



## UNIT 3 WORKBOOK

### UNIT 3: Forest School Programmes: Learning & Development

**Credit 6; Guided Learning hours 30; Total Qualification Time 60.**

This unit has 5 Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
<b>The learner will:</b>	<b>The learner can:</b>
1. Understand the Forest School Principles and holistic approach to learning and development in relation to an 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'.	1.1. Summarise how the Forest School principles apply to own programme. 1.2. Give examples of ways in which Forest School encourages physical development and well-being. 1.3. Give examples of ways in which Forest School encourages social and emotional development and well-being including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Spiritual Development.</li> </ul> 1.4 Give examples of ways in which Forest School encourages intellectual development including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Independent learning.</li> </ul>
2. Understand the value of the play process at Forest School.	2.1. Summarise the key characteristics of play and its role at Forest School. 2.2. Explain, giving examples, how play and choice are integrated into own 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'.

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
<b>The learner will:</b>	<b>The learner can:</b>
3. Understand relevant theories of learning and development and their application to Forest School.	3.1. Summarise recognised theories of learning and development relating to own 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'.
4. Understand the impact of behaviour on learning and development at Forest School.	4.1. Summarise some of the key influences that affect the behaviour of all participants at Forest School. 4.2. Explain how any participant's total behaviour can impact on their learning and development and that of others at Forest School. 4.3. Describe how meeting the needs of all participants develops a community of learning, giving examples from own experience of Forest School.
5. Know how to reflect on own Forest School training.	5.1. Summarise own personal development and learning journey through the Forest School training process. 5.2. Explain how own experience of Forest School training may inform own wider practice and professional development.



### **Forest School Leaders Level 3 Certificate – UNIT 3**

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Course Location: The Forest, Hollywood, Co. Wicklow, Ireland

Course dates: 5-9 October 2019 and 22-25 February 2020

#### **Declarations:**

##### **Student:**

I certify that this workbook and portfolio of evidence presented for assessment and moderation by the above student is my own work and authentic. (*Refer to our Learning Style, Assessment Methods & Plagiarism document in **Policies & Procedures***).

**Signature: Claire Samways**

**Date: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

##### **Tutor:**

#### **Internal Moderator (if sampled during the moderation process):**

I have sampled this workbook and portfolio during the internal moderation process and confirmed the tutor's assessment decisions.

Signature:

Date:

**Learning Outcome 1: Understand the Forest School Principles and holistic approach to learning and development in relation to an 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'.**

**1.1. A. Summarise how the Forest School principles apply to own programme.**

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

**(Jill, I am writing this one up as to how I see my Forest School programme running and developing as I currently do not have a FS, have not conducted my 6 pilots as yet, but can reflect from training to date.)\*\***

Forest School refers to an ethos and method of increasing confidence and self-esteem through facilitating largely child-led, hands-on experiences, facilitated through repeated visits to a natural environment.

**Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations, and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.**

My forest school programme will take place once a week (initially) on a 6 week rotation in a woodland setting at Glasswater wood throughout the seasons ideally with the same group of learners. An agreement between the Woodland trust and myself will be set up to run the FS, with awareness of the site management plans, to enhance sustainable woodland practices and empower the next generation of eco warriors.

The Forest School programme will be co-created, planned and developed with fellow forest school practitioners and be based on observations from the group, time of season, the age, and the ability of the group. Each session would have a start, middle and ending. As needs require this can be changed and adapted e.g. if the weather or underground conditions change (it may start to snow and require going indoors). During sessions I would observe individuals needs and abilities which helps me plan and adapt for future sessions e.g. the need for a quiet chill out zone, or some individuals may want and need more energising games. At the end of each session I will have a reflection time with participants and co-leaders to see how they felt, what they liked, and how we could improve on delivery-what went well and tune ups.

Physical and behavioural boundaries will be established on initial sessions of programme delivery during circle up time. Agreements will be set to practice self-care, care for others and to respect and care for the earth we live on. Clear site boundaries will be marked on site as to where participants can and cannot go.

At the end of each session and 6 week block of delivery I will review and reflect practice delivery with my fellow co-leaders to generate ideas, work collaboratively, consider observations of the group and seasonal changes, to enhance and enable future programme development.

**Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.**

My Forest School will be set up in Glasswater Wood which is a Woodland Trust 6 acre broad leafed woodland.

It is the ideal space and environment to deliver a FS programme. There is space for parking, easy access, pathways, rides, and glades. There are good boundaries in the form of hedging and fencing around the 6 acres which creates a safe space to explore whilst feeling free in a woodland environment.

I have worked with the Woodland Trust's site manager to establish a small hazel coppice rotation over the past 4 years and will be developing practices within the forest school that incorporate sustainable woodland management practices e.g. seed collecting, growing, and planting native tree species. I will monitor the environmental impact of the FS on the woodland particularly in reference to the flora and fauna, and as required change where the fire is situated.

Sessions will aim to foster a deep connection with nature for leaders, learners and the wider community through regular personal experiences and practices at FS sessions. To date the general public and Woodland trust have been incredibly supportive and interested in my work and what I am now trying to achieve by developing a Forest School.

The natural resources are abundant in Glasswater wood which creates an inspiring and ideal environment for learners and leaders to enable creative ideas to come to the fore for activities such as den building, leaf print making, fire making , space to free play and explore, listen to the bird song, find insects, space to put up hammocks and chill, places to make rope swings and have fun. This makes it an ideal FS setting.

**Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners.**

Where it is appropriate, FS sessions can be linked to what is being taught at school such as climate change, environmental awareness, geography, getting to know your physical place, mapping, as examples of how can link FS sessions to formal school learning.

FS programmes will aim to promote the holistic development of learners by using a range of learner centred processes and the 'Four key Dynamics' within a Forest School where there is constant, moving interplay between the young person, the practitioner, the seasons/place and the resources we have available. Activities such as energising games, bonding socially around the campfire, singing songs, learning new skills like making a mallet, being empowered to be creative and free, sit spot time, relaxing in a hammock, all promote holistic development and foster individuals to become resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners.

**Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.**

All growth, learning and development involves taking a certain amount of risk. Supported risk taking appropriate to the environment, learners age and ability is encouraged in a FS setting.

