



18 Sustainable Play

In today's world, sustainability is a fundamental principle that guides our actions and decisions, even in play-based projects. Sustainability in play isn't just about conserving resources; it's about ensuring that the joy, learning, and benefits derived from play can be experienced by generations to come. This guidance sheet explores the importance of sustainability in play-based projects, drawing insights from our E-learning course.

<https://engage.smartplaynetwork.org/play-training-courses/sustainable-play-and-climate-change/>

Sustainability in play-based projects involves a mindset shift towards creating play experiences that are not only enjoyable in the moment but also have lasting positive impacts. By adopting sustainable practices, we contribute to a healthier environment, more engaged and playful communities.



Defining Sustainability: Sustainability in play-based projects refers to the practice of developing and executing activities and initiatives that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It emphasises the creation of play experiences that not only bring joy and learning to participants today but also contribute positively to the environment, community, and society, ensuring long-term benefits and impacts.

In essence, sustainability in play means being mindful of the materials, resources, and practices we use to create play opportunities. It involves considering the environmental, social, and economic impacts of our actions and striving to make choices that are beneficial in the long run.

Benefits of Sustainability

Integrating sustainability into play-based projects brings numerous benefits:

- **Environmental Stewardship:** Sustainable play initiatives minimise harm to the environment. This can include using eco-friendly materials, reducing energy consumption, and incorporating green spaces.
- **Community Engagement:** Sustainability often involves engaging the community in project planning and maintenance. This fosters a sense of ownership and involvement, making play initiatives more successful and enduring.
- **Economic Efficiency:** Sustainable practices can lead to cost savings. By reducing waste, conserving resources, and using energy-efficient technologies, play projects can be more economically viable.
- **Long-term Impact:** Sustainability ensures that the benefits of play endure over time. By considering the future consequences of our actions, we create play opportunities that are longer lasting.

Assessing Sustainability

It is important to reassess our activities and materials with sustainability in mind. Here are a few key tips when considering delivery:

- Are my materials renewable?
- What is the lifespan of the materials? Will we get years of use out of them, or will they break or be binned?
- Do my actions encourage sustainability and environmental awareness with my community?
- Have we tried repurposing or sharing items before making purchases?



Case Studies

Play Plus Toy Library



Toy Libraries: Allow for extending and reusing the life of toys and play items. Often toys are only used by a single family and then binned after sitting in a cupboard for years. Toy libraries allow for a single toy to be shared between dozens of families, thus greatly reducing waste. Play Plus Toy Library has been operating in Edinburgh for over a decade and has helped support other communities create their own toy sharing initiatives.

<https://www.smartplaynetwork.org/play-plus-toy-library>

Gallatown Garden



Gallatown Garden and Wild Play space: Community Garden spaces have been instrumental in championing sustainability in the communities. Gallatown Garden has shown Kirkcaldy that green spaces can offer so much more by connecting adults and children to play, workshops, and learning experiences. From weekly nature play, bike repair workshops, and gardening groups they have turned the outdoors into a community hub and multi-purpose space championing sustainable communities.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gallatownwildspace>
<https://ymcakirkcaldy.co.uk/activities/wild-play-space/>

Resources

SPN Engage Hub: Training Courses and Resources

including:

- Sustainable Play
- Little Explorers
- All Weather Play



Scottish Play Strategy: “All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.”

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/play-strategy-scotland-action-plan/>

Scottish Net-Zero Nation engagement strategy:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/net-zero-nation-public-engagement-strategy-climate-change/pages/3/>

Learning for Sustainability Action Plan:

<https://lfl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/target-2030-movement-people-planet-prosperity-scotlands-learning-sustainability-action-plan-2023-2030.pdf>

Keep Scotland Beautiful: Charity supporting carbon literacy.

<https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/>

Environmental Learning for Children, Teens, and Teaching Resources for Educators:

<https://ypte.org.uk/learn>

Smart Play Network Members Support

As a member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your project, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org