



# EVALUATION REPORT 2021-2023

ECO  
DRAMA

# INTRODUCTION FROM ECO DRAMA'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EMILY REID

**We are delighted to share our latest report, charting Eco Drama's work over the last two years 2021-23.**

Despite many challenges of an ongoing pandemic, we were grateful to begin 2021 with record interest in our **Out to Play** project. Since 2015, the project has been gathering steady momentum, and in early 2021, the launch of our latest resource pack for Early Years attracted the attention of **Glasgow City Council**, catapulting the work into all 236 nurseries across Glasgow and complimenting and enhancing our existing **Glasgow Communities Fund** project.

**A 2-year long commission** from the Council, along with growing interest from Primary Schools across Glasgow, paved the way for our busiest two years since the project began. Notably, schools began requesting Out to Play residencies in the winter term, certainly a first for the project, demonstrating potentially changed attitudes to outdoor learning since the pandemic.

As well as working with pupils, teachers and early years practitioners on the Out to Play project, advancing outdoor learning and learning for sustainability through the arts, we have been developing **new outdoor performance projects** which inspire and nurture children's connection to nature.

2021 saw a collaboration with writer Zoe Bullock, creating a new piece of outdoor performance for the Edinburgh International Childrens Festival '**The Listening Tree**', and in 2022 we undertook a special commission with Lyth Arts Centre and Dandelion delivering '**Harvest Stories**' at various Harvest Festivals across Scotland.

We were delighted to have our film '**Future Calling**' showcased as part of the programme of activities at COP26, and we continue to share knowledge and ideas via presentations, workshops and webinars with a variety of organisations and partners across Scotland, the UK and internationally.

We are proud to have achieved some of the headline statistics you can see on this page, and we hope you enjoy reading about our recent work in this report.



Artistic Director and Founder

**15 five-week Out to Play residencies** took place across 11 primary schools engaging **2,146 learners** and **263 teachers**.

**1,619 children and 1,107 early years practitioners** participated in Out to Play Mini-Residencies and Out to Play In a Day.

831 teachers, early years practitioners and educators participated in **17 online and 5 in-person Out to Play CPD sessions**.

**We distributed 1,681 Out to Play resource packs** as part of Out to Play projects, and through sales.

**We presented on Out to Play at conferences and events**, including Education Scotland's Creativity and Wellbeing week.

# OUT TO PLAY



Out to Play is Eco Drama's award-winning creative outdoor learning programme in which Drama Artists collaborate with partner primary schools, early years settings and additional support needs (ASN) schools to explore and promote the role of drama, storytelling and creativity in outdoor learning and play.

The strong CPD element underpinning the Out to Play programme develops staff knowledge, confidence and skills, empowering teachers and practitioners to deliver their own arts-based outdoor learning and play sessions.

Since 2015, Out to Play has worked in-depth with 64 schools and nurseries in the Greater Glasgow area, and reached over 7,500 children and 2,400 teachers and early years practitioners across Scotland, the UK and internationally.

## Out to Play - Primary School Programme

In 2021-23, Eco Drama delivered **15 five-week Out to Play residencies across 11 schools**. We also facilitated external CPD. In total, the primary programme engaged **2,146 learners and 263 teachers** in the broad subject area of Learning for Sustainability, aiming to nurture pupils' confidence, creativity, and health and wellbeing, as well as developing literacy, social skills and a deeper connection to the natural world.

## Out to Play Early Years - Glasgow City Council Commission

In 2021-23, we were delighted to receive funding from Glasgow City Council to develop and deliver the Early Years strand of Out to Play. **All of the Council's 236 nurseries participated in Early Years webinar training, and received copies of our 'Let's Go...Out to Play!' Early Years Resource Pack**. A further 61 nurseries benefitted from our in-person CPD experiences 'Out to Play In a Day' and 'Mini-Residencies', in total engaging **1,619 children and 1,107 practitioners**.



### **Out to Play aims to achieve the following outcomes:**

- ✓ Children and young people have access to higher quality outdoor learning and play activities.
- ✓ Children and young people have improved knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for nature.
- ✓ Create positive change in the lives of children and young people by improving academic attainment in relation to their Learning for Sustainability.
- ✓ Teachers and practitioners have improved knowledge, confidence and skills in delivering arts-based outdoor learning and play.

# OUT TO PLAY PRIMARY RESIDENCIES



To assess levels of enjoyment and learning from the Out to Play residencies, we undertook a pre-post study inviting pupils and teachers to participate in evaluation before and after their Out to Play residency. Questions were designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative feedback.

