

5.0: Developing outdoor learning

High Quality Outdoor Learning represents a further step on the continuing journey to improving the quality of outdoor learning.

Outdoor learning does not provide the answer to all society's problems and should not be treated as an isolated approach. Rather, it should be seen as one means to achieving outcomes alongside other approaches, for example, through the arts, sport or youth work. What makes outdoor learning unique is the combination of facilitated practice and the outdoor environment, practitioners and providers drawing on their values, knowledge and skills to help participants of all ages achieve their goals. In so doing, outdoor learning offers opportunities to experience the natural world and develop a relationship with nature that could have lasting impact at personal, societal and global levels.

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The benefits of outdoor learning are widely understood, yet economic, political, cultural, environmental and social factors continue to shape the field. Although research supports the contribution that outdoor learning can make to some of our greatest challenges, access to the benefits is inequitable, whether as a participant or potential member of the workforce¹. Education and health professionals, funders and policy makers all have roles to play in the adoption of outdoor learning approaches but may be unaware of their potential. There is a need, therefore, to promote outdoor learning at all levels of society, building bridges to participation and moving outdoor learning from an option for some to an entitlement for all.



Achieving these goals is not the responsibility of a single person or organisation. Practitioners, providers and advocates of outdoor learning can all contribute to leading the development of the field by:

- ✓ Using, promoting and sharing this guide.
- ✓ Sharing knowledge and good practice through communities of practice.
- ✓ Advocating for outdoor learning in all its forms.
- ✓ Supporting organisations that champion outdoor learning.
- ✓ Collaborating with other sector organisations.
- ✓ Exploring and developing new ideas to improve practice.
- ✓ Looking for ways to add value, shape and move the field of outdoor learning forwards.
- ✓ Engaging with research initiatives that demonstrate short term outcomes as well as long term impact.

By striving for and demonstrating high quality provision, practitioners and providers can achieve meaningful outcomes that have the potential to change lives. By contributing to the wider sector through advocacy, research and practice development, they can also help to raise awareness of and capitalise on the value of outdoor learning, moving towards a truly inclusive and equitable outdoor learning offer for all.

References

- ¹ Anderson, N., Anderson, N. et al, (2021) *INclusivity in the OUTdoors: Insights and recommendations from the 2021 Raising Our Game Webinar Series*. Available at: <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/standards/iol-professional-standards/equality-diversity-inclusion/inclusivity-in-the-outdoors.html>

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