playful Schools demonstrated that child-led free play not only supported children's mental health and wellbeing, it also enabled children to continue to develop social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills. This included children forming new friendships and developing their own support networks, improvements in their communication, ranging from the increased listening skills through to negotiation and conflict resolution, and improvements in their fine and gross motor skills. Across all groups, playworkers reported an increased sense of bravery to engage in new or challenging activities and increased levels of collaborative and inclusive play. The children developed individually, for example learning to skip or balance, and they developed collectively through the negotiation and problem-solving inherent in large group play.

The Playful Schools project clearly demonstrated that Loose Parts Play supported the full range of children's development. Despite children in the Community Hubs being on the frontline during the national lockdown, the research has provided evidence of the numerous ways in which Loose Parts Play supported their mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, engaging in Loose Parts Play provided opportunities for them to continue to meet key social, emotional, physical and cognitive developmental milestones.

Section 3: Understanding risk factors for Loose Parts Play in Covid-19

Risks through outdoor play

Understanding of risk factors for transmission outdoors is still emerging. There is broad agreement that the key risk factors for Covid-19 transmission are length of time and intensity of exposure. In other words, the risk of transmission is related to 'dose and time' - risks increase in areas with poor air circulation and extended length of exposure¹⁸. Studies to date point to outbreaks occurring primarily through indoor exposure with adults as the main source of initial infection¹⁹. Based on current evidence, the risks of outdoor play therefore appear to be minimal.

Risks through surface transmission

Transmission through touching of surfaces is recognised as a key route of infection and Loose Parts Play involves touching objects. While this therefore presents a risk for Loose Parts Play, this needs to be viewed alongside the evidence that children are at lower risk of both infection and transmission. At present, the growing body of evidence of the risks to children's mental health and wellbeing as a

result of being denied opportunities to play outweighs the evidence of risks to both their health and the health of wider society through infection and transmission. The priority is therefore to further reduce the risk of infection and transmission through good hygiene practices while enabling opportunities for play.

The challenge facing playworkers is how to facilitate children's play while minimising risk of transmission. Children's freedom to explore the loose parts resources is fundamental to their play process and therefore crucial to their development. To minimise risks of surface transmission, the structure of play sessions needs to be adapted to allow sufficient post-session cleaning time. This must be part of the paid time for the playworker. Resources with porous surfaces should be minimised, and when used they must be quarantined for 72 hours between use.

“The power of Loose Parts Play is that it is for everyone: “I think it's something that they are all good at... They can naturally do this. They don't need to build up a skill set, they can just instantly get stuck in and be good at it.”

Risks through physical contact

In Scotland as of 10th July 2020, children 11 and under no longer have to physically distance from other children and adults outdoors. At the date of publication, adults and children 12 years and older from different households are required to maintain physical distance from one another. In practice, this means that while Loose Parts Play is recognised as beneficial for children across both the primary and secondary school age groups, current restrictions on older children mean that delivering Loose Parts Play for children 12 years and older is more complex. Play Scotland and ScrapAntics are currently delivering community and family outdoor play sessions that work within physical distancing guidelines. We will report on these outcomes and our learning from the provision in due course.

The experience of delivering Playful Schools demonstrated that physical distancing between adults and younger children is neither possible nor desired within Loose Parts Play. This was generally due to five reasons:

1. Provision of physical support for younger children (e.g. holding hands to walk over bridges/get in or out of barrels)
2. Assisting children to move large and/or heavy items
3. Provision of basic first aid or comfort;
4. Younger children seeking touch or adult interaction (e.g. holding hands or asking adults to tie their shoelaces)
5. Children inviting adults to engage with their play (e.g. inviting an adult into their den).

The slight paradox of child-led free play is that while it requires adults to step back from their traditional roles as 'play leaders', the very nature of the play requires them to remain physically and emotionally available to children. Crucial stages in the evolution of children's play require the building of trust and adults are only able to do this through being physically available to children. What the Playful Schools project demonstrated however is that in relation to the balance of evidence for children engaging in play within the context of Covid-19, the consistent identification of profound changes in children's development provides evidence that the benefits of Loose Parts Play far outweigh potential risks when appropriate measures are taken.

Overcoming Risks: a Framework for 'Covid Safe' Loose Parts Play

The following framework was developed from the Playful Schools project during which we delivered 1,160 play opportunities to children in Dundee. When planning a Loose Parts Play session, we recommend the following processes are followed to minimise risk. The Framework is a result of experiential evidence gathered during the delivery of the Playful Schools project and adheres to the Scottish Government guidelines as of 31st August 2020.

Playful Schools: Framework for Covid Safe Loose Parts Play

- Ensure availability of, and necessary storage for, one complete set of loose parts resources per setting (i.e. resources should not be used in multiple settings)
- Build at least one hour into staff time for post-session cleaning after every play activity
- Minimise the use of resources with porous surfaces (i.e. carpets, foam)
- Create a 'rota' of soft/porous loose parts resources to ensure 72 hours quarantine between use
- Playworkers carry their own PPE at all times, including hand sanitiser, mask and gloves
- Playworkers wear masks when it is not possible to maintain the 2-metre distance
- Ensure children wash hands before and after every play session
- Ensure children and playworkers hand sanitise at least every 20 minutes during play.




Section 4: What to think about when planning Loose Parts Play during Covid-19

4.1 Hygiene in Loose Parts Play

Storage of Loose Parts

Loose parts resources should be stored securely in an area with good ventilation. Due to potential fire risk, loose parts should not be stored in open areas. Ideally, resources should be stored in a locked container that is in an easily accessible area within the setting. To minimise potential for cross-infection, loose parts resources should not be used in multiple settings.


 **Use nature! Go out into local green spaces and encourage children to use their surroundings in their Loose Parts Play**

Post-Session Cleaning and Quarantine

Current evidence indicates that Covid-19 remains on surfaces for between 24 and 72 hours. To minimise any potential risk of transmission, all loose parts should be either cleaned or quarantined for 72 hours. The recommended cleaning procedure for loose parts is outlined in Appendix 3. If it is not

possible to thoroughly clean a particular resource, for example due to being porous, it must be stored in a designated 'quarantine' area for at least 72 hours between use.

The potential transmission risks presented by soft or porous resources is unclear. However, evidence from Playful Schools is that children consistently value soft items in their play, including large sections of foam, large pieces of fabric or carpet squares. This presents a challenge as these items are the most difficult to clean. The level of comfort that these items promote among children should however not be overlooked. It is important to recognise the value of including softer items in the Loose Parts kit. For this reason, we also recommend that any settings using Loose Parts Play implement a 'quarantine rota' for any resources that cannot be thoroughly cleaned between use. This means that any porous resources that can't be properly cleaned, like blankets and fabric, should be stored and left untouched for 72 hours after every play session.

 **Why not cover resources like foam with wipeable material?**

REMEMBER: If it can't be cleaned, quarantine!

Working with multiple groups

If working with multiple groups of children in one setting during one day, for example due to working with different classes within a school, all loose parts resources will need to be cleaned between each group. This will need to be factored into staff time and expectations adjusted accordingly. For example, the worker will be able to work with fewer groups and paid time must be allocated to allow for cleaning.

It is important to ensure that you remain working within the latest Scottish Government guidance when working with multiple groups. Contact with different households should be minimised. Further guidance for informal play services is available on the Scottish Government website in reference to [Organised activities for children](#) and in [Play Scotland's Guidelines for unregulated, informal play services](#).

 **Try contacting local builders, scrap yards and large companies to gather more loose parts resources.**

REMEMBER: Playworkers must be allocated sufficient time to clean resources after every play session.

Staff Hygiene in Covid-19

It is important to ensure staff are aware of expected standards for hygiene, particularly hand washing and respiratory hygiene. An example Covid Hygiene Checklist is available in Appendix 2. All staff will need to be supplied with their own hand sanitiser, face coverings and gloves. If using reusable face coverings, make sure that staff have a large enough supply to enable them to use a fresh face covering each day and are aware that multi use face coverings will need to be washed between uses.

 **Why not supply all playworkers with a small shoulder/waist bag to keep their sanitiser, mask and gloves with them during play sessions?**

4.2 Physical distancing during Loose Parts Play

Make sure that staff are aware of expectations regarding physical distancing from other adults and young people 12 years and older. This includes co-workers and older children attending play sessions. Close contact should be minimised and working practices adapted to enable staff to maintain a 2m distance from adults and older young people.

Covid-19 presents different risks for different people, so ask staff if they have any particular concerns and think about possible ways to address these. For example, if any staff are at higher risk, you could allocate work in settings with easier access to handwashing facilities, in settings in open air or with smaller groups of children. Risk assessments should be completed for individual staff members who are at higher risk.

REMEMBER: Staff will need to distance from each other, including during breaks and travel to/from work.



Working with younger children:


Although children 11 and under are currently not required to maintain physical distance from one another, it is important to limit contact a) between adults and children, and b) between large groups.

All activities during the play sessions should be designed to enable playworkers to maintain the 2m physical distancing rule between themselves and the children. However, there is recognition in current guidance that physical distancing between adults and younger children needs to be balanced with children's emotional needs. It is also recognised that when working with younger children there will be situations where the 2m rule cannot be followed, despite all possible steps being taken to try to maintain this. When situations arise where the 2m rule cannot be followed a risk-assessment based approach should be used. Consideration should be given to whether the task is essential, the urgency of the task, and whether the task can be completed in a different way that enables the 2m rule to be adhered to.

“The power of Loose Parts Play is that it enables children to take control: “This child was in full immersion play and was able to have an out by just carrying on [playing].”

Younger children do not currently require to distance, although settings will likely have separated children into different groups or ‘bubbles’ to make the groups smaller. When planning Loose Parts Play sessions, think about ways to adapt play sessions to minimise contact between groups. This could mean running sessions consecutively with different groups of children and allowing for cleaning of resources between sessions. If there are multiple Loose Parts Play sessions occurring at the same time,

for example if two or more playworkers are running parallel sessions, contact between the groups should be minimised. It may be useful to demarcate different areas of the outdoor space for the different groups so children can clearly and easily identify the areas for their play. Each group will need their own set of loose parts to ensure resources are not shared between groups. Discussion of how children will be grouped should take place prior to the sessions, and in consultation with relevant staff.

 **Try to create activities that encourage children to maintain physical distance, for example by including drainpipes, long tubes and rope in the loose parts resources.**



Flexible, responsive planning

The specific arrangements for size and level of interaction between groups of children will differ in each setting. Specific arrangements for the structure of play sessions, storage and quarantine will need to be discussed in detail in each setting prior to delivering the Loose Parts Play sessions. Sufficient time therefore needs to be allocated to the planning process to adapt to specific requirements.

REMEMBER: the structure of play provision will need to respond to the particular challenges (eg storage) faced at each setting, therefore flexibility is likely to be essential in the planning process to respond to particular requirements.

Registration and Tracing

If play is occurring in a setting where children are not known to the organisers, a system of pre-booking or registration to enable tracing may be necessary. This can be a temporary record for a period of 21 days. Detailed guidance on processes for adhering to both NHS Scotland's Test and Protect system and on the safe gathering of data is available [here](#).

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be completed for each setting, ensuring that this includes reference to specific risks related to Covid-19 and physical distancing. Specific attention should be paid to needs of at-risk groups, for example anyone with health or behavioural needs, and the particular risks faced by people from a BAME background. This includes thinking about specific risks for staff and for people attending services. It is likely that detailed discussion will be required at each setting to address specific risks. These meetings can be done at distance or virtually to prevent the need for face meetings between adults.

Staff Wellbeing

Illness Procedures:

Make sure that all staff and individuals in your organisation, including children and young people, are aware of the various Covid-19 symptoms and know to inform a member of staff or responsible person if they feel unwell.

If the playworker becomes unwell during a play session, they should inform their co-worker (if working with someone else) and a member of staff from the setting (if working within or in partnership with a setting). If the number of children in the play session means that a replacement worker is required, a member of staff from the setting should take over the playworker's duties. If this is not possible, the playworker should ensure that all children return to a space where adequate supervision is available.

The worker who is unwell should maintain 2m distance throughout the intervening period between becoming unwell and leaving the setting, and use a face covering. The worker should leave safely as soon as possible, using private transport where possible, and immediately notify their manager. They should then follow the procedures as explained in the NHS Test and Protect guidance, available [here](#).


After the person with possible symptoms leaves the setting, all items that they have touched should be thoroughly cleaned. Face coverings and gloves must be used during cleaning and hands washed with soap and warm water and sanitised once cleaning has been completed.

Travelling to/from work

Staff must not travel and should follow the 'stay at home' advice if they have Covid-19 symptoms, have been diagnosed with Covid-19 or are self-isolating (e.g. through household isolation or Test and Protect measures). It may be good practice to ringfence some budget to provide cover for staff members who may need to isolate. Depending on the employment status of playworkers, it may be important to clarify the status of sick pay for staff if they are required to isolate.

Talk to your staff about their travel arrangements to and from work. Find out if playworkers will be using public transport,

or sharing private vehicles. If they are using public transport, think about ways to adjust their working hours to avoid travel at peak times. If workers usually share cars, make sure that they are aware of the current recommendations for minimising risk of transmission through maximising distance and wearing face coverings.

 **If staff are using public transport, why not try to time sessions that avoid rush hour?**

REMEMBER: The potential for sickness pay and staff cover for workers self-isolating may have a significant impact on project budgets.