To assess our feedback, we have used the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's 'Inspiring Learning' framework. This identifies five General Learning Outcomes (GLOs) that we have used to measure outcomes and demonstrate the impact that participation in an Out to Play residency has had on pupils and staff.



## IN 2021-23, 15 FIVE-WEEK OUT TO PLAY RESIDENCIES TOOK PLACE AT:

St Albert's Primary School  
 Pollokshields Primary School  
 St Rose of Lima Primary School  
 Sandaig Primary School  
 Broomhill Primary School (x 3 residencies)  
 Scotstoun Primary School (x 3 residencies)  
 Middlefield School  
 Crookston Castle Primary School  
 St Martha's Primary School  
 Crofffoot Primary School  
 Aultmore Park Primary School

## SKILLS

Practical elements of sessions included drama, storytelling, discussion, movement and singing. Participants developed communication skills, literacy skills, creativity, imagination, and soft skills such as confidence and teamwork.

'I'm more **confident** in talking to a big audience.'

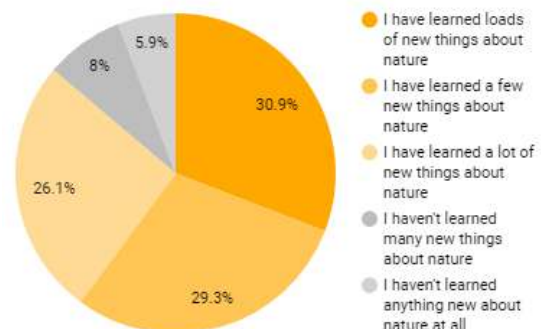
'When people make me angry it **changed me to walk away** rather than hurt them.'

'[It] helped me use my **imagination**.'

What difference has Out to Play made for you?  
 (P4-P7 pupils)

## KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING

Knowledge and Understanding was developed by increasing pupils' awareness of nature and their relationship to it. Curriculum areas covered included Social Studies, Literacy and English, Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing. Topics included plants and animals, food growing and food waste, seasons, life and water cycles, biodiversity, weather, reusing and recycling, ecosystems and climate change.



Do you know more about nature since participating in Out to Play? (P4-P7 pupils)

# OUT TO PLAY PRIMARY RESIDENCIES



## BEHAVIOUR & PROGRESSION

Weekly sessions during the five-week residencies encouraged pupils to spend time outdoors and enabled them to become familiar with the Out to Play methodology and engage deeply with its content. Participants developed more pro-environmental thoughts and behaviours, and changed or developed attitudes towards the natural world.

**‘It has stopped me from littering.’**

**‘It made me change my mind and start caring about the planet more.’**

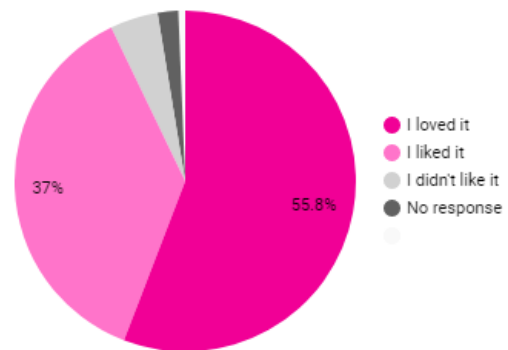
**‘Made me think I should recycle more.’**

What difference has Out to Play made for you?  
(P4-P7 & P1-P3 pupils)

## ENJOYMENT, INSPIRATION & CREATIVITY

Participation in drama and storytelling games and activities encouraged pupils to be creative throughout the Out to Play sessions.

Participants showed a high level of enjoyment from taking part in Out to Play across the two years.



Did you enjoy taking part in Out to Play?  
(P1-P3 pupils)

## ATTITUDES & VALUES

Drama and storytelling supported and encouraged participants to explore their attitudes and values towards nature and the environment — children gained a deeper awareness of the natural world, their place within it and our collective responsibility to care for it through the project.

**88%** | **99%**  
BEFORE | AFTER

P1-P3 pupils agree that people should look after wildlife and nature to keep the planet healthy.



