

# Case Study - Developing Quality Outdoor Provision and Experiences for Children, Including Access to Risky Play

Tiny Tots' Day Nursery is a bright, spacious and welcoming Full Day Care Nursery located in Prestatyn, North Wales. The nursery is registered for 86 children and accepts children aged three months 11 years. The nursery boasts a large secure two acres plus outdoor space where children can explore and learn from the wide range of experiences on offer. The nursery has been a respected part of the local community for the last 40 years.

## What the setting hoped to achieve:

Historically, children attending Tiny Tots' Nursery have had access to a fantastic outdoor play environment and the outdoor space has presented them with freely chosen play opportunities. The setting wanted to increase the activity range on offer and the benefits that accrue from these activities. With a focus on providing children with valuable life skills that would enhance their confidence and development. The staff at Tiny Tots attended various Outdoor and Risky Play courses and through these, they were able to identify the key benefits that come with outdoor play such as improved motor skills and increased health and well-being benefits.



However, they wanted to offer their children more. Tiny Tots wanted to really encourage children to build resilience, be confident in their capabilities and understand their current limits to enable children to assess and make their own judgements about risk and consequently push their skill development further. With this in mind, Tiny Tots wanted to teach children how to make fires, how to cook outside, use a hammer or a saw, to make shelters and more. Alongside teaching children that there are consequences to every action to develop personal responsibility. Tiny Tots were enthusiastic about encouraging children not to be afraid of bad weather and to be happy to still play and experience the outdoors when it's not sunny or raining. But the most important achievement Tiny Tots wanted to make was to help the children develop a love for the great outdoors.

## The planning stage. What were the first steps?

The first step Tiny Tots made was to research other outdoor settings around the country, taking note of good practice in order to shape and inform their development plans. Tiny Tots looked at a wide range of settings and provisions across the country, from the priorities of settings with limited outdoor space to those settings that operate completely outdoors for the entirety of the day and how this was managed and delivered safely and effectively for the children in the setting.



Secondly, and most importantly, Tiny Tots arranged meetings with their current children and families to listen to what they wanted in an outdoor setting. They felt their children, perhaps more than anyone else, were best placed to consider what an exciting outdoor setting looked and felt like.



From the result and consultations with children and stakeholders, Tiny Tots developed an action plan with staff for the development of the outdoors with **S.M.A.R.T** targets (**S**pecific. **M**easurable. **A**chievable. **R**elevant. **T**ime-bound) on what they hoped to achieve. Considerations were included regarding the availability of staff, space, budget, skills and time as well as requirements for accessibility, allergies etc. Once the final plan was in place, Tiny Tots and their staff had a clear shared focus to bring their and their children's ideas to life.

Throughout the development process, Tiny Tots tried to involve the children as much as possible in the journey, in the challenging building process as well as the planning stage and at every step Tiny Tots tried to ensure they did not miss any learning opportunities for the children.

## Improved outcomes for children and their families- How has the development positively affected the children?

**"I actually can't begin to tell you of the immense pride we have from seeing some of the amazing success stories through our work. This has been backed up by consistently positive feedback." Ben Williams, Tiny Tots.**

We have continued to record observations of the children's learning and there has been a definitive improvement in children's behaviour both in school and at home as well as in the setting. The biggest improvements that we have observed in the children have been; increased attainment for boys and girls, development in personal and social skills including a huge boost in confidence and independence, increased physical development, both gross and fine motor skill development, improved knowledge and understanding of the outdoors including scientific inquiry and discovery, increased interest in creative and imaginative play and design, and independent risk assessing skills.



### The planning stage. What were the first steps?

Some settings face difficulty with getting staff on board with the increased use in the outdoors, however, as Tiny Tots included their staff and parents in the process from the start, all parties were clear on what was expected and the benefits that it had for the children. Tiny Tots continue to support their staff through team meetings and training along with management setting the tone by modelling learning experiences and interactions with children in the outdoors.

**"The biggest difficulty we had was trying to maintain an effective programme each day as the numbers increased. It's so important not to let the standard of care we deliver be affected. Consequently, we now have a cap on the number of children we accept daily. It is a nice problem to have!"**

**Ben Williams, Tiny Tots Nursery**

### The next steps: How Tiny Tots intend to use this learning to continue to improve outcomes for children and families



Tiny Tots intend to continue to strive for excellence and keep improving what they deliver, with their aims for the children and ethos at the core, all the development work is to ultimately benefit the children. Their aim is to help them in every way they can and prepare them for the challenges that lay ahead in an ever-changing world in an environment that is both exciting and fun, an environment that develops along with the children.

Tiny Tots plan to carry out timetabled reviews of their development plan and continue to take part in professional learning and development to

ensure they continue to offer an outdoor learning environment and experiences where children can be challenged in their development.

### Further support and NDNA resources

- Q&A on the Outdoors - NDNA factsheet
- Information for Parents and Families: Benefits of Outdoors and Risky Play- NDNA Factsheet
- Seasonal Outdoor Play - How to Keep High Engagement Levels All Year Round in the Outdoors - NDNA factsheet
- 10 Top Tips for Developing the Outdoors on a Low Budget - NDNA factsheet

Published January 2020