Key Guidance for Play Services

[Scottish Government – Guidance for Organised Activities for Children](#)

[Play Scotland – Guidelines for Unregulated, Informal Play Services](#)

[Scottish Government – Guidance for Fully Outdoor Childcare Providers](#)

[Scottish Government – Guidance for Physical Distancing in Schools](#)

[Scottish Government – Guidance on Re-opening School-Age Childcare Services](#)

Key Public Health Guidance

[Health protection Scotland – Full Guidance for Covid-19 in Non-Healthcare Settings](#)

[NHS Scotland Test and Protect](#)

[Covid-19: Decontamination in Non-Healthcare Settings](#)

[Scotland NHS: Hand Hygiene Guidance](#)

[HSE: First Aid in Coronavirus](#)

[Covid-19: Phase 3 – Staying Safe and Protecting Others](#)

Sources of Further Information

[Sports Scotland – Safeguarding in Sport: the delivery of sport at a distance](#)

[Sports Scotland – Return to Sport and Physical Activity Guidance](#)

[Sports Scotland – Getting Coaches Ready for Sport](#)

[St John Ambulance – Covid-19 Advice for First Aiders](#)

[Youthlink – Guiding Framework for Renewal of Youth Work](#)

[Youthlink – Detached Youthwork Guidelines](#)

References:

1. [Theory of Loose Parts: how not to cheat children](#)
2. [Theory of Affordances](#)
3. [Loose Parts Play Toolkit 2019](#)
4. [Play Strategy for Scotland – Our Vision](#)
5. [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
6. [Play Builds Children](#)
7. [Bruce, T \(2005\) Early Childhood Education](#)
8. [Playwork Principles](#)
9. [Playful Schools Report](#)
10. [Wider collateral damage to children in the UK](#)
11. [Play First Report – Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing during and after lockdown](#)
12. [Children are not Covid super spreaders](#)
13. [Susceptibility to and transmission of Covid-19 amongst children and adolescents](#)
14. [An evidence summary of Covid-19 paediatric literature](#)
15. [Advice on physical distancing in schools](#)
16. [Improving safe access to street space for children's play](#)
17. [Play as a resource for children facing adversity](#)
18. [The risks – know them – avoid them](#)
19. [Covid-19 and children: what does the science tell us](#)

All online references accessed on 25th September 2020

Appendix 1: Example 'Covid Safe' Loose Parts Play Resources

Many of the usual items for Loose Parts Play can be effectively cleaned and are therefore suitable for use. If in doubt, remember the simple rule: **If it can't be cleaned, quarantine!**

Covid-Safe/ Cleanable Items:

Bricks
Buckets
Drainpipes
Plastic guttering
Blocks of wood
Large industrial tubes
Barrels
Large planks that can be walked on
Pallets
Stones, pebbles, cobbles
Tarpaulins
Anything with caster wheels (broken chairs etc)
Old pull along suitcases (preferably plastic)
Plastic hats and helmets
Old computer items, (keyboards, monitors, mouse)

Old telephones
Pots and pans, baking trays, plastic containers etc
Mud kitchen supplies (metal bowls, metal spoons etc)
Golf balls or anything sphere
Tree logs and large branches
Airbag-free steering wheels
Cable drums
Crates
Tyres
Old shelving (preferably metal or plastic)
Cot sides
Plastic clothing/accessories (handbags, old builders/reflective jackets)
Large pegs/clamps
Wheelbarrows
Corrugated plastic

Items that will likely require quarantine:

Rope
Cardboard boxes
Fabric (either large pieces or torn into strips)
Large sections of foam
Carpet squares
Old clothes (for dressing up)
Natural resources (leaves, feathers, shells, pine cones)

Appendix 2: Daily Hygiene Checklist

Covid Safe Practices: Daily Checklist	
Prior to arriving at the setting, ensure that neither yourself nor any other playworker has Covid-19 symptoms.	
Prior to arriving at the setting, ensure that you have your 'Covid Safe' kit, including an individual pocket-sized bottle of hand sanitiser, face covering and gloves. Ideally, you should also have a small shoulder/waist bag to enable you to keep the kit with you at all times along with any other essential items, according to the session plan.	
If you need to sign in upon arrival at the setting, use your own pen.	
Wash hands upon arrival at the setting with soap and warm water for a minimum of 20 seconds.	
Remember to avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth while at work.	
Remember to maintain respiratory hygiene. This means covering nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing nose. Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin. If you don't have any tissues available, cough and sneeze into the crook of the elbow. Wash hands or use hand sanitiser immediately afterwards.	
Remember to use hand sanitiser at least every 20 minutes throughout the session.	
If working with different groups of children, ensure that you wash hands with soap and warm water between working with each group.	
Remember to always wash hands or use hand sanitiser before putting on PPE (face covering, gloves, aprons) and after removal.	
Remember to wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water immediately after cleaning the Loose Parts Play resources.	
You must use a clean set of clothes each day. Clothes and multi use face coverings will need to be washed in a washing machine between sessions to prevent transmission.	
Do not share personal items (e.g. mobile phone), food, cutlery or crockery.	

Appendix 3: Cleaning of Loose Parts Play Resources Checklist

All resources must be cleaned thoroughly after each play session, including when working with different groups of children in one setting. If working with different groups of children consecutively you will need to clean the resources between each session. The following checklist should be followed for cleaning of Loose Parts Resources:

Loose Parts Play: cleaning checklist	
Make sure you have sufficient disposable cleaning cloths, ample supply of detergent/ disinfectant and access to fresh water.	
All workers engaged in cleaning of the Loose Parts Resources should use a face covering and disposable gloves during cleaning.	
All resources should be washed/wiped down using standard detergent and disinfectant that is active against viruses and bacteria.	
The cleaning cloth should be changed regularly during the cleaning process.	
All resources that have been washed/wiped should be allowed to thoroughly dry between use. If the items are being stored directly after cleaning, they should be stored in a way that ensures good air ventilation to prevent mould.	
If it is not possible to thoroughly clean a resource, for example because it is porous, it should be stored in the designated 'quarantine' area for 72 hours.	
Dispose of used cloths in a disposable plastic bag. At the end of the cleaning process, tie the plastic bag and place in a second bag before being put out for collection.	

Appendix 4: Example Risk Benefit Assessment

Please note that this is an example only.

Please adapt to meet your own requirements and situation

- The Playworker's role in the park is to provide stimulating play experiences for the children and their families whilst conforming to current COVID regulations.
- All Playworkers will have a good knowledge of current COVID regulations.
- All Playworkers will count how many bubbles, families and children have attended their session.
- All Playworkers will have their own individual hand sanitiser and cleaning equipment.
- All Playworkers will have access to PPE equipment and a First Aid Kit, which will be managed by a Co-ordinator.
- All Playworkers will have access to basic hand washing.
- All Playworkers will sign a declaration before each working day informing us of any recent illnesses, symptoms or cause for concern.
- All Playworkers are responsible for children attending safe sessions, area suitability and cleanliness and limiting crowds.

However:

- should a Playworker notice any hazards in the playground, these should be reported immediately to a member of staff at the setting (or environmental services)
- should a Playworker be concerned about a child, for example who is injured or upset, this should also be reported immediately to a member of staff at the setting. However, Child Protection concerns should be reported directly to the Child Protection Officer in the setting as per the Staff Handbook.

It is a good idea to record that workers have read and understood guidance and risk assessments before they start work. As guidance is changing quite regularly, a table or form might help you record this information so that you can ensure that it is done consistently. This can be combined with a declaration that the worker is symptom free at the time they start work, which shows that you are monitoring this.

Pre-Session Checks

(Undertake prior to each play session)

Date	Charged mobile phone + stocked 1 st Aid Kit, incl PPE	Location	Notes on Weather/circumstance	Any action taken/further action to be taken	Signed	Further action completed? (see assessment notes)
Eg 29.06.20	Yes	St Peter's Primary School	Light rain	Removal of cloth resources (carpet tiles, sheets)	NAME	Yes

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Although what follows in this guidance are Risk Benefit Assessments it is clear that this project will be affected by issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that more stringent cleaning and disinfection routines will need to be observed. These cleaning routines have been detailed alongside the other risk mitigation for each loose part type. Processes may need to evolve as we move through phases as per the Scottish Government route map¹

What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result?	Who might be at risk?	What measures are already in place?	Further measures due to changing guidance – update, initial and date
<p>Covid-19 infection from contact between humans</p> <p>Covid-19 infection symptoms are: a new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia)</p> <p>Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. In severe cases, Covid-19 can be fatal.</p>	<p>Children, staff members, Supporting adults, wider public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff members to be aware of the symptoms of Covid-19. • Strict regular hygiene routines are observed, staff and children should wash their hands with soap and water before a session and after a session, and staff should wash their hands between groups. When handwashing facilities are not available anti-bacterial hand sanitiser should be used. • Staff will only attend one setting per day to avoid cross-infection. • Cough and sneeze hygiene will be observed. Participants should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing then dispose of the tissue immediately and then wash their hands or use anti-bacterial hand sanitiser. • Staff should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. • Staff will observe physical distancing and stay 2 metres away from other adults, and where possible children at all times. • Children will participate in small groups, be encouraged to, and have enough space to physically distance. • PPE provided to staff for use if needs be during First Aid procedures or when physical distancing is not possible. Staff are not responsible for first aid and setting staff should be notified of children’s injury in order to administer using their usual procedures. • Staff should follow the Scottish Government guidance in relation to Covid-19² including guidance in regard to travelling to work. 	

¹ Scottish Government Covid-19 Route Map <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map/>

What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result?	Who might be at risk?	What measures are already in place?	Further measures due to changing guidance – update, initial and date
Covid-19 infection from contact on surfaces (Harm as above)	Children, staff members, Supporting adults, wider public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular cleaning and disinfection of equipment to be carried out as per guidance for specific equipment (detailed in this guide) • Play items to be cleaned between groups and after sessions • Play items only to be used in one setting • Clean clothes to be worn at each session • PPE (masks and gloves) to be used when cleaning equipment 	

It is recognised that it is not possible to fully social-distance within education and childcare settings with very young children and with children who have complex needs or disabilities. Staff should implement the measures outlined in the non-healthcare settings guidance³, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for within their settings. It is essential that a holistic approach is maintained in caring for children and that care providers are alert to the stress that many of the children that are attending the care setting may be experiencing. For vulnerable children difficult home situations may be exacerbated. For children of key workers, there may be anxieties related to their parent’s welfare and health while at work. This means that it is important where possible to ensure that children’s emotional needs are anticipated in considering what the requirements are for staffing. This will also be an anxious time for many of the staff too and it is essential that their health and wellbeing is considered. There may be additional challenges helping these groups of children navigate this difficult time.⁴

The core public health measures that underpin provision of services are:

- enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning practice
- caring for children in small groups
- minimising contact between these groups
- maximising the use of outdoor spaces
- physical distancing between adults and older children in the setting including parents at drop-off and pick-up times⁵

² Scottish Government Covid-19 Guidance <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

³ Health Protection Scotland Core COVID-19 Information and Guidance for General (Non-Healthcare) Settings https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2973/documents/1_covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings.pdf

⁴ Coronavirus (COVID-19): physical distancing in education and childcare settings <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-physical-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/pages/physical-distancing/>

⁵ Coronavirus (Covid-19) Phase 3 Guidance on Reopening Early Learning and Childcare <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-on-reopening-early-learning-and-childcare-services/>

WEATHER Risk Benefit Assessment

Benefits:

- Sensory stimulation from the elements.
- Learning how to dress appropriately for different weather conditions.
- Direct learning about weather systems.
- Fresh air good for physical and mental health; improved concentration/readiness for learning.
- Multiple health benefits of being outdoors.

What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result?	Who might be at risk?	What measures are already in place?	Further measures?
<p>Weather Conditions</p> <p>Sunny days - sun burn, sun stroke</p> <p>Cold days – frost bite, hypothermia</p> <p>Rain, Thunder, Lightening</p> <p>Snow and Ice – slippery surfaces causing injuries such as fractures</p>	<p>Children, Supporting adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check weather conditions on the day and consider impact on the activity. • Everyone should wear suitable footwear and clothing. Participants to be advised of the need for suitable attire in advance of the session. • Where possible, encourage application of sunscreen, covering of shoulders and hat wearing. NB. DO NOT use your own sunscreen on children. • Encourage wearing of warm clothing if weather temperatures are low. Play Workers to encourage children to keep active and may introduce a warming up activity. Keep the duration of the activity appropriate to the prevailing weather conditions. • Encourage wearing of waterproof clothing, including footwear. • Encourage caution on slippery surfaces. 	<p>Consider cancelling session if weather is extreme and would cause danger to staff and participants.</p>
<p>Strong Winds</p> <p>Falling trees or limbs – head injury, crush injury</p>	<p>Children, Supporting adults</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the risks of materials being blown about in windy weather e.g. tarpaulins and other play items. • Do not hold sessions where wind-blown trees pose a risk. • Check for leaning or dead trees. • Warn participants about any potentially dangerous trees. 	<p>Consider cancelling session if winds are of such force that it would cause a danger to participants.</p>

Loose Parts Play Risk Benefit Assessment

Benefits of undertaking activity:

- Opportunities for experimenting, discovering and exploring a wide variety of scrap and natural materials.
- Children learn to self-assess risk in line with their own abilities.
- Informal design and construction play is particularly strong.
- Multisensory outdoor environment and variety of materials adds to the learning experience.
- Children learn that unwanted materials can have a play value and learn first hand about the advantages of re-using materials before recycling or disposing of them.
- Open-ended materials encourage children to be creative and imaginative.
- Increased levels of cooperative play.
- Enjoyment → improved mental health & well-being.