**IN 2021-23, OUT TO PLAY  
IN A DAY TOOK PLACE AT:**

- Scaraway Nursery
- Rosshall Nursery
- Hamiltonhill Nursery
- Ibrox Nursery Class
- Govanhill Nursery
- Sandyford Nursery
- Haghill Park Nursery Class
- Govan FLC
- Eastwood Nursery
- Broomloan Nursery
- Primrose Day Nursery
- Clarence House Nursery
- Acorn Park Nursery
- Westerhouse FLC
- Woodacre Nursery
- Cloverbank Nursery
- Ardoch Childcare Centre
- Smiley Stars Nursery - Mansewood
- Hutchesons' Pre-School
- Whiteinch Nursery
- Smiley Stars Nursery - Ibrox
- Lime Tree Day Nursery
- Little Me Nursery - Maryhill
- Cloan Nursery
- Happitots Nurseries - Robroyston
- Little Scholars Nursery
- Belhaven Nursery School
- Happitots Nurseries - Garrowhill
- Linn PSADC
- Craigton Nursery Class
- Little Wonders Nursery
- Winter Gardens Nursery
- Elmcroft Nursery
- Evergreen Outdoor Nursery
- Hyde n Seek Nursery
- Langa Street Nursery
- Pollok Children's Centre

# OUT TO PLAY EARLY YEARS

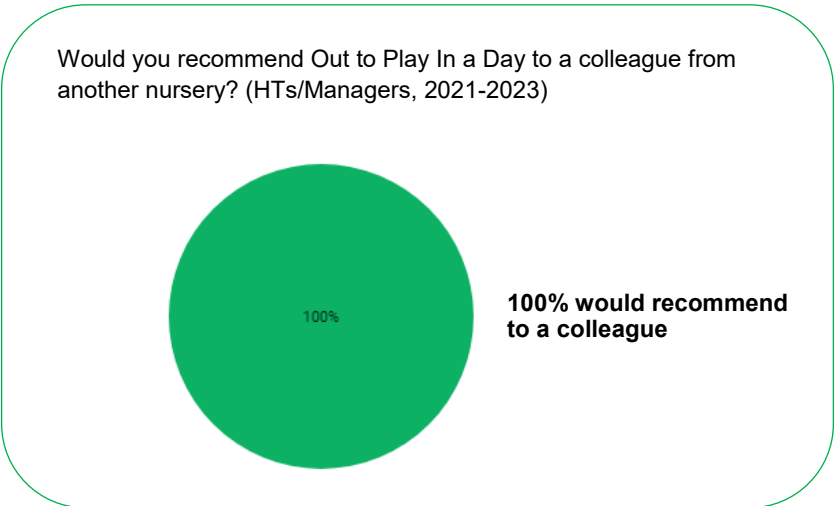
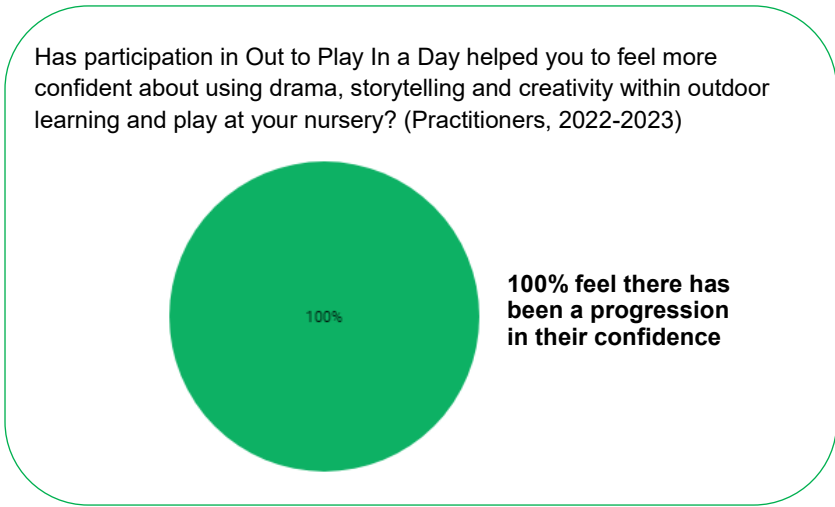


## OUT TO PLAY IN A DAY

**10 Glasgow-based early years settings participated in a pilot of 'Out to Play In a Day' in 2021.** As a result of its success, **a further 27 nurseries** were offered the opportunity to participate in Out to Play In a Day in 2021-23.

All settings spent one full day with a professional Drama Artist from Eco Drama. The Drama Artist facilitated arts-based, outdoor drama and storytelling sessions on the theme of water with three or four groups of each nursery's pre-school children. The day also included a CPD session for staff.

**Number of children who participated: 940**  
**Number of practitioners who participated: 293**  
**Number of CPD sessions delivered: 37**



IN 2021-23,  
OUT TO PLAY  
MINI-RESIDENCIES  
TOOK PLACE AT:



Scaraway Nursery  
Rosshall Nursery  
Hamiltonhill Nursery  
Ibrox Nursery Class  
Govanhill Nursery  
Sandyford Nursery  
Pied Piper Nursery  
Rosemount Lifelong Learning  
Tower View Nursery School  
Onslow Drive Day Nursery  
FAREplay Nursery  
Fasque Family Centre  
Nithsdale Road Nursery  
Pride & Joy Nursery  
Pollokshields Early Years Centre  
Strathclyde University Nursery  
St Bridget's Nursery Class  
Ivy Kindergarten  
The Enchanted Tree Nursery  
Our Lady of Lourdes Nursery Class  
Penilee Nursery School  
Renfrew Street Nursery  
Thornlaw Nursery School  
My Second Home Nursery

# OUT TO PLAY EARLY YEARS

## MINI-RESIDENCIES

In 2021-23, our Out to Play Mini-Residencies offered Early Years practitioners at **24 Glasgow-based nurseries** the chance to explore the Out to Play methodology in-depth.

Participating settings spent three full days with a Drama Artist from Eco Drama over three weeks. **589 children and 93 staff participated in outdoor drama and storytelling sessions.** In week one of the Mini-Residency, staff took part in a practical CPD workshop. In week two, a planning CPD session gave staff dedicated time to develop their own arts-based outdoor learning sessions, for delivery in week three.

Staff-led Out to Play sessions showed a **rich understanding and enthusiasm for utilising storytelling and drama** to deliver outdoor sessions themed around nature.



**Practitioners felt that the most beneficial elements of the Out to Play Mini-Residencies were:**

Saffron working in our setting & seeing our outdoor space used in a more creative way. 86%

Seeing the activities contained in the resource pack being demonstrated. 86%

Taking part in the CPD session(s) with Saffron. 79%

**Managers fed back that the Out to Play elements staff would most likely use in their settings were:**

Transforming the space to create an imaginary world. 89%

Using a box with something special inside to introduce a story or a theme. 89%

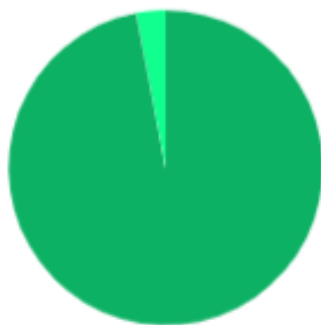
# OUT TO PLAY CPD



In 2021-23, 831 teachers, practitioners and support staff participated in 17 online and five in-person Out to Play CPD sessions. During the 2-hour sessions, participants explored how to integrate arts-based outdoor learning and play into the curriculum, how to reimagine playgrounds to make them places of adventurous learning, and how to utilise creative learning methods such as drama and storytelling to engage learners with the natural world.



After the 2021 webinars, attendees were asked: 'Will you use some of these ideas and exercises in your future practice?'



97% would use the ideas

After the 2022-2023 webinars, attendees were asked: 'How confident do you now feel about using drama and storytelling during outdoor play at your nursery?'



70% feel confident  
30% feel very confident

'I thought it was the best online training I've ever participated in: **lively, relevant, interesting, well-structured, down-to-earth, helpful, considerate, inspiring! Very professional.**'

Early Years CPD Webinar, Feb 23

'**Thank you, it gave me lots of ideas and the confidence to have a go as drama is out of my comfort zone.**'

Early Years CPD Webinar, Mar 22

'**The storytelling was amazing and the ideas were fresh and easy to use. Nice to get a book too.**'

Whole school CPD session, Oct 22

'**It was worth the 4am wake up to join from Australia. Thank you.**'

Early Years CPD Webinar, Feb 23

'**We can't wait to apply what we've learned with the children.**'

Whole school CPD session, May 22



# THE LISTENING TREE

Working closely with writer Zoe Bullock, Eco Drama's Emily Reid took on the role of director for **'The Listening Tree' – a new outdoor interactive walking performance for children and their families**, commissioned by Imagineate for Edinburgh International Children's Festival.

The performance was launched over 2 weekends in summer 2021 at the Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, as part of the Festival's Family Encounters. It was performed again at Eastwood Park Theatre in June, this time produced by Eco Drama.

**Sithy is a tree spirit.  
It's Sithy's job to listen to  
all the secrets of all the trees,  
all across Scotland.**

Trees listen to everything,  
you see, and oh the stories  
they can tell!

You can watch a short trailer of 'The Listening Tree' on our [YouTube channel](#).