Make risk taking work by doing the following:

- Take it seriously.
- Know that it is important that children take risks AND people are often very frightened of these risks
- Use BRAs
- Have an Emergency Plan
- Do daily Site Checks to ensure that you are comfortable with all the activities and circumstances
- Keep an accident book
- Work within your and your setting's policies and procedures

Gill, T., (2008) No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society London: Calouste Gulbenkian Play England: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/>

By putting in control measures (detail in RBA's) and following the above, the activity can be carried out with confidence, empowering, and encouraging both practitioners and learners.

Through observation and reflection with leaders and learners, individuals are encouraged to explore and develop activities they are interested in and sessions can be planned and adapted to allow for individual as well as group needs.

The use of tools and fire making practices will be determined by the learners age and ability. Baseline RA for these activities will have been completed prior to any of these activities taking place.

**Principle 5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.**

The reason for me conducting my training as a Level 3 Forest School practitioner is to enable me to conduct and develop a Forest School.

I am aiming to develop this FS with two other fellow trainees (and be fully qualified FS practitioners) to keep a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners. At a minimum I will use 2 FS practitioners at each session regardless of group size.

I will follow local authority school and nursery guidelines to risk assess how many adults should accompany children keeping a balance between safety keeping a balance between safety keeping a balance between safety and too much adult presence to hamper the freedom that children need to become independent learners.

All practitioners and adults helping at Forest School will have a current DBS (Police check) to ensure their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people, and vulnerable people.

My Forest School has a handbook which includes relevant working documents, all the policies and procedures required for running a Forest School. The roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers are also included.

Forest School is a reflective practice with ongoing learning inspiring me to continually learn and develop new skills to support a child-led approach to learning, child development, play, and wellness through nature connection.

## **6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning**

The Forest School Movement has developed a range of learner centred processes in relation to child development, learning and play. A child-led approach to learning forms the bedrock of FS whereby practitioners are able to draw out and value what young people are interested in, and trust their own process of learning, exploring, and developing.

The 'Four key Dynamics' where there is constant, moving interplay between the young person, the practitioner, the seasons/place and the resources we have available are used in the FS setting.

The Flow Approach, devised by Joseph Cornell, identifies four stages of learning, representing four moods, which should ideally be followed as a sequence in order to create the ideal structure in which to learn in a natural environment is used to help plan FS sessions : <https://reconnectwithnatureirl.com/forestschool/>

- Awaken Enthusiasm – creating an atmosphere of curiosity, amusement, or personal interest.
- Focus Attention – concentrating on one physical sense to become calm, observant, and receptive to surroundings.
- Experience Directly – absorbing, experiential activities that give deep, inner sense of belonging and understanding.
- Share Inspiration – giving opportunity to reflect and share on what has been learned.

Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School. A wide variety of learning preferences and stimulus are provided in a FS setting from free play, to quiet sit spots, to relaxing in hammocks, to using creative imagination, focussed attention in learning new skills like mallet making and learners are given a choice of what they are drawn to do or not do.

Through reflective practice and observation at each session learners and practitioners can be empowered as to what they have achieved, what can be tuned up, and future sessions planned, tailored and 'scaffolded' to meet the needs of future learning and development thus ensuring a thriving and growing environment to be in.

## **1.1 B. Demonstrate an understanding of the challenges of implementing them and how you may overcome them.**

My main challenge has been that I am setting up a FS from scratch with no prior experience but just an inspiring vision and reason behind why I want to do this which keeps me motivated to overcome obstacles of establishing a FS.

To overcome the challenges of implementing and establishing a FS following the principles and ethos of a holistic approach to learning and development I have:

- collaboratively worked with the Woodland trust in finding a site to set up my Forest school which is an inspiring environment for both practitioners and learners
- Undertaken the Level 3 FS training from October 2019 to current
- Joined the Irish Forest School Association
- Attended summer and autumn meets/gatherings with the IFSA in 2019 to meet with practitioners from all over Ireland and conduct ongoing learning and idea generation (not able to this year 2020 due to COVID19 but have met up via Zoom)
- Established connections with my co-trainees
- Kept in contact with Marina
- I have linked with a local school to set up my 6 pilot sessions to deliver to a group of 7-8-year old's. This has involved speaking with the headmaster to educate him on the FS ethos and pedagogy, my long-term vision of establishing a FS, linking with the P4 teacher, developing my FS handbook with policies and procedures
- Set up my own insurance
- Completed a REC 2 first aid course
- Established an emergency action plan
- Conducted RBA's to give confidence and reassurance on taking risks
- Practiced skills learnt from training course with co-trainees
- Bought relevant reading material to enhance learning for FS delivery
- Booked further CPD courses to develop skills
- Visited other practitioners' sites to generate ideas of how I could develop my FS site
- Set up a framework of session delivery that ensures choice, a flow approach, with observation and reflection time both with learners and practitioners
- With the COVID situation I am currently establishing new risk assessments and how sessions can be run whilst being aware that this is in continual flux (sought guidance via Marina and the IFSA)

## **1.2. Give examples of ways in which Forest School encourages physical development**

Physical development is defined as one of the many domains of infant and toddler development relating to the growth and skill development of the body, including the **brain, muscles, and senses**. <http://www.earlyyearsatters.co.uk/our-services/school-and-nursery-improvement-partner/physical-development-pd/>

There has been considerable concern over the last few years about an increase in children's sedentary behaviour and a reduction in their physical activity. If it does not happen early it is more difficult to establish later on. Babies and young children undergo rapid and wide-ranging physical and psychological developments in their early years which contribute to their future health and well-being.

A Forest School setting is the ideal enabling environment for physical development from early years onwards.

It provides a free flowing play space away from a sedentary environment.

There are a multitude of activities in FS that support fine motor development such as threading beads, leaf print making, painting, exploring colour, craft work, building mini dens, and playing with clay.

Stop and start games such as statues; games such as being rabbits or snakes so that children balance their weight on different parts of the body develop stability control, proprioception, and neuromuscular control.

Locomotor skills are developed during energising games such as Beetle Tag and climbing in trees.

Object-control skills are developed in games and activities that include catching, rolling, and throwing such as pattern ball.

