

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Developing nature provision

“The best classroom and the richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky.” (Margaret McMillan, 1919)

Not all of you are fortunate enough to have a natural environment within or in close proximity to your setting. The pedagogy of natural provision lies in giving children choice and freedom.



There is much you can achieve in your own setting as well as thinking about using existing open spaces or linking to an established forest school or beach school. Introducing children to nature and involving some degree of risk is something any setting can achieve.

Consider these questions and top tips for increasing the nature provision in your setting.

1. Are you looking to improve and enhance your existing nursery outdoor space by providing a better connection to nature?

Try to refocus the resources and activities you provide to give children more access to nature, some element of risk and choice so that they follow their own ideas. Examples include a mud kitchen or muddy area (mud, puddles), collections of dried leaves, acorns, conkers etc, wildlife areas, den making, area for climbing, swinging or sliding and so on.

2. Are you looking at introducing elements of risk?

Risky play helps children understand their abilities and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they live: one which is not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. Review your provision so that you enable children to push against the boundaries of what they can do and provide opportunities for exploration and discovery. Weigh up the dangers of taking the risk against the benefits of doing so.

3. Are you looking to expand your existing outdoor space and offer a more natural environment?

It may be possible for you to expand or redevelop your existing area if you have unused space, or space that is not used well. If this is the case, think about how you might make this into a more natural space such as letting the grass grow longer or sowing wildlife flowers. Visit other settings who offer such provision for ideas.

4. Are you considering access to an already available natural environment such as an existing forest or beach school?

If you have never visited a forest or beach school, find out where your nearest one is and arrange to

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visit it. This might help you decide whether it is possible to establish your own or provide ideas for developing your outdoor space. Use the time wisely, remember to ask questions and note down any challenges you come across.

5. Are you considering purchasing, renting or using an outdoor space elsewhere?

If you are planning to use public or community space it is likely that there will be other people who use it regularly. You need to consider this in terms of how and when you use it, how you will ensure that the correct staff and resources are available and what information you will need to provide for parents.

6. Are you considering opening a new outdoor service?

If you find a space that you want to develop as a separate service, this will require more investment and consideration. Apart from the potential purchase of the land and the due diligence that might go with that, you will also need to liaise with a number of organisations depending on your location and what you want to offer. Ensure you have all the information you need through developing a business plan, including the possible demand for the service and registration requirements.

NDNA products to support you with this

- Publication - [Nature play: Inspiring outdoor approaches](#)
- Training - [Developing quality outdoor provision.](#)

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna