

Better
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Introduction and contents

At greenspace scotland we've always talked about parks and greenspace as our natural health service, our children's outdoor classrooms, our community and leisure centres without a roof. Now we need them more than ever.

During the first lockdown we heard lots of heart-warming stories of how local greenspaces, communal gardens, back greens and back courts were helping people connect and cope with the lockdown. There were home-gardening packs, colourful potato sacks, bug bingo, yarn bombing of rainbows and butterflies, and shopping drop offs for older neighbours who were getting through flour supplies at a rate comparable to the Bake Off tent!

As lockdown restrictions started to ease, many groups began to find ways of taking the indoors – outdoors, moving activities from community centres, village halls, schools and leisure centres into local parks and greenspaces.

As we continue to adapt to living with Covid-19, we've developed **Better outside - using our spaces more** to provide examples, ideas, inspiration and resources for taking indoor activities outside. We hope you find these resources useful.

There are eight thematic resource sheets, plus a guide on technical resources:

1. Arts, culture and heritage outside
2. Taking cinema outdoors
3. Free range community centres
4. Let's keep growing
5. Outdoor play and learning
6. Employability and skills
7. Health and wellbeing outside
8. Youth work al fresco
9. Technical resources

You can also find further information and inspiring ideas in the Better Outside section of our website www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/better-outside

We would love to hear how you have been using your local greenspace and taking the indoors-outdoors. Please get in touch with us by emailing info@greenspacescotland.org.uk

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Arts, culture and heritage outside

Greenspaces, parks and streets have become even more important to us as social and cultural venues. With cinemas, theatres, performing arts venues being closed and festivals cancelled during the Covid-19 pandemic, new kinds of events were staged in different locations, transforming spaces and creating new experiences for audiences. Community groups have also organised outside performances. Here are some pointers to help and inspire your group.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any guidance and regulations for your area, think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these and being outside.

Read: [Scottish Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): events sector guidance](#)

Contact a local group that have already run a similar event to learn from their experience.

Start small to build your confidence and get the help, skills and equipment you need.

Plan ahead and decide on - the scale of your event, a suitable film or performance for your audience, the best time and day of the week and time of year and how you will promote it.

Your budget will depend on the scale of the event and if you already own or can borrow equipment from other organisations. For example, it can start from about £500 for a small screening event if you already have access to seating, rain cover for equipment, and a high-quality projector but could be significantly more if you need to include all costs such as hiring all the equipment.

Things to consider

Where will the event take place? It could be in a park, public space or a privately owned open space. Check who owns the site and get permission to use it. Parks may require you to submit a permission form or sign an agreement. Check with your local authority whether you need a Public Entertainment License and/or Public Liability Insurance.

Think about how to reach your audience, be welcoming and inclusive. Put in place measures to ensure sound quality without disturbing the neighbourhood. Think about where the audience will sit, how easily can they see the performance and whether they will need seating - can they bring a deckchair or blanket, how will the event be weather-proofed - will umbrellas be needed? Do you need physical distancing due to any current Covid-19 restrictions?

Decide if you want to charge for tickets or make it a free event. Make sure you promote your event to your audience. This can be through posters, flyers, social media or advertising.

Depending on the scale of your event you may need volunteers to help with publicity, set-up, stewarding, organising a one-way system and gathering track and trace information.

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, as well as keeping up to date with latest Covid-19 guidance for your area, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.



Photo Credit: Simon Forsythe

Other practical things to consider include location, shelter, clothing, toilets, handwashing and getting your wider community involved. Take a look at Better Outside [Technical resources](#).

Who can help?

If outdoor performing arts or film screening is something you want to do on a regular basis here are some useful organisations and guides:

[Advice](#) for delivering arts activities outside.

If you are asking musicians to play outdoors read this [advice](#).

Helpful [guidance](#) from a council on delivering arts activities outside and working with councils.

Outdoor Arts UK have a collection of Covid-19 [resources](#).

[Directory](#) listing Scottish arts professionals with capacity and skills to deliver outdoor programmes.

[Guide](#) to taking community cinema outdoors.

Real life examples

Hayburn Park outdoor cinema screening

With cinemas closed, the Hayburn Playpark Association brought the magic of film to their park with a hugely enjoyable outdoor screening of Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr Fox*.

Taking community theatre outside

The Rubber Chicken Theatre company performed the beautiful Sondheim musical 'Into the Woods' outdoors amongst the trees of Holmehill Wood in Dunblane, with a socially distanced cast and audience.

When community art meets food growing

'An Empty Gunny Bag Cannot Stand' was originally intended to take place on unused land surrounding SWG3 arts complex in Glasgow. Then lockdown happened and a new plan evolved by inviting a whole street in Kelvindale, Glasgow, to plant and grow the potatoes on their own doorsteps.

Art on the Street

A colourful, temporary zebra crossing mural appeared on a pedestrianised main street in Dundee, painted by a local scenic painter, artists and students and co-designed by businesses and residents. It was painted in about 10 hours using eco-friendly paint that lasts 4-6 weeks.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/arts-culture-and-heritage-outside>

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Taking Cinema Outdoors

During the Covid-19 pandemic more social activity is happening in parks, greenspaces, gardens and out on the street. Outdoor screenings are a great way of bringing communities together in a safe and special way.

Watch our short films

Hear first-hand experience from Hayburn Playpark Association and Glasgow Artists' Moving Image Studios by watching our two short *films* on running an outdoor cinema community event in a park or public place. Get inspired and don't be daunted!

Top tips

Contact a local group that have already run a similar event. Hearing first-hand experience beats any factsheet! If you can't find anyone local check with [Film Hub Scotland](#) or [Cinema for All](#) as they may know of community film clubs that have run outdoor screenings.

It's really important with outdoor screenings to make sure you have a powerful enough projector.

Start with a small local event and learn from experience. Just doing something at a manageable scale for your group will give you a boost and lots of learning.

Don't be afraid to ask for help! There's an incredible amount of people who want to see communities come together safely, also you'll be surprised who might have the equipment or skills you need to make it work.

Planning your event

You need to plan ahead and decide on the scale of your event, a suitable film for your audience, the best day of the week and time of year for screening. This will determine how much budget you will need and how many people can come along.

Location – where will the event take place. It could be in a park, public space or a privately owned open space. Check how many people the space can safely hold, if it has good sight lines for the screen, if it has access to any power.

Set up - when you set up the projector, think about where the audience will sit, how easily can they see? If you are expecting a large audience, it might be worth setting the projector up high behind the audience, so the image is larger. Also, think about whether your audience will need seating - can they bring a deckchair or blanket - will umbrellas be needed? Do they need any physical distancing due to any current Covid-19 restrictions? Check the guidance for your area and plan this out.

Permissions and insurance – check who owns the site and get permission to use it. Parks may require you to submit a permission form or sign an agreement. Let relevant authorities know what you are doing, generally they will be very supportive. Check with your local authority whether you need a Public Entertainment Licence, and/or Public Liability Insurance. It's also worth notifying

the local police and environmental health, who can advise on health and safety measures.

Volunteers – depending on the scale of your event you may need volunteers to help with publicity, set-up, stewarding and gathering track and trace information. GAMIS had five volunteers, who helped people negotiate the one-way system, register contact details and answered questions from curious passers-by.

Publicity and bookings – decide if you want to charge for tickets or make it a free event. Make sure you promote your event to your audience. This can be through posters, flyers, social media or advertising. If you need people to book, have an easy booking system that will help you manage numbers. GAMIS used [Eventbrite](#) to register bookings, posting up QR codes so that people could book online whilst queuing.

Budget - your budget will depend on the scale of the event, if you charge for tickets and what equipment you already own or can borrow from other organisations. It can range from about £500 for a small event if you already have access to seating, rain cover for equipment, a high quality projector and a screen, to £2200 if you need to include all costs such as hiring all the equipment, seating, rain cover, publicity, film screening licence, insurance, as well as PPE for volunteers and sanitiser for attendees.

Things to consider

Projector - the most important thing is ensuring you have a powerful enough projector. GAMIS used a theatre-quality digital projector, which just about managed once the sun went down. You can hire daylight projectors, which are excellent. Alternatively, you can also use digital LED screens, but these are quite expensive, particularly if you want a good resolution.

Sound – you will need decent sound quality which generally means a PA system. This can be hired from commercial companies or you might find there is a community project or social enterprise that could provide one. GAMIS used a local music charity *Music Broth* who provided the PA System and power generator.

Power – you will need a power supply to power the projector, DVD player and PA. This could be from an adjacent building if you can do it safely: do make sure all cables are protected and secured so as not to be a trip hazard. Or hire/borrow a generator to power the projector and PA, it's worth making sure it's a 'silent' one, regular ones can be noisy and may drown out the sound of the movie.

Licenses - you will need to obtain a licence to screen the film, this is the case even if you are not charging for tickets. Most films can be licenced through distributors like *BFI*, *Filmbank Media* or *Park Circus*. You can usually find the info on the DVD case or online.

Health and Safety - always check current Scottish Government event guidance in relation to Covid-19 when planning and just before

running your event. During restrictions you may need to mark out safe queuing distances and a one-way system, a station with sanitiser and a system so people can give contact details on paper and possibly digitally. Make sure all electrical and screening equipment and cables are protected and secured so as not to be a trip hazard. All electrical equipment must be covered in case of rain. You should have a risk assessment that covers potential risks, how you will minimise and address them.

Inclusion and accessibility – think about how to reach your audience, be welcoming and inclusive. To reach a local audience GAMIS had posters in Urdu, Slovak, Punjabi, Romanian and English. The posters had a mobile number so that local residents could contact them if they had any concerns on the night. Think about how the event might impact on local residents. To ensure they didn't disturb local residents GAMIS paid for a sound technician to work with them to ensure the sound was properly balanced so that everyone could hear, without causing a nuisance to neighbours.

Who can help?

If outdoor film programming and screening is something you want to do on a regular basis here are some useful organisations and guides:

Film Hub Scotland provide funding and support for independent film clubs, festivals and cinemas. They have lots of useful resources including: *Starting a Community Cinema* | *How to plan an outdoor screening guide* (which includes a risk assessment template) | *Inclusion and access info*

Cinema For All help communities screen films

My Community Cinema is a directory of community run cinemas

Independent Cinema Office is a helpful organisation providing support and advice

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Free range community centres

Greenspaces, parks, gardens and streets have become even more important to us as venues for social activities, sports, youth work and cultural events.

With most community centres being closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, groups have looked for new ways of bringing local people together outdoors safely and creating a much-needed sense of community.

Activities which would normally happen in a community centre have moved outdoors, such as community cinema, exercise classes and seasonal events.

The community centre is also greatly missed as a point of information about what goes on locally and a place where chance meetings between people happen. It has been a challenge to recreate this function outside, but here are some pointers and examples to help and inspire your group.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any Covid-19 guidance and regulations for your area, think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these and being outside.

Read: [Scottish Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): events sector guidance](#)

Is there somewhere locally that could be turned into a sheltered outdoor space? Woodlands Community Trust in Glasgow turned their outdoor workspace area into a bookable meeting space for local people who wanted to meet up with family and friends.

You might be able to put up a more permanent structure like a marquee or tipi in a local greenspace. Pollokshields Development Trust and Urban Roots found a tipi with the sides open worked well.

Some exercise classes can take place outdoors. There is al fresco pilates in Starbank Park and yoga in the big backcourt at Govanhill. In Balerno, the Village Trust mapped local walks to encourage residents and visitors to discover their local area and to keep active and healthy. The walking routes can be downloaded or people could pick up a booklet in the Red Phone Box in the centre of the village.

Outdoor theatre and cinema screenings have also taken place across the country. We have put together a handy [how to guide](#) and videos about putting on outdoor film screenings.

Seasonal events which normally bring people together in the community centre can be relocated outdoors. Alva Community Council organised a Halloween display competition where residents could add their house to a google map and Dunblane had a community pumpkin patch.

Things to consider

Whichever activity you decide to try out in your "free range community centre" during the pandemic it will need careful planning, and adherence to guidance and regulations (of which there are many!)

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.

Other practical things to consider include location, shelter, clothing, toilets, handwashing and getting your wider community involved. Take a look at [Better Outside](#)

[Technical resources](#)

Check how many people the space can safely hold and if there is access to any resources like power and toilets. Will you need a shelter and seating, or will participants bring their own? Do they need any physical distancing due to any current Covid-19 restrictions and if so, how do you plan the space so that this happens?

Letting people know – consider how to reach different people in your community. Social media works well for some, but others need off-line information. Balerno Village Trust used the Red Phone Box they had just adopted from BT as a central information point and it also doubled up as a "share box" - creating an important sense of community at a time when a lot of people felt vulnerable and on their own.



Who can help?

Your local park might have a Friends of Park group you can work with to put on events and run activities in the park. There is no central list of these groups, but Friends of Park groups are often active on Facebook or Twitter, so have a look there.

greenspace scotland has created a range of resource sheets and collected inspirational stories from across Scotland to help and inspire you to take indoor activities outside – find out more at

www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/better-outside

If you are interested in finding out more about semi-permanent structures such as tipis and shelters, check out the Better Outside [Technical Resources](#)

Real life examples

Tipi at the Bowling Club

In Pollokshields, Urban Roots and Pollokshields Trust worked together to ensure that local people could continue to access the services of voluntary groups by using a tipi as indoor-outdoor meeting space.

Balerno's Red Phone Box

Balerno Village Trust adopted a red phone box and turned it into a mini community and information centre during lockdown.

Govanhill's big backcourt

Residents in Govanhill transformed their back court into a place to chat, share a drink and even do socially distanced yoga!

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/free-range-community-centre>

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Let's keep
growing

Photo Credit: Viewpark Gardens
Allotments Association

Allotments and community gardens have remained open for individual gardening and organised group activities. There's been an amazing amount of fruit and veg growing, with surplus veg being distributed to neighbours and foodbanks.

As not everyone has been able to get outside, lots of groups have been providing gardening-at-home activities and other ways of outreach gardening and growing.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any Covid-19 guidance and regulations for your area, think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these.

Read: [Scottish Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): community food-growing spaces](#)

Read: [Scottish Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): events sector guidance](#)

Once you've decided what you're going to do, plan your activities carefully. You'll need to think about safe numbers, space, your capacity and any other practical resources you might need to adapt your activities to meet current guidance or to do more outside. You might require additional funding for items such as storage units, shelters, handwashing stations, individual cooking utensils, face coverings, individual toolboxes etc.

Things to consider

Keep in touch with your regular site users and participants to let them know what measures are in place, and how services or activities have changed. Ask users of your site for ideas on how to make changes to allow a wider range of activities to take place.

Using online platforms like Zoom can be a good way to run group training sessions or meetings to keep your project progressing if you can't be on site.

You can also widen your audience and attract new members with new skills by using tools like Instagram, Facebook or posters around your community.

Be realistic about what you can deliver and consider the capacity of your group. Find out who else can help you locally. For example, there might be another organisation or local business making deliveries locally who may be willing to help deliver grow at home kits.

Find ways to understand your community and their needs. Remember people have had very different experiences during the pandemic and some may be anxious about participating in activities again. They may need additional support or a phased introduction to what's on offer.

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, as well as keeping up to date with latest Covid-19 guidance for your area, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.

Other practical things to consider include shelter, clothing, toilets, handwashing and getting your wider community involved. Take a look at Better Outside [Technical resources](#)

Who can help?

[Social Farms & Gardens Scotland](#) has produced a list of practical points to help community growing groups to think through, plan and get back to growing.

[Trellis](#) have been offering regular Zoom sessions to support community growing groups covering a range of topics such as seasonal gardening activities, bird feeding and informal coffee and chat sessions.

[The Grow and Learn in Nature Award](#) from the Caley offers the opportunity to continue to develop gardening and nature skills at home. This could be creating bug hotels in the garden, growing plants for pollinators on your balcony or herb planters on your window.



Photo Credit: Urban Fox

Real life examples

Growing with the Maxwell Centre in Dundee

The Maxwell Centre is a community centre and garden which successfully adapted their services and activities. They set up a 'Grow Dundee' Facebook page and blog, delivered 'Grow At Home' kits to families and moved some indoor activities outdoors like cooking workshops.

Blooming well in the East End

Include Me 2 Club's Allotment Angels joined forces with Urban Fox for East End In Bloom. Together, the two organisations provided 500 bags of pots, compost, sunflower seeds, wildflower seeds and vegetables to families to help them grow at home and get the East End blooming with colour.

Veg your ledge in Falkirk

Community groups and organisations across Falkirk took part in a pilot project to get them growing their own produce from their windowsill. Forth Environment Link produced and delivered 250 Veg Your Ledge kits designed to encourage people to realise the benefits of growing their own fresh food, reducing their carbon footprint, and experiencing the health and therapeutic gains associated with food growing.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/lets-keep-growing>

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Photo Credit: The Cyrenians

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Outdoor play and learning

Photo Credit: Milton Community Garden

From informal play to outdoor nurseries and nature kindergartens, from outside classrooms to outdoor education and forest schools, there are lots of ways that parks and greenspaces can be used for play and learning.

The *National Position Statement on Outdoor Play and Learning* has links to research evidence showing why outdoor learning and play is so valuable for children and young people. This Statement predates the Covid-19 pandemic and demonstrates why playing and learning outside is so important for children's health, wellbeing and development. Actions taken now in response to the pandemic can set in train new practices for the future.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any guidance and regulations for your area. Think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activities to meet these and being outside.

Working with others – when taking your first steps towards taking play and learning outside it is a good idea to work in partnership with other organisations to draw on their skills and experience. You'll find lots of suggestions in the 'Who can help?' section.

Finding a space near your school or nursery - NatureScot's *Greenspace Map for Outdoor Learning* lets you search quickly and easily for greenspaces nearby and within a 5 minute walk. *OS Greenspace* lets you search by postcode to find parks, playing fields, sports areas, playgrounds and community gardens.

Linking with Award Schemes – the structure and resources associated with award schemes can help you think about how to plan and develop your activities. There are lots of different schemes including: *John Muir Award*, *Eco Schools* and *Junior Award Scheme for Schools*.

Things to consider

Identifying a suitable site and finding out who owns it may take time.

You will need to have a formal agreement for permission to use the site.

Think about access to the site – how will staff, volunteers and children get there?

What facilities will you need on site? Think about shelter, toilets and handwashing, clothing, play and learning materials.

Thrive Outdoors have produced *resources* to help you think about selecting a site, shelter, toilets, handwashing, eating, clothing and loose parts play. Although written from an early learning perspective, the resource will be useful for many outdoor settings for play and learning.

You can find out more about semi-permanent structures such as tipis and shelters, in the Better Outside *Technical Resources*

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, as well as keeping up to date with latest Covid-19 guidance for your area, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.



Photo Credit: The Sheiling project

Who can help?

Using greenspaces for early learning and childcare - the Thrive Outdoors team at Inspiring Scotland provide a wealth of useful information and **resources** on how to use greenspaces for outdoor play and learning.

Out to Play: creating outdoor play experiences for children - practical **guidance** and advice from the Scottish Government for early learning and childcare settings and practitioners on how to access outdoor spaces to create safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences.

Playful schools - Play Scotland have produced a **guide** to delivering loose parts play during Covid-19.

Learning through Landscapes (previously called Grounds for Learning in Scotland) has a wealth of **resources** for early years, primary and secondary schools. They've also got a great range of short videos – search for Learning through Landscapes on YouTube.

Taking the classroom outside - NatureScot's **Learning in Local Greenspace resources** can help teachers discover the learning potential in local greenspaces. Resources and supporting documents are available to download to help you to find, access and use your local greenspace.

Many local authorities have specialist outdoor learning teams who can offer support and resources to teachers, as well as to wider community group leaders, e.g. **East Ayrshire's Learning Outdoors Support Team; Falkirk Council's Falkirk Outdoors** and **East Lothian's Outdoor Learning Service**

Education Scotland: outdoor learning webinars - during 2020, Education Scotland held webinars to support and encourage outdoor learning, many are available on their YouTube channel e.g. the **outdoor learning journey** of Garnethill Primary School

Teaching Learning Outdoors is a free **on-line module** (2 hours) aimed at instructors, third sector and private organisations, classroom assistants, volunteers, or indeed anyone who wants to work in partnership with education establishments to deliver meaningful outdoor learning experiences.

Real life examples

Wild Fife Babies and Bairns

As traditional parent and toddler groups have been 'locked out' of their venues, a Countryside Ranger on maternity leave, started to organise meet-ups to introduce babies and parents, in fun ways, to the natural environment; sparking natural curiosity, love and care for nature.

Shortlees Primary School - whole school learning outdoors

A School Grounds Survey identified several spaces with different features which would be suitable for a variety of lessons and activities. Training was undertaken by the teachers, a range of outdoor learning resources accessed and learning across the curriculum was moved outside.

Weekend Warriors – playscheme in Rouken Glen Park

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this playscheme for children with learning disabilities and their families, was taken outside to a safe space in Rouken Glen Park. It has been so successful that it will continue outdoors.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/outdoor-play-and-learning>

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Employability and skills

Photo Credit: Sacro Garden Project

Many parks and heritage projects are connected with training and employability schemes. It's been encouraging to see these projects find ways to continue their activities and services by taking more of their activities outside.

With restrictions on indoor training and skills sessions, moving activities outside allows them to continue