# HARVEST STORIES



Eco Drama's Saffron Gillies delivered **'Harvest Stories' sessions as part of the Dandelion Festivals in Wick and Inverness** in summer 2022. The specially tailored sessions - commissioned by Lyth Arts Centre and Dandelion - used stories and songs (and apples!) to inspire children about harvest and Scotland's rich orchard heritage.

**dandelion**

# COP26



We were delighted to be able to take part in the programme of activities that marked Glasgow as host city for COP26.

Our short film '[Future Calling](#)' - created by pupils from Boclair Academy during lockdown 2020 - was included in the Educational Institute of Scotland's '[No Planet B](#)' digital exhibition and National Theatre of Scotland's '[Dear Planet](#)' Exhibition.

Eco Drama's Emily Reid and Ben Mali spoke at '[Campference](#)' - an online international conference about children, nature connection and the power of stories.

Emily was also a guest speaker at Starcatchers' COP26 [Playspace](#) event 'Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Practice in Arts for Early Years'. Starcatchers invited Emily to take over their Instagram account for a day to share stories on Eco Drama's [sustainable and climate-friendly practices](#) with the early years sector.



## KNOWLEDGE SHARING



**'I've used [Eco Drama's] resource pack. It's MEGA literacies material!'**

Social Media, Sept 22



We shared learning from the Out to Play project when we delivered sessions at Learning through Landscapes' '**International School Grounds Conference**' in February 2022, at Royal Society of Edinburgh's '**Early Years Being & Belonging Conference**' in March 2022 and at Education Scotland's '[National Creativity Event](#)' in April 2022. We also led an '**Intro to Ecoscenography**' session in collaboration with set designer Mona Kastell for Starcatchers' [Playspace](#) in March 2023.

We have continued to add regular [Drama Artist blogs](#) to our website, sharing ideas and tips from the Out to Play residencies to support teachers and early years practitioners to develop their arts-based outdoor learning practices.

Our 3 Out to Play resource packs continue to attract interest from teachers, early years practitioners and educators. In 2021-23 we gave out **1,570** copies as part of Out to Play sessions, and sold a further **131** copies across Scotland, the UK and internationally.

'It was fun and [a] break from written classwork which **allowed many children to achieve success in learning who had barriers in the classroom.**'

Out to Play primary residency, '23



'I was extremely surprised with pupil A's level of engagement. **I think the project has been really beneficial.**'

Out to Play ASN residency, '21

'I really enjoyed working with Saffron and got a new perspective on how to challenge myself when working outdoors with children.'

Out to Play Mini-Residency, '22

'A number of parents have commented, during Parents Nights, [on] the **children's improved confidence and love of outdoors citing Eco Drama as a main driving force for this.**'

Out to Play primary residency, '22



'I will now take the ideas from Out to Play and give them a go. **I will do drama with the pupils now because I know it will work.**'

Out to Play ASN residency, '21

'The workshop was wonderful. [Saffron] was so engaging – the children were hanging on her every word!'

Out to Play In a Day, '22



# CONCLUSION & REFLECTION

Over the last two years, we have witnessed many benefits of our creative outdoor learning and performance work.

Drama Artists and Performers witness the impact first-hand when interacting with participants and our core team gain insight via the evaluation data, from developments in children's creativity, imagination and confidence, to improved health and well-being, literacy, emotional and social development as well as skills, knowledge and understanding. We have also noted the development of nature connection and pro-environmental thoughts and behaviours.

Our projects demonstrate the unique ability of the arts to engage children emotionally as well as intellectually in their learning, and when children are connected emotionally, it is more impactful in the long run. Children appear to thrive in their learning when it happens outdoors, with many comments from pupils and staff about increased focus and well-being when learning and playing outdoors, particularly in pupils who may not engage in more formal teaching methods indoors.

It has also been encouraging to witness teachers and early years practitioners using drama and storytelling within their outdoor learning practice after taking part in Out to Play, ensuring a lasting legacy of the project.



However, despite making headway with a record number of schools and achieving positive evaluation data during Out to Play 2021-23, there is still more to be done.

A recent [NatureScot Research Report](#) published in 2022 evidenced that Outdoor Learning and Play provision has risen in early years settings, but has decreased significantly in primary schools, particularly in large schools and in areas of disadvantage. As we look to the next two-year period at Eco Drama, we feel a renewed sense of purpose to continue the momentum of Out to Play - to continue supporting the improvement of young people's health, wellbeing, learning for sustainability and educational outcomes, and Scotland's target to become a nature positive, net-zero country.

## ECO DRAMA

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