What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result?	Who might be at risk?	What measures are in place?	Any further measures taken (note, initial and date)
Ability Inability to use equipment sensibly in the environment may lead to an accident.	Children, Supporting adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The age and ability of the children is taken into account. • In settings materials introduced through a talk and demonstration at the start and during the session • All Play Workers dynamically risk assessing throughout the session. • Play Workers may intervene if children are using equipment unsafely. 	
Manual handling Back injury through lifting, crouching and using heavy equipment.	Children, Supporting adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to be aware of how to lift any heavy equipment safely and model good practice. Care to be taken particularly when carrying equipment on and off site. Staff to advise other adults to follow the same procedure or not allow them to lift (depending on what is most appropriate for the situation). • Resources are tidied away after use. 	
General supervision Inadequate supervision may lead to accidents happening.	Children, Supporting adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults should keep an eye on the whereabouts of all children at all times. Children playing with the equipment are expected to stay within the designated area. • Adults may ask children to leave the session and equipment if the play becomes dangerously boisterous or an incident happens. This should be done in consultation with setting staff. 	
Miscellaneous Children or adults add in additional loose parts from the environment or their own belongings and an accident results.	Children, Supporting adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient variety and quantities of resources to reduce the need for additional stock. • Dynamically risk assess found items and remove unsuitable ones; if they are to become part of the kit ensure a written RBA is completed as soon as possible. 	

Risk Benefit Assessment: Den Building/obstacle course

- A imaginative equipment use
- B Encounters with certain types of risk help children to learn how to manage those risks.
- C creativity
- D cooperation
- E Knots
- F confidence

What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result?	Who might be at risk?	What measures are already in place? What are we already doing?	Any further measures taken (note, initial and date)
Den building materials can cause scrapes, eye pokes, bumps.	Participants, staff	Gentle discussion with group about potential risk. Encourage planning, communication and cooperation. Involve participants in encouraging and congratulating safe practice. Ongoing monitoring of individuals mood before and during activity. Teach knot skills.	
Moving logs can drop on toes, cause bumps and bruises.	Participants, staff	Gentle discussion with group about potential risk. Encourage planning, communication and cooperation. Involve participants in encouraging and congratulating safe practice.	

RESOURCES: things to check and possible preparation required prior to use

This is a list of resources that may be used in play sessions. The list is not exhaustive and the resources offered will vary. Certain activities or resources require higher levels of supervision than others.

Things to consider when checking new items:

Entrapment of fingers and head

Strangulation

Chemical concern from used containers

Electrical concern: batteries, leaky components, etc.

Loose bits which may come off

Splintering or shattering, especially under pressure or temperature changes

Flammability of materials and whether this will affect where it is stored

How effectively the item can be cleaned/disinfected

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Hoses and tubes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very wide, very long plastic ribbed tube • Short medium width ribbed tubes in various colours • Narrow blue tubing • Firm yellow hose • Animal tubes 	<p>Useful for water play as flexibility allows them to be fastened in different directions. Children enjoy experimenting with water flow through hoses. Balls can replace water when water is unavailable.</p> <p>Also used for communicating and this encourages social play.</p>	<p>Sharp ends causing bodily injury.</p>	<p>Use duct tape on sharp edges if required. Most items will not need attention until they are ready to be disposed of.</p>	<p>Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session. If children are observed putting items in their mouth, that item is removed immediately for cleaning or disposed of.</p>

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
<p>Guttering and pipes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic • Bamboo • PVC piping • Attachments/connectors for the different sorts of guttering 	<p>Very robust items. Again, useful for water play as flexibility allows them to be fastened in different directions.</p> <p>Clear link to real life as children can see guttering on buildings and plumbing under the kitchen sink.</p> <p>Bamboo feels soft and natural.</p>	<p>Sharp ends if cut-off which could lead to bodily injury.</p> <p>Cracks can emerge in plastic guttering/pipes which can pinch skin.</p> <p>Children not paying attention and hitting others with large items.</p> <p>Fungal growth on bamboo guttering – cause infection.</p>	<p>Sand down ends if needed.</p> <p>Saw off any cracked ends to prevent crack from spreading/dispose of any items which are no longer salvageable.</p> <p>Use smaller guttering, e.g. bamboo, if concerned about children’s ability to handle big guttering.</p> <p>When working with settings, talk with children to come up with safe methods for carrying long items.</p> <p>Scrub down bamboo when it arrives with soap and water; dry thoroughly before storing.</p> <p>Duct tape the ends if necessary prior to use.</p>	<p>Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children.</p> <p>Resources are ‘rested’ between each session.</p>
<p>Water container and tap water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10L solid water carrier • 5L flexible water carriers • Old milk bottles • Old soda bottles • Other plastic bottles and cups 	<p>Source of water where no tap exists.</p>	<p>Bacteria in stagnant water – upset stomach, water-borne diseases.</p> <p>Remains of food or other items in bottles which had a previous household life.</p>	<p>Wash and dry thoroughly prior to using the first time; dry containers prior to storing.</p> <p>Do not use bottles which have had chemicals use or contain food residues.</p>	<p>Children do not share access to the same water and containers are wiped down with anti bacterial wipes during the session.</p>

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Bowls / basins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic • Metal 	Essential items for water play, role play, mud play, sound play. Children can even wear them on their head. (Metal bowls stack inside each other and add to the mathematical potential.)	Plastic bowls can smash into small shards if jumped upon or heavy weights used. This can cause cuts, etc.	Strong, tough resources used as much as possible which do not do this. Intervene if play becomes too rough. Remove broken items.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarpaulins (various) • Sheets • Organza material 	All are quick dry, robust and the variety and range of materials provides learning and play opportunities through comparing and contrasting. Also the materials appeal to girls and boys. Useful for den building. Encourage imaginative play (including fantasy and role play).	Bacterial infection from wet and damp resources. Sharp edges on worn ringlets.	Use quick dry materials. Remove any ringlets which have become worn. Wash items as required. Dispose of if necessary.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session. Cloth items are washed regularly.

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
<p>Pegs Clothes pegs and bobbles</p> <p>Chunky plastic tent pegs.</p>	<p>Multiuse - for den making, decorating, holding items together and hanging items up. Pegs good for different purposes – holding material together.</p>	<p>The spring mechanisms may cause the pegs to bite or snap.</p> <p>Elastic may snap on bobbles. Elastic may cut off circulation if wrapped around a body part.</p> <p>May cause injury if used forcefully as a weapon or if fallen on if a child is running and falls on it. Children may trip over them when they are fixed in the ground.</p> <p>Worst case scenario - could cause eye/brain injury.</p>	<p>Check the spring mechanisms and remove broken or damaged pegs as needed. Or use spring-less pegs.</p> <p>Advise children not to use as weapons or run with peg in hand – remove tent pegs from use if play becomes unsafe. Advise children of trip hazard.</p> <p>Advise children to not tie bobbles around body parts.</p>	<p>Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are ‘rested’ between each session. If children are observed putting items in their mouth, that item is removed immediately for cleaning or disposed of.</p>
<p>Car and bike tyres</p>	<p>Can be stacked, rolled, buried, balanced upon, and used in many other ways. Very versatile resources especially when there are lots of tyres.</p>	<p>Road dirt – stain clothes, skin, etc. Rubber may be soft and rubs off onto the skin. Protruding wires or nails may pierce skin causing infection. Gathered water may have become stagnant – bacterial infection.</p>	<p>Prior to use, wash tyres thoroughly, check for and remove any embedded nails. Only choose and use tyres with harder rubber and with no protruding wires. Empty tyres of water daily to avoid build-up of stagnant water. Ideally, tyres should have drilled holes to avoid water gathering.</p>	<p>Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are ‘rested’ between each session.</p>

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
<p>Rope, climbing rope, string & twine, washing line – different lengths and sizes</p> <p><i>NB Separate RBA may be required if this is to be a key theme in the play session</i></p>	<p>Tying things, den building, practical challenges, games like tug of war.</p>	<p>Looping of rope or string – strangulation; rope burns to skin; tying rope or string too tight – loss of circulation.</p> <p>Rope or string breaks during an activity.</p>	<p>Children in settings will be reminded of safe use of ropes at start of session - Play Workers will ensure that participants are aware of possible risks and how to manage them.</p> <p>Use of long rope at public sessions will be supervised/observed. Short/safe lengths of rope should also be made available for den-tying.</p> <p>Participant will be encouraged to watch out for each other.</p> <p>Play Workers will check all equipment prior to session to ensure they are fit for purpose - ropes used for building swings will be load bearing; unsuitable rope will be disposed of appropriately; fraying rope may be mended by cutting and sealing. Participants will be asked to report any broken/hazardous equipment to the Play workers who deal with it appropriately.</p> <p>Play Workers ensure they take back the lengths of rope at the end of the session and it is not left out.</p> <p>Play Workers may halt the activity if they deem it to be too hazardous.</p> <p>Working mobile, First Aid kit and qualified staff member to be in attendance at every session.</p>	<p>Items are removed if visibly dirty. Resources are rested (“quarantined”) between play sessions.</p>

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Bread and milk crates	Useful for stacking, transporting, construction work, obstacle courses and low level balancing activities.	Falling onto a crate resulting in injury - bruised and/or scraped. Metal rods trap fingers.	Do not use metal rod crates OR thoroughly secure rods in place so they do not move.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session.
Dressing up items including bags and hats	For role play	Sharp items and dangerous litter in pockets – cuts and bacterial infection.	Check pockets and lining thoroughly before making available. Wash items prior to use if needed.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of sessions. Cloth resources are washed regularly. Sharing of items is discouraged.
Paintbrushes and rollers Food colouring Big chalk	For creative art work and mark making.	Chemicals on paint brushes and rollers.	New paintbrushes and rollers to be purchased and used for play purposes only.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session.
Computer keyboard, other electrical items (not plugged in)	Role play, time machine – if you can get it going!	Protruding wires – scratch or pierce skin causing infection	Remove all protruding wires prior to the keyboard being used for play purposes.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session.

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Wooden disks, stumps and planks	Building, creating and constructing. Stepping stones and seating which can be moved about.	Splinters – bacterial infection. Splitting and cracking of wood – entrapment of fingers. Breaking of wooden items. Nails in old wood. Impact or strain injury from transporting inappropriately.	Introduce good bits of wood which are strong, durable and if cracks exist, they do not pose a hazard. With really splintery wood, sand down or discard. Check old wood for nails, paint, etc and remove or discard. Observe children and advise on safe ways of moving items.	It is recognised that porous substances are hard to clean and disinfect. Remove any evidently dirty items for later cleaning. If any items get bodily fluids on them remove and dispose of the item safely.
Transportation trolley	Transporting of Loose Parts.	Trapped fingers resulting in injury – bruises. Cart being pulled over child. Items falling out of the cart and injuring a child/adult.	The cart is to be folded away when it is not in use. Children do not go in the cart. Adults open and close the cart, ensuring that no children are in the way of it. The cart is to be packed well, and ensure that there are no wobbly items on the top that are at risk of falling out.	The trolley should only be used by the staff members. Handles should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes after use.
Guttering Stands	Balancing guttering/tubes/pipes on, to create ball run.	Getting fingers nipped when adjusting the feet of the stand as they turn. Loose Screws.	Ensure that the guttering stands are fit for purpose, and there are no loose screws before allowing children to access them. If any of the guttering stands are broken they must be removed immediately.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are ‘rested’ between each session.

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Small natural materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticks • Stones • Shells • Cones 	Games, role play, higher order thinking, pattern work and other areas of maths, environmental art work. Multi-sensory play experiences. Object and various imaginative types of play.	Splintering, scrapes/scratches, eye-pokes from sticks. Broken shells can be sharp. Stones can have sharp points and rough edges.	Different groups have different thresholds of tolerance for these risks. Instruct children on safe ways to transport. Play Workers to dynamically risk assess and respond accordingly.	It is recognised that porous substances are hard to clean and disinfect. Remove any evidently dirty items for later cleaning. If any items get bodily fluids on them remove and dispose of the item safely.
Craft items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clay • Pens and papers • Glue • Sand 	Miniature play areas when put on tarp. Multi-sensory play experiences. Manipulative play. Quiet time when other activities may be overwhelming.	Bacterial infection from material. Cross infection.	Use fresh sand and clay. Do not use materials which smell bad or have weird growths. Non toxic items to be used.	It is recognised that porous substances are hard to clean and disinfect. Clay and malleable craft items should only be used by one child and then disposed of.
Scissors	Handy for cutting things including masking tape. Carried by all Play Workers in their bags for use in emergencies e.g. rope/string entangled so as to cut off circulation/airway.	Cuts and wounds from breaking or piercing skin. Impale if sharp end impacts e.g. if falling.	Check for rusty, worn wire and blunt scissors. Children are not given scissors. Play Workers must ensure that scissors are in their pack at end of session.	Scissors should only be used by the staff members. Handles should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes after use.
Large plastic blocks	Useful for construction work, obstacle courses & low level balancing activities & weighting down tarpaulin/dens.	Falling on to item & getting bruised/scraped. Trapped fingers/toes. Muscle strain from lifting.	Children supervised, reminded to take care if necessary.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested'

ITEM	BENEFIT	What has the potential to cause harm (hazards) and what might result to children at the play session	MEASURES PUT IN PLACE	Additional COVID-19 measures
Blue Barrels, some with both ends, others have each of the ends cut off, and some only one end cut off.	Useful for hiding in, rolling in, Using to prop up other loose parts.	Risk of collapse if someone sits or stands on barrel when someone is inside. Can be sharp edges where lids have been cut off. Can blow in windy conditions causing injury.	Check edges are smooth, Asses weather conditions, Supervise children, remind them of rules ie sitting or standing on them.	Resources are checked to be clean at start of session and cleaned thoroughly and disinfected after each group of children. Resources are 'rested' between each session.

New Items Added (Can be written in by hand, to be included in main document at later date)

Useful Contacts

WHO	CONTACT DETAILS	WHY YOU MAY WISH TO CONTACT
Emergency Services	999 or 112	Person is seriously injured.
Child Protection Officer	Within setting	Child Protection concerns. Relevant form must be completed. Sandy must be made aware of report and paperwork handed over to be kept securely.
[Name of manager]		Concerns re resources; cancellation of session due to weather; other concerns or issues.
[Name of manager]		If [name] can't be contacted in the first instance re concerns re resources; cancellation of session due to weather; other concerns or issues.
[Name of manager]		If [name] can't be contacted in the first instance re concerns re resources; cancellation of session due to weather; other concerns or issues.

Appendix 5: Example Staff Handbook

Section 1: What is Loose Parts Play and why do it?

1.1 Introduction to Loose Parts Play

Loose parts resources are everyday objects that can be used in an endless variety of ways. Playing with loose parts requires imagination, making it an inherently creative activity. The term 'loose parts' first emerged during the 1970s after the publication of Nicholson's (1971) article 'The Theory of Loose Parts: How NOT to Cheat Children'. Nicholson argued that we are all born creative but that education and culture restricts the natural urge to invent, explore and discover. In contrast, loose parts or the 'variables' in life such as materials, shapes, smells, fluids, sounds, motions, fire and plants, enable children to 'play, experiment, discover, invent and have fun.'

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it."

(Nicholson, 1971: 30).

The aim of Loose Parts Play is simply to increase the range of objects children have to play with, providing a space for them to explore everyday items and use their natural creative instincts to discover new ways to play. Loose parts are not toys, but rather objects with endless possibilities. Each object will be viewed in a unique way by each child – it will be interpreted or understood differently depending on the 'affordances' given to it by each child in a particular moment. 'Affordance Theory' (1979) was developed by an American psychologist James J. Gibson and suggests that environments and objects within them have values and meanings that are unique to the person perceiving them.

"Loose Parts Play can "bring a sense of freedom when you have none."

For example, a car tyre in a Loose Parts Play session may represent the wheel of a taxi, or a base for a den, a mode by which to roll down a hill, or part of an obstacle course. The key is that any object can be interpreted in a limitless number of ways depending on the symbolic world created by the person playing with it. This is the aim of Loose Parts Play – to provide a wide variety of objects that children do not usually interact with and provide them the freedom to create, interpret, and understand these objects in any way they wish.

More recently, Loose Parts Play is described by Casey and Robertson (2019) in the 'Loose Parts Play Toolkit' as an activity that creates a richer environment for children, allowing them to do what they need to do, to follow their interests and go where their curiosity takes them. They describe environments full of loose parts as blurring of distinctions between learning and playing, allowing children to experiment, enjoy and find things out for themselves.



1.2 Why is Play Important?

The Right to Play

Play is a fundamental right of childhood and is central to children and young people's wellbeing and development. Play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development. The Play Strategy for Scotland recognises play as essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood. Professor Sir Harry Burns asserted that investing in children's play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children's health and wellbeing in Scotland. At a national level, it is therefore recognised that children must be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, ability and preference.

Children's right to play is embedded in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). When they play, children drive their own development. We know that play has a critical role in building:

- **the structures of the brain;**
- **stronger, healthy bodies;**
- **resilience – children's ability to cope with stress, challenges and setbacks;**
- **skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking;**
- **children's sense of identity;**
- **close family relationships;**
- **strong connections within communities**

Children need time, permission and space to play. They need opportunities to experience risk and develop resilience through play. Play is a powerful builder of happy, healthy, capable children. In short, play builds children (Children's Play Policy Forum, 2019).

1.3 Role of the Adult in Loose Parts Play

Loose Parts Play is generally a free play activity. Free play means that play should be 'freely chosen'. In other words, it should be spontaneous and unpredictable. It should be performed for no external goal or reward but rather something that the child chooses to engage with for no motivation other than the enjoyment of play. However free play does not mean that the adult has no role. As the play and learning expert Tina Bruce (2005) highlights child-led play can be initiated by a child or an adult and adults can work in partnership with the child or children in their play.

The crucial – and very challenging – balance to find is ensuring that the child remains in control of the activity. Playwork is a distinct area of work with children and young people and facilitating play requires distinct skills. The Playwork Principles, developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group in 2005, were developed to provide a professional and ethical framework for playwork, including the role of the adult in facilitating play, and as such are worth referring to in full.

1.4 The Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

Section 2: Working in Covid-19

2.1 Key information on Covid-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms are:

- New or continuous cough
- Fever
- Loss of sense of taste or smell

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This is thought to be the main way the infection is transmitted between people and is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person.

There are two routes by which COVID-19 can be spread:

- **Directly:** from close contact with an infected person (within 2 metres) where respiratory secretions can enter the eyes, mouth, nose or airways. This risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person who has symptoms.
- **Indirectly:** by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching own mouth, nose or eyes.

How long can the virus survive on environmental surfaces?

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 72 hours. We know that similar viruses are transferred to and by people's hands. Therefore, frequent hand hygiene and regular decontamination of frequently touched environmental and equipment surfaces will help to reduce the risk of infection transmission.

2.2 Illness/Isolation

What to do if you are unwell or have contact with someone with symptoms:

Non-Covid-19 Related Illness:

If you are unwell and unable to work please contact [name] as soon as possible to enable us to arrange emergency cover. We also request that you update [name] regularly regarding your illness to help planning for cover as required.



Covid-19 Related Illness:

If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 (new or continuous cough, fever, loss of sense of smell or taste, extreme fatigue) you MUST NOT attend any setting. Please inform [name] as soon as possible and we will arrange emergency cover.

If you have Covid-19 symptoms – you must follow the new Test, Track, Isolate and Support procedures as follows:

1. As soon as you begin to identify symptoms, you must self-isolate (along with all members of your household)
2. Access the Scottish Government's NHS Test, Trace, Isolate and Support self-assessment procedures here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-access-to-testing-for-coronavirus>
3. Answer the questions on the online guide to identify if you are eligible to for a test. If you are, a self-testing kit will be posted out to your home address.
4. Until you have received the results of your test, you must assume that you have Covid-19 and self-isolate.
5. If your test is positive, you and all members of your household must continue to self-isolate for the recommended 7 days.
6. If your test result is negative, please notify [name] that you are now available to return to work.

If you have been in contact with someone with Covid-19 symptoms – you must self-isolate for 14 days. If they have taken a test and the result is negative, you may return to work.

If you become unwell while at work:

Please maintain a 2-metre distance from any co-workers and the children. Call [name] immediately and notify the setting's manager. A member of staff from the setting should take over your duties or, if this is not possible,

please ensure that the children return to an area with appropriate supervision. You should leave safely as soon as possible, using private transport where possible.

After the person with possible symptoms leaves work, all items that they have touched should be thoroughly disinfected. Face coverings and gloves must be used.

2.3 Physical distancing

Physical distancing for adults:

- You are required to follow the Scottish Government physical distancing guidelines and maintain 2 metre distance from all adults, including any co-workers. Please remember that most transmission occurs between adults, so minimising contact between adults is essential.
- This means that if at all possible, you should not travel together to the workplace in the same vehicle. If this is not possible (e.g. there is limited public transport to the setting) then you can share a vehicle but please maximise physical distancing and/or use face coverings.
- Please note: if you are travelling to work on public transport, the use of face coverings is now mandatory on all public transport in Scotland. You will be supplied with face coverings.



Physical distancing between adults and children:

- It is also strongly recommended that you maintain 2 metre distance from the children you will be working with however there is recognition in the guidance that this needs to be balanced with children's emotional needs.
- All activities during the play sessions should be designed to enable you to maintain the 2-metre physical distancing rule between yourself and the children (but not necessarily between the children).
- If play sessions are occurring simultaneously, contact between the groups should be minimised. It may be useful to think about how to encourage children to maintain this distance. It may be useful for example to 'demarcate' different areas of the outdoor space.

“The power of Loose Parts Play is that it lets children see their own progress: Just seeing the kids progress... seeing them get brave and seeing them being proud of themselves for doing things, like building things, coming out the first week not really quite sure, being quite babyish in the way they went about it and in the last week they're throwing themselves off structures that they've built, being so happy. Just seeing the positive impact it's had on them is my favourite thing about it. Just allowing them to have the freedom and just stepping back as an adult.”

2.4 Expected hygiene practices:

- Do not attend any setting if you are feeling unwell or have any Covid-19 related symptoms.
- Wash hands upon arrival at a setting with soap and warm water for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- If working with different groups of children during the day, please ensure that you wash hands with soap and warm water between working with each group.
- You will be provided with hand sanitiser – please keep this with you at all times and use at least every 20 minutes throughout any play session.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after cleaning the loose parts play resources.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth during each session.
- Cover the nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing the nose. Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin. If you don't have any tissues available, cough and sneeze into the crook of the elbow. Wash or use hand sanitiser to clean hands immediately afterwards.
- Always wash hands before putting on PPE (coverings, gloves, aprons) and after removal.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. mobile phone).
- Do not share food, cutlery or crockery.
- Please use a different set of clothes each day. Clothes and face coverings will need to be washed in a washing machine between sessions to prevent transmission.
- If a child starts displaying symptoms during a play session please notify the setting manager/coordinator.

2.5 Cleaning of Loose Parts Play resources:

- All resources need to be thoroughly cleaned after each play session. If working with consecutive groups of children during the day, you will need to clean all resources between each session. You will be paid for this time.
- Loose parts resources should be cleaned with either a detergent that kills viruses/bacteria or disinfectant. Use disposable clothes and regularly change the cloth during cleaning. Dispose of used clothes in a tied disposable bag.
- Face coverings coverings and gloves should be worn when cleaning Loose Parts Play resources before/after sessions.

2.6 Framework for Covid Safe Play

The following framework was developed by the Playful Schools project delivered by ScrapAntics and Play Scotland during the 2020 summer break. Please follow these procedures at all times:



Playful Schools: Framework for Covid Safe Loose Parts Play

- Ensure availability of, and necessary storage for, one complete set of loose parts resources per setting (i.e. resources should not be used in multiple settings);
- Build at least one hour into staff time for post-session cleaning after every play activity;
- Minimise the use of resources with porous surfaces (i.e. carpets, foam);
- Create a 'rota' of soft/porous loose parts resources to ensure 72 hours quarantine between use;
- Playworkers carry their own PPE at all times, including hand sanitiser, mask and gloves;
- Playworkers wear coverings when it is not possible to maintain the 2-metre distance;
- Ensure children wash hands before and after every play session;
- Ensure children and playworkers hand sanitise at least every 20 minutes during play.

Section 3: Health and Safety Procedures

You will have a named contact for each setting who will be responsible for overall health and safety procedures in that setting. In this guidance we refer to this person as the Coordinator.

3.1 Personal Protective Equipment (face coverings, gloves, aprons)

During the play sessions it is not necessary to use face coverings as long as you always maintain a 2m distance from the children you are working with. If closer contact is necessary – for example, if immediate first aid is required – you should put on a mask before approaching the child. It is therefore advised to always keep a mask on you (in a pocket) in case of emergency. However, if you wish to wear a facemask, you are free to do so. You should use the correct procedure in applying and removing a mask if you do.

3.2 First aid

[This section will need to be adapted according to the requirements of each setting].

3.3 Child protection, safeguarding and risk

[This section will need to be adapted according to the requirements of each setting].

“The power of Loose Parts Play is that it builds relationships: “And a lovely comment that I overheard, a 14-year old boy told a 12-year old girl: ‘I ken you’re worried about starting the big school but you’re going to be at my school and you know me now so you’re going to be okay.’ And they hadn’t been at primary school with each other, so they’d bonded at these sessions and they’re going on to high school together. He’s going to be a year above her but he’s like ‘I’ll look out for you’.... That was lovely to see. Children supporting each other.”

3.4 Risk Assessments

We will complete risk assessments for each type of activity that will be carried out during play sessions and for each setting. Your duty as playworkers is to continually assess risks – this is called a Dynamic Risk Assessment. This means that you need to carefully observe children’s behaviours and intervene only if you assess the risk of injury outweighing potential benefits to the child.

The key to a dynamic risk assessment is observation. Be watchful of behaviours but also of facial expressions, body language and social interactions. If a child is engaging in behaviour that you think needs adult intervention – for example if they are playing aggressively – use distraction rather than highlighting their behaviour. Ask them to help you lift a heavy pallet or ask them to do something for you. This will positively reduce the potential risks of the behaviour without drawing attention to the behaviour itself.

Loose parts play is a risky/challenging form of play and children’s exploration of risks should be encouraged. Finding the balance between allowing children to explore risk and assessing risks is difficult. You may at times step in too early. It may be useful to remember that children need unpredictability in play but predictability in adults. Use the other members of the team to reflect and discuss how you are each perceiving risk to identify your own personal limits or concerns.



3.5 Playworker responsibilities

As playworkers, you have the following responsibilities when working at each setting:

- Check all resources before the start of each session for safety (e.g. check pallets for large splinters or loose nails)
- Count all resources put out at the start of each session and count all resources back in at the end. This is particularly important for resources that could potentially be misused (e.g. ropes)
- Ensure all resources are clean before the start of each session
- Thoroughly clean all resources at the end of each play session and between different groups
- Facilitate and undertake dynamic risk assessments during each play session
- Check in regularly with the other members of your team to see if they are needing support
- Ensure all loose parts resources are stored in the correct place within the Hub at the end of each session
- Use appropriate PPE throughout (e.g. face coverings and gloves while cleaning resources)
- **Have fun!**



Project partners:



Committed to PLAY



Taic do Chluiche



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