Sensory development is continually happening in a FS school setting due it being a multisensory environment using site, sound, and touch. Listening to the birds sing, feeling the wind in your face, touching the earth, playing with clay, making dens, taking time in a sit spot or hammock all stimulates sensory development.

A FS setting and activities provides the optimal environment for developing physical development ideally working with the early year group and onwards.

### 1.3. How does Forest School encourage social and emotional development and well-being?



- **How does Forest school support the development of self-esteem and confidence?**

A FS setting is a space to feel safe, have fun and be adventurous by creating a warm, friendly, non-judgemental atmosphere. By using children's names, they feel seen and a FS name can help them feel unique and freer to express their individuality.

Create clear boundaries and agreements both physically and behaviourally as to what is acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour at the beginning of sessions. Discuss risk, safety, and emotional reasoning for decisions being made.

Create tasks with the learners ability in mind to ensure that they succeed, feel empowered, giving acknowledgement when they have achieved what they set out to do.

Allow learners to follow their own path of learning and reasoning, encouraging curiosity and a desire to explore new things.

Show an interest in what they are doing and ask questions rather than giving them answers that will encourage them to look wider and further.

Be aware that individual's with a noticeably quiet voice may have low self-esteem. Be patient with them, allow them space and time to find their voice as they build in self-esteem and start to flourish as an individual.

Use effective communication skills both verbally and non-verbally to make young people feel respected and valued. Make positive comments and do not compare their work or skills with someone else. Be aware that people differ greatly in talent, interests, and abilities. Yet change is possible in many areas, everyone has the capacity to change grow and develop different skills.. the brain is plastic.

Encourage a 'Growth mindset' Dweck, C (2017) [\*Mindset – Updated Edition: Changing The Way You think To Fulfil Your Potential\*](#), Robinson. This is a theory centred around the belief that intelligence and learning can be developed and improved. If someone has a growth mindset, they have a positive attitude towards learning and their ability to progress and achieve. In relation to self-esteem believing you can improve, and acknowledging a child's effort and hard work creates resilient adults who can embrace feedback, have the passion for sticking at things, and believe that if they want to, they can achieve and grow, and ultimately feel good about themselves.

All of the above will support the development of self-esteem and confidence in those participating in regular FS sessions.

- **How does Forest school support the development of emotional intelligence and resilience?**

Emotional intelligence is a term or concept popularized by researchers in the 1990s. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions. People who possess this trait also have the ability to understand and influence the emotions and behaviour of others. And with this understanding, some are able to enjoy greater success in life. <https://www.healthline.com/health/emotional-intelligence>

There are 5 elements of emotional intelligence:



Self-awareness	Self-awareness is being conscious of your own feelings and motives. Emotionally intelligent people often demonstrate a high level of self-awareness. You know how your emotions affect yourself and others, and you do not allow your emotions to control you.
Self-regulation	People with the ability to self-regulate do not make impulsive decisions. You pause and think about the consequences of an action before proceeding.
Motivation	People with emotional intelligence are productive and driven. You think about the big picture and assess how your actions will contribute to long-term success.
Empathy	Emotionally intelligent people are less likely to be self-centred. Instead, you empathize with others and your situations. You tend to be a good listener, slow to judge, and understanding of the needs and wants of others. For this reason, an emotionally intelligent person is often seen as a loyal, compassionate friend.
Social skills	It is easier for you to collaborate and work in teams. You tend to be an excellent leader because of your strong communication skills and ability to manage relationships.

Some people with emotional intelligence are born that way. For those who are not, this trait can be learned with practice. Recent developments in the field of neuroscience have helped educators recognise and appreciate the opportunities for neural development are best to take place during the formative years, however emotional intelligence can be a learned practice. Established behaviours will take significantly longer to alter before new emotional circuits and habits are developed, but with persistence and commitment change can take place.



Forest School helps develop the 5 elements of emotional intelligence:

### 1. **Self-awareness:**

Developing self-awareness requires tuning in to your true feelings.

The main elements of self-awareness are:

- Emotional awareness. Your ability to recognize your own emotions and their effects.
- Self-confidence. Sureness about your self-worth and capabilities.

Throughout activities in FS sessions practitioners are encouraging participants to be aware of how they are feeling and how others are feeling by the practice of agreements of self-care and care for others in the group. Also, through the process of continual reflective practice individuals become more aware to check in as to how they feel.

Self-confidence is developed by learning and completing new tasks and taking risks, giving participants a feeling of self-worth and a sense of achievement, such as lighting a fire for the first time.

### 2. **Self-regulation:**

You often have little control over when you experience emotions. You can, however, have some say in how long an emotion will last by using a number of techniques to alleviate negative emotions such as anger, [anxiety](#) or [depression](#). A few of these techniques include recasting a situation in a more positive light, taking a long walk and meditation or prayer.

Self-regulation involves:

- Self-control. Managing disruptive impulses.
- Trustworthiness. Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
- Conscientiousness. Taking responsibility for your own performance.
- Adaptability. Handling changes with flexibility.
- Innovation. Being open to new ideas.

During FS sessions practitioners may have to deal with challenging behaviour and disruptive episodes. Using skills such as showing understanding as to how they are feeling,

acknowledge their feelings, speak to them with a slow, quiet voice, ask them to take some time out, are some skills to use to help participants learn to self-regulate.

FS also helps individuals to learn to be adaptable and deal with change e.g. if the weather changes during sessions, you learn to either change the task you are doing, move inside or move to a more sheltered space and put suitable clothing on.

Innovation is continually encouraged and to be open to new ideas. Learners are encouraged to explore avenues that take their interest and follow the flow of what captures their imagination.

### **3. Motivation:**

To motivate yourself for any achievement requires clear goals and a positive attitude. Although you may have a predisposition to either a positive or a negative attitude, you can with effort and practice learn to think more positively. If you catch negative thoughts as they occur, you can reframe them in more positive terms — which will help you achieve your goals. Motivation is made up of:

- Achievement drive. Your constant striving to improve or to meet a standard of excellence.
- Commitment. Aligning with the goals of the group or organization.
- Initiative. Ready yourself to act on opportunities.
- Optimism. Pursuing goals persistently despite obstacles and setbacks.

By being committed to the FS ethos, principles, pedagogy, and by constantly striving to meet these standards promotes achievement drive and enhances motivation.

FS encourages optimism in the pursuit of meaningful goals such as sustainable woodland practices and development of the next generation of eco warriors despite obstacles and setbacks and to ready yourself to act on opportunities that require using your initiative.

### **4. Empathy:**

The ability to recognize how people feel is important to success in your life and career. The more skilful you are at discerning the feelings behind others' signals the better you can control the signals you send them. An empathetic person excels at:

- Service orientation. Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting clients' needs.
- Developing others. Sensing what others need to progress and bolstering their abilities.
- Leveraging diversity. Cultivating opportunities through diverse people.
- Political awareness. Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships.
- Understanding others. Discerning the feelings behind the needs and wants of others.

FS encourages individuals to be empathetic through service orientation such as caring for the environment; developing others through reflective practice and observation; providing FS opportunities to a diverse set of people; understanding peoples backgrounds and political upbringing.

**5. Social skills.** The development of good interpersonal skills is tantamount to success in your life and career. In today's always-connected world, everyone has immediate access to technical knowledge. Thus, "people skills" are even more important now because you must possess a high EQ to better understand, empathize and negotiate with others in a global economy. Among the most useful skills are:

- Influence. Wielding effective persuasion tactics.
- Communication. Sending clear messages.
- Leadership. Inspiring and guiding groups and people.
- Change catalyst. Initiating or managing change.
- Conflict management. Understanding, negotiating, and resolving disagreements.
- Building bonds. Nurturing instrumental relationships.
- Collaboration and cooperation. Working with others toward shared goals.
- Team capabilities. Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals.

FS approaches are fantastic at developing social skills by encouraging practices and activities that include collaboration and co-operation, generating group synergy, building bonds, working towards shared goals, inspiring people, dealing with conflict management, and encouraging effective, clear communication.

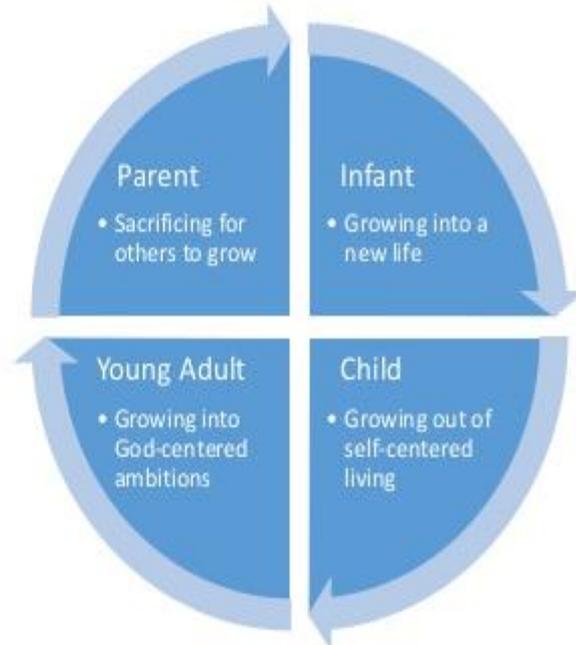
An example of this would be a group building a natural shelter requires all the above skills of working together towards a shared goal, effective communication, and the ability to influence others.

Again, a FS setting is an optimal environment and practice to develop emotional intelligence and resilience.

- **How does forest school encourage spiritual development?**

## Stages of Spiritual Growth

- A tool to help
- Spiritual maturity is not necessarily tied to age or longevity of church attendance
- Be humble and honest in our evaluation if we want to grow



The needs of children have been well researched in the psychological and sociological disciplines. It can be argued that all children also have an inherent spirituality which should be considered to achieve a truly holistic picture of developmental needs. As John Bradford puts it:

‘For a human being, especially a child or young person, to have a full quality of life, spirituality in all its aspects must be nurtured and affirmed. For children or young people who have been marginalised or who have suffered deprivation in every way, the need for such nurture and affirmation in human spirituality is all the more pronounced’.

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/body-mind/childhood-youth/childhood-and-youth-studies/childhood/child-spirituality>

Children’s spiritual needs can be considered in terms of what may be universal (or innate) and in terms of what might be expressed through religious persuasion or affiliation to a faith community. Children appear to have an inbuilt curiosity about the world, which expresses itself in wonder and awe; in questions about where they came from; and the meaning of death.

Hay & Nye, writing from an educational research perspective, suggest that spirituality is innate in children. The features they identify in children's spirituality are presented by Margaret Crompton as:

- sensing a changed quality in awareness.
- sensing values, ideas about good and evil or what matters.

- sensing mystery wonder and awe.
- sensing meaning or insight or connectedness.

All of the above are developed in the FS setting through practices of:

- Awareness of self-care, care for others and care for the environment.
- Encouraging the younger generation to become guardians of the earth we live on i.e. what matters/the bigger picture
- By sensing the mystery and awe of the world around us
- Feeling a deep connection to nature

FS approaches tie in closely with humanistic concepts of spirituality which embrace:

'aspirations, moral sensibility, creativity, love and friendship, response to natural and human beauty, scientific and artistic endeavour, appreciation and wonder at the natural world, intellectual achievement, physical activity, surmounting suffering and persecution, selfless love, the quest for meaning and values by which to live'.

FS provides an optimal environment for spiritual development.

## 1.4 Give examples of ways in which Forest School encourages intellectual development including creativity and independent learning.



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Intellectual development refers to a person's growing ability to learn in relation to the world around him or her. Intellectual development is characterized by four stages.

### Stages of Intellectual Development

#### 1. Sensorimotor:

This stage occurs from the time a child is born until he or she becomes a toddler at two years old. During this stage, a child's experiences with the world are based on his or her five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting) and motor skills. During the first two months of life, the child is grasping and sucking. These are called elementary motor movements.

#### 2. Pre-operational:

This stage is characterized by intellectual development in early childhood during the ages of two through seven. At this stage, a child builds language skills. From the ages of two to four, logical reasoning is not at its height, yet a child can speak and be understood by those around him or her. From the ages of four to seven, a child's speech becomes more developed. He or she begins to use simple reasoning while talking and can participate in games that have simple rules. A major milestone of this stage is being able to understand things from another person's point of view, called theory of mind

#### 3. Concrete Operational:

This stage in a child's intellectual development occurs from the ages of seven to 11. At this stage, a child starts to understand logical patterns. The child's cognitive skills are developed and help to form a solid understanding of different subjects. Since the child's intellectual development has progressed, he or she is capable of solving problems completely and accurately. With a sharper cognitive focus, children at this stage are able to understand why processes happen. They can also understand processes that are only imagined instead of seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled.

#### 4. Formal Operational:

This stage happens from the age of 12 and on. At this stage, cognitive focus is heightened, and a person is able to understand abstract concepts. Children can solve abstract problems using information and context, meaning that not all of a problem's components need to be present in order to solve it. Many of these components are inferred, requiring a person to logically deduce answers. Children and adults build on the intellectual development that occurs here for the rest of their lives.

FS encourages intellectual development from the early years onwards through sensorimotor input of the five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting) and motor skills. By being in an outdoor woodland environment stimulates the five senses compared to learning in with four walls. <http://www.learningwithoutwalls.org.uk/>

The ability to see a wide variety of objects, hear the wind in the trees, bird song, being able to touch different textures from leaves to playing with clay, to building dens with natural materials, smell decaying leaves, wild garlic and taste food cooked over the fire all are high sensory activities.

***"The best classroom and the richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky"***

*Margaret MacMillan*

Motor skills are developed by playing energising warm up games, climbing trees, learning how to use tools such as the bow saw and palm drill.

Playing games with simple rules such as pattern ball, beetle tag, deer's ears, helps develop the pre-operational stage of intellectual learning which occurs between the age of two to seven, thus emphasising the importance of play.

Between the ages of seven to eleven FS helps with the concrete operational stage of intellectual development where children's cognitive skills are developed, and they form a solid understanding of different subjects. This is achieved by learning tasks such as:

- teaching the skill of how to light a fire and how this process occurs
- learning how to use a variety of tools
- learning to tie knots and build rope structures
- building dens
- learning about the seasons, flora, and fauna
- playing with clay and being able to be creative in what they make

From the age of 12 and on cognitive focus is heightened in the formal operational stage of intellectual development, and children are able to understand abstract concepts and solve abstract problems. Abstract tasks such as learning how to put up a rope swing, a challenge to make a fire in 10 minutes, find water and purify it, to making survival shelters are all examples of how FS encourages the development of the formal operational stage of intellectual development encouraging creativity and to become an independent learner for life.

## **Learning Outcome 2: Understand the value of the play process at Forest School.**

### **2.1. Summarise the key characteristics of play and its role at Forest School.**

**Refer to widely recognised principles of play, Article 31 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and current play work practice.**

In our busy lifestyles, changing family structures, societies focus on academics and extra-curricular activities, the opportunities to play have been greatly reduced, which is why it is such an important tool in the context of Forest School. Forest School's offer the ideal opportunity for play experiences in a truly inspiring environment.

#### Importance of Play

Play is considered so important to a child's development that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has established Article 31 that every child has a right to play and to engage in other recreational activities, including participation in cultural activities and the arts.



Article 31 states (taken from [www.playboard.org](http://www.playboard.org)):

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 31 imposes three obligations on state parties to guarantee that the rights it covers are realised by every child without discrimination:

- The obligation to **respect** which requires government to refrain from interfering directly or indirectly in the enjoyment of the rights contained within Article 31.
- The obligation to **protect** which requires government to take steps to prevent third parties from interfering in the rights contained within Article 31.
- The obligation to **fulfil** which requires governments to introduce the necessary legislative, administrative, budgetary, and other measures aimed at delivering full enjoyment of Article 31 rights by all children and young people

### So...What is Play?

- Play is free and unstructured.
- Play can be independent or as part of a group.
- Play may involve equipment or just pure imagination.
- Play can be boisterous, energetic, quiet, contemplative, light-hearted, or serious.
- Play can bring children and adults together.
- Play is an essential element to Learning.



The essential characteristics of playing (Making Sense of Play: Perry Else)

1. Play is a process, not a specific action
2. Self-chosen, with a willingness to participate
3. Active engagement, attentive response to feedback
4. Sufficiently safe, physically, and psychologically
5. A whole body/mind experience
6. Timelessness, lost in the moment
7. Curiosity; attracted to newness or new experiences
8. Pleasurable
9. Different for each person
10. Satisfaction is self-defined, with no extrinsic goals

Tina Bruce identifies 12 features of play. Bruce states that if more than half are present, the play is quality play.

The 12 features of play:

1. Using first-hand experiences
2. Making up rules
3. Making props
4. Choosing to play
5. Rehearsing the future
6. Pretending
7. Playing alone
8. Playing together
9. Having a personal agenda
10. Being deeply involved
11. Trying out recent learning
12. Co-ordinating ideas, feelings, and relationships for free-flow play.

Bruce, T. (2001) Learning through play: babies Toddlers and the Foundation Years. London: Hodder and Stoughton

Bob Hughes (2002) researched and published a Playworker's Taxonomy of Play types.

<http://learningintheleaves.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/The-Taxonomy-of-Play-Sheet.pdf>

For some time now, the changing nature of children's lives has been a major concern, with researchers talking about the 'shrinking horizons of childhood (Gill, 2005), play deprivation (Bundy et al., 2011), the hurried child (Elkind, 2001) and 'nature deficit disorder'(Louv, 2008).

This has resulted in an imbalance on how the modern world's children are developed being adult driven and focusing on the mind development predominantly with little emphasis on spiritual and emotional development or time for free play. As discussed previously this has led to increase in stress, obesity, mental health disorders, poor cognitive and physical development.

As a Forest School Practitioner, the aim would be to address this imbalance in child development and provide an environment and practices that allow for equal development of the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. We need to provide planned times for free play and choice that is not adult-driven.

### **Play the Forest School Way:**

Forest School encourages a child led approach to play by providing an ideal environment, activities, and time to be free.

Children can self-choose activities to participate in from opportunities presented on the day or choose to take time out in a hammock to self-regulate.

The FS environment provides a safe place to play with defined boundaries and appropriate risk assessments undertaken for activities of play in a multisensory environment.

Forest school is a whole mind, body, spirit experience providing tasks that cognitive (learning to tie knots), physical (climbing trees, energising games), spiritual (sense of wonder and awe for the natural world).

Quality time is given to activities such as playing with clay or craft making which characterises timelessness or being lost in the moment.

Children are encouraged to try out new experiences that they have never tried from playing on rope swings, building dens, playing with clay, using their imagination, lighting a fire.

There are no goals at the session only the aim to have a pleasurable experience with a sense of self satisfaction.

Play can be either on your own or with a group, be energetic (playing on rope swings, energising games, den building) or quiet and contemplative (sit spotting, whittling, chilling in the hammock).

Creatively using your imagination is encouraged to make up games, create your own artwork, role play, pretend.

## **Principles of Play:**

Over the last few years some key principles of play have been developed that are accepted and used by playworkers and FS practitioners.

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 well-being of individuals and communities.**

Forest School offers the ideal opportunity for children and adults to play.

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.**

In the forest school environment, we do encourage free play and allow children to lead the learning. We can provide activities that can be interpreted by children in different ways, so they are still given the freedom of choice of what they would like to participate in.

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.**

A play policy could be written into your FS handbook to ensure the play process is supported and facilitated at FS sessions.

4. **For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.**

As a Forest School Practitioner, you carefully choose and select your activities that have a play element and are child led not adult driven.

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.**

The woodland setting of a FS provides the ideal space and environment to 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.**

At the heart of Forest School is the importance of having a qualified practitioner who can lead/facilitate the play process in a woodland environment. Reflective practice is encouraged at the end of each session to gain feedback from participants and co-workers as to how sessions went and what could be improved on.

7. **Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.**

This element plays directly into the evaluation and reflection elements of the Forest School programme and ensure it is a child-led approach and not adult driven.

**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 well-being of children.**

This element links a number of different learning approaches and holistic development within the Forest School programme. Through observation of individuals sessions can be developed to extend what interests the individual or group thus extending their play.

All activities have Risk Benefit assessments carried out with control measures put in place to ensure that the well-being of children is ensured with the benefit of ongoing child development.

## 2.2. Explain, giving examples, how was play and choice integrated into your 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'?

**Links need to be made to a play policy and/or the Forest School Handbook**

**Include a few examples from your own 'Introduction to Forest School Pilot sessions.'**

Sessions were developed in line with my play policy – **see Appendix 1** - to ensure play and choice were at the heart of session delivery.

The '**Flow Approach**' to learning was used as a framework to design session delivery. This was devised by Joseph Cornell which identifies four stages of learning, representing four moods, which should ideally be followed as a sequence in order to create the ideal structure in which to learn in a natural environment:

<https://reconnectwithnatureirl.com/forestschool/>

- **Awaken Enthusiasm** – creating an atmosphere of curiosity, amusement, or personal interest.
- **Focus Attention** – concentrating on one physical sense to become calm, observant, and receptive to surroundings.
- **Experience Directly** – absorbing, experiential activities that give deep, inner sense of belonging and understanding.
- **Share Inspiration** – giving opportunity to reflect and share on what has been learned.

My initial session was developed with a framework to have a beginning, middle and end incorporating the '**Flow Approach**' to learning with play and choice being at the heart of each session, with time for observation of participants and reflective practice.

### **Beginning:**

During the circle up time at the beginning agreements were set for expected behaviour and physical boundaries set on site. This was to ensure that the woodland setting felt like a safe place to be and play.

After the initial brief I '**Awakened Enthusiasm**' with the aim to create enthusiasm and interest in the up and coming activities by telling a story about woodland creatures and how they live in the forest to stimulate creative imagination.

I then got them to play and energising warm up game called 'Beetle Tag' to play on the theme of woodland creatures and empower participants to be free to express themselves, have fun, releasing some nervous energy and '**Focus Attention**' to the surroundings they were playing in.

### **Middle:**

After the 'Beetle Tag' energising game I got the group to circle up again and gave the choice of two activities following on from the story set from the beginning, one being making mini villages for woodland creatures, the other being playing with clay to make

woodland creatures. The option to flow between the two activities was given so participants had choice. A chill out zone was set up as another option with two hammocks or sit spot spaces if individuals wanted to take time out to self-regulate doing quieter more reflective activity. This part of the session used the aspect of '**Experience Directly**' of the **Flow Approach** to learning where participants could become absorbed in their creative imagination of creating mini woodland villages and playing with clay to create woodland creatures with play and choice being at the heart of the session delivery.

### **End:**

The group was brought together to reflect on what they enjoyed doing, with time to show off what they had created and encouraged to vocalise how they felt. They were also asked what they did not enjoy or any activity they would like in a session.

Time was factored in to allow time for closing the play activities down and to tidy up the site with both participants and practitioners.

The Forest School leader and co-leaders met to discuss what went well, what they observed in individuals, and what could be tuned up for the next session delivery.

It was felt overall that the session flowed well with good choice and that the option of the chill out zone would be incorporated for the next session even though the chill out zone was not used in this session by individuals as they were absorbed in the two activities. Participants enjoyed the choice and flow between the two creative play activities and loved the overall theme and how their creative imagination was encouraged by story telling and setting the scene about how woodland creatures lived in the forest.

The co-leaders reflected that the session format worked well and viewed to use the 'Flow Approach' to co-create the next session with play and choice being at the heart of each session delivery.

## **Learning Outcome 3: Understand relevant theories of learning and development and their application to Forest School.**

### **3.1. Summarise recognised theories of learning and development relating to own 'Introduction to Forest School Programme'.**

#### **Summarise a minimum of two recognised learning theories and explain their relevance to a Forest School programme.**

The Forest School Ethos resonates with important themes in the history of Western European educational theory since the 18th century: Thoreau, Froebel, Montessori and McMillan have all advocated the benefits of learning in the natural environment and insisted that children need to play, to experience space and movement and sensory stimulation for healthy development.

#### **Two Recognised Learning Theories:**

1. The **Flow Approach**, devised by **Joseph Cornell**, identifies four stages of learning, representing four moods, which should ideally be followed as a sequence in order to create the ideal structure in which to learn in a natural environment is used to help plan Forest School sessions : <https://reconnectwithnatureirl.com/forestschool/>
  - Awaken Enthusiasm – creating an atmosphere of curiosity, amusement, or personal interest.
  - Focus Attention – concentrating on one physical sense to become calm, observant, and receptive to surroundings.
  - Experience Directly – absorbing, experiential activities that give deep, inner sense of belonging and understanding.
  - Share Inspiration – giving opportunity to reflect and share on what has been learned.
2. **Henry David Thoreau** has been a philosopher I have widely read about and inspiring influence on my life. He was our subject choice to research during training which I thoroughly enjoyed. He was disillusioned with the conventional teaching practice of his time (all his writings apply to today). He sought to revolutionise the educational system and implement a practice based on the following principles.
  - A deep respect for the local and natural environment.
  - Learning through experience.
  - Hands on learning.
  - Knowledge is constructed, not imparted.
  - Student directed learning.
  - Teachers are facilitators, co-learners not expert lecturers.

## **Explain how learning theory has been applied to own introduction to Forest School programme.**

I have been very much inspired by the writings and philosophy of Thoreau for a long time which has influenced my life direction and choices over the past 15 years. On researching his views on education and his suggested approach to learning being through learning by experience, a hands on approach, deep respect for nature, and teachers being facilitators I was able to implement this into my pilot sessions during training.

Also researching about the Flow Approach to learning by Joseph Cornell has been very inspiring.

These learning theories and approaches of Thoreau and Joseph Cornell are at the heart of my session delivery by:

1. using the woodland as a multi-sensory outdoor learning environment
2. creating a space where children learn through experience rather than impart the knowledge to them.
3. using the framework of Joseph Cornell's Flow approach to plan, co-create, and facilitate FS sessions with play and choice at the heart of sessions
4. Awaken enthusiasm for sessions at beginning of sessions by setting the scene or story telling
5. encourage a deep respect and love of nature by setting agreements and boundaries
6. Focus attention on senses and being aware of surroundings by playing games such as blindfold recognition, sit spotting or time in the hammock relaxing
7. Experience directly – being involved in absorbing activities such as free play and energising games, building dens, playing with clay, learning how to use tools
8. learning by hands on methods e.g. playing with clay, learning how to make a rope swing
9. The learning is child-led and consequently facilitates learning at the child's own pace.
10. Shared Inspiration – at the end of sessions circle up and allow learners and practitioners time to reflect on what they enjoyed, how they felt, what could be tuned up on

## **Learning Outcome 4. Understand the impact of behaviour on learning and development at Forest School.**

### **4.1 Summarise some of the key influences that affect the behaviour of all participants at Forest School.**

#### **Include internal and external factors in the wider lives of all adults and children e.g. social, environmental, biological, neural development.**

Factors that affect human behaviour are multidimensional including attitude, perception, genetics, culture, social norms and ethics of a society, religious inclination, coercion, and influence by authority. Human behaviour is defined as the range of actions and behaviours exhibited by humans at certain stages of development.

Some internal factors considered to be important in influencing human behaviour are:

- knowledge about risk factors
- attitudes, beliefs, and core values
- social and life adaptation skills
- psychological disposition, e.g. self-efficacy
- physiology.

Some external factors are:

- social support
- the media
- socio-cultural, economic, and political factors
- biologic
- health care
- environmental stressors
- societal laws and regulations (Cole et al., 1992)

The presence or absence of these factors functions to either initiate or restrain healthy behaviours.

Secure attachment: a healthy relationship that is internalised that informs a person's internal working model of self, others, and feelings of being in the world.

Neuroscience of attachment: Attachment is a huge hormonal force that deeply affects the brain, mind, physiology and even how we lay calcium in the bones (Dr Margot Sunderland)

Secure attachment = Resilience

Resilience is key for: self-esteem, capacity to ask for help when troubled, development of effective stress regulatory systems in brain and body, capacity for deeply fulfilling relationships in later life, capacity for empathy, longevity.

Human behaviour is thus influenced by a multitude of factors including internal and external leading to the development of a resilient securely attached individual or someone who is insecurely attached leading to unhealthy behaviour patterns.

Fortunately, the brain is plastic ... it has the capacity to keep growing through our lives, and the insecure child/young person or adult has the potential to switch on higher thinking processes and learn new ways to behave that are healthy and become securely attached in relationships and be resilient.

As Forest School Practitioners we can help with behavioural change by:

- Calming the body down
- Understanding the importance of play – it activates opioids.
- Being loving with safe boundaries.
- Encouraging relationships with others and the non-human world.
- Being empathetic with good listening skills
- Being in the great outdoors - cortisol levels are naturally reduced
- High ratios, increased relationships.
- Giving choices and including learners in decision making
- Encourage risk taking
- Build confidence and self esteem
- Child-led (attends, asks to play, attune, warm touches)

#### **4.2 Explain how a participant's behaviour could impact on own and others' learning and development.**

An individual with low self-esteem or insecure attachment style could present with challenging behaviour which could present in many ways during a FS session.

They may have a low span of concentration and start to get frustrated and angry doing a task which has the potential to upset the rest of the group. This is where the skill of a FS practitioner needs effective communication skills to deal with challenging behaviour such as acknowledging how they feel, offer alternative options of activity to keep them interested, speak calmly but firmly to them, ask to speak with them one to one, teaching them how to self-regulate by either releasing pent up energy with a high energy activity or a calming activity such as swinging on a rope swing or lying in a hammock.

This requires a lot of potential one to one work and skill from the practitioner to the individual with challenging behaviour and be disruptive to the flow of the group's learning and development.

It may take this individual longer to establish healthy behavioural patterns and be able to self-regulate feelings and emotions in a better way, but that is where change is possible and a FS setting is an ideal environment to foster change and growth.

This may also impact on the practitioners ability to facilitate other learners developmental process as time may be impacted when dealing with individuals with challenging behaviour. Thus, the importance of having a high ratio of practitioners to learners so that when dealing with challenging behaviour has less impact on session delivery and long term growth and development of learning experiences.

### **4.3. Describe how meeting the needs of all participants develops a community of learning, giving examples from own experience of Forest School.**

**Reflect on the effectiveness of how your learning community has been developed during the training; during your Pilot 'Introduction to Forest School' and through your observations.**

Forest School embraces the needs of all participants by being conducted in a multi-sensory environment, with agreements established early on to have respect for self, others and the world we live on, with clear boundaries both physically and behaviourally with play and choice being at the heart of session delivery.

