

Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Name of policy, function or service

Central Scotland Forest Kindergarten Officer

Purpose and aim(s) of the policy, function or service

To develop and pilot Forest Kindergartens, nursery teacher training and pre-five educational activity across Glasgow and the Clyde valley. The post will link with the WIAT Education Officer and help implement the FCS Woods for Learning and Woods for Health strategies. It will also link in with the GCVGNP health improvement theme by enhancing the value of the Green Network as a resource for healthy living and as a focal point for health improvement within the pre-five-education sector.

Who will benefit mainly from this policy, function or service?

A gap-analysis will be carried out as Phase 1 of this project identifying priority areas in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley for the development of Forest Kindergarten activities.

Based on the outcomes of Phase 1, the Forest Kindergarten Officer will engage with private and local authority pre-5 establishments and work with them to increase regular pupil access to, and experiences of woodlands and green spaces. Families and local volunteers will also experience benefits by taking part to this pilot project.

Information and Data (evidence) used

Age

There is a growing understanding in health policy that sustainable health improvements can only be achieved through healthy environments and healthy lifestyles. There is evidence to suggest that children who fail to engage with the environment before the age of 11 are unlikely to form strong affiliations with the environment later in life.

Furthermore, those individuals who engage or are introduced to the environment as children while often temporarily losing this interest during their teenage years tend to regain it in their twenties.

Ward Thompson et al. (2004).

Social Deprivation

It is proposed to undertake a feasibility study (Phase 1) to identify priority areas for the development of this concept focusing on regeneration areas identified in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan and areas ranked at high Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Gender

The proposed programme aims to equally engage with pupils from both genders.

Future considerations:

The gap-analysis (November 2008 - March 2009) will include consultation with different groups from the different strands of diversity, in particular:

- Race and in particular with BME communities
- Religion and Belief
- Disable people

Sexual orientation: N/A.

The data collected during the gap-analysis and the consultation carried out during its development will shape the engagement programme of the Forest Kindergarten Officer from April 2009 (when the post will be filled).

Summary of Impact

The Ward Thompson research has shown that in the long term, forest kindergartens can reduce injury and risk in children's play and reduce childhood obesity and other health related issues (diabetes, mental health issues etc.). This is proposed to impact on children from different communities equally.

Woodlands, as well as other green infrastructures, are environments that help people to be active and contribute to the delivery of Scottish Government programmes such as Healthy Living, Safe Routes to Schools, eco schools, Curriculum for Excellence and various workplace schemes run by the Centre for Healthy Working Lives. From schools engagement by the Forestry Commission, it has been recorded that many pre-5 establishments do not currently use woodlands as a teaching resource, mainly due to a lack of teacher confidence and knowledge.

It is proposed to evaluate the real and perceived barriers to outdoor education in

order to increase the use of woodland and greenspaces as outdoor classrooms and natural play areas. In order to achieve this a comprehensive consultation programme will be carried out by an appointed consultant (Phase 1). The outcomes of the study will influence the educational programme of the Forest Kindergarten Officer in 09/10.

Monitoring/Evaluation

An annual report will be submitted to FCS National Office at the end of every financial year.

Based on the outcomes and recommendations of the gap-analysis, indicators will be developed in order to monitor the impact that this function has on the seven different strands of diversity. Each annual report will include the information.

Further Information

Available from Central Scotland Conservancy.