This fosters a feeling of being safe, being included, being heard, and the ability to be expressive in creative ways either as an individual or with a group which develops a community of learning.

Having respect for other peoples needs and awareness of how others are feeling is important to create a sense of belonging and feeling nurtured...looking out for each other and checking in with each other at the beginning and during sessions.

Having the option of different types of activity is stimulating and depending on how you are feeling on the day you may want to charge about doing energising games or be quieter and more reflective or solitary.

I found this approach to be very refreshing during my training period, as main stream education is so in the head and everyone is expected to do the same thing, where as in FS there is the freedom of choice, more ability to adapt to how you are feeling on the day, multi ways to self-regulate, and the ability to be free and be yourself, whilst having boundaries and awareness of other people, with respect and awe for the natural/spiritual world. We also had great fun and Marina is an amazing practitioner to learn and mentor from fostering a space and style of 'leadership' that embraces all. As a group we forged great friendships over the 9 days of training and developed a learning community of budding FS practitioners to be. To spread the good work in Ireland...like the 'Honeybee' ( my FS name in training and what I intend to call my FS.. "The Honeybees").

During my Pilot session delivery in training at Wicklow, our group delivered a session with play and choice at its heart, fun, freedom and to use creative imagination. Participants had choice of what they would like to do or not do with options of flow between two engaging activities or to be in the chill out zone. This encouraged a community of learning meeting individuals needs to be either on their own, work collaboratively, be self-expressive, be creative, be solitary and encouraged to be themselves. Awareness, observation, and taking a step back to let participants be free was key whilst being there to facilitate the process of learning and development. On observation both the practitioners and participants enjoyed the session with natural flow between the group and practitioners. The woodland space and boundaries that were set up lent itself to a stimulating, inspiring space which felt like a safe space to be in to learn. Feedback from the participants and practitioners was that they had fun, felt free and loved using their creative imagination.

## **Learning Outcome 5: Know how to reflect on own Forest School training.**

### **5.1 Summarise own personal development and learning journey through the Forest School training process**

In summary I have felt totally alive and inspired by the whole Forest School training process. I feel it was meant for me.

I feel honoured to be have trained by Marina who is held in such high esteem in the FS world of practitioners, and I hope I can take her passion and enthusiasm forward with my own practice to inspire and encourage others both practitioners and learners and have a positive influence on people's lives.

I loved the whole learning experience from practical woodland crafts, learning how to put up tarps, building dens, free play, playing with clay, learning rope skills and tying knots, foraging, to classroom based work on learning styles, challenging behaviour, pedagogy, FS history, ethos and principles.

I loved it all.

So from being an idea and concept of something I thought I may like to do, I now feel I am in the process of becoming a fully qualified FS practitioner with the ability to inspire and encourage others in life to be wholesome rounded people who care for themselves, others and the world around us.

### **5.2 Explain how your own experience of Forest school training may inform own wider practice and professional development**

I feel I am at the developmental stage of becoming a fully fledged FS practitioner with a solid foundation of knowledge of the FS ethos and pedagogy, why I want to be a FS practitioner, knowledge of practical skills, awareness of learning styles and challenging behaviours, knowledge of woodland management, how to prepare and observe sessions with emphasis on play, choice and being child-led. The ability to be co-creative with other practitioners, and to find my voice.

From this point my next step is to:

- build on my training and be able to deliver my 6 pilot sessions with my fellow trainee Michelle Wooderson.
- Conduct REC 2 first aid training
- Get insurance
- Practice practical skills of putting up tarps, tying knots, lighting fires etc
- Build on ability to deliver sessions using the 'Flow Approach' to learning with play and choice being at the heart and time for reflection
- Work on developing skills to deal with challenging behaviour
- Link and communicate with the school I hope to deliver the sessions to
- Complete my FS handbook and RBA's for session delivery

In conjunction with my FS training course I have:

- Joined the Irish Forest School Association (IFSA)
- Attended IFSA Spring and Autumn meets in 2019 \*(2020 has been disrupted due to COVID but we had a virtual 'Fireside Event' via Zoom last month)\*
- Kept in contact with my learning group via what's app
- Linked with fellow trainees
- Bought books from the reading list
- Kept in contact with Marina (Mentor) as a role model to aspire to

On completion of my training phase and once I become fully qualified, I would like to tune up and build on all skills learnt and build general experience. I intend to spend the next year working one day a week at developing my FS practice delivering 6 session blocks over the seasons of a year. I would like to review and reflect on my practice as I go along as to what and where I can learn and develop on as a practitioner. I now feel I am building on a community of like-minded people from my training phase where I can be co-creative, learn and develop from experienced practitioners in the IFSA and Circle of Life Rediscovery, and by keeping in contact with fellow co-trainees.

Long term I hope I can have a small but thriving Woodland Crafts business and combine my current coppicing and coppice craft skills with a Forest School element ... "The Honeybees"... working collaboratively and co-creatively with fellow FS practitioners to inspire and encourage the next generation.

## Appendix 1: Play Policy

Play is considered so important to a child's development that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has established Article 31 that every child has a right to play and to engage in other recreational activities, including participation in cultural activities and the arts.

Article 31 states (taken from [www.playboard.org](http://www.playboard.org)):

1. the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 31 imposes three obligations on state parties to guarantee that the rights it covers are realised by every child without discrimination:

- The obligation to **respect** which requires government to refrain from interfering directly or indirectly in the enjoyment of the rights contained within Article 31.
- The obligation to **protect** which requires government to take steps to prevent third parties from interfering in the rights contained within Article 31.
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The essential characteristics of play: (Making Sense of Play: Perry Else)

1. Play is a process, not a specific action
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5. A whole body/mind experience
6. Timelessness, lost in the moment
7. Curiosity; attracted to newness or new experiences
8. Pleasurable
9. Different for each person
10. Satisfaction is self-defined, with no extrinsic goals

All staff at the Honeybee's Forest School will be aware of recognised principles of play, Article 31 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, current play work practices and ensure the characteristics of play and choice are at the heart of Forest School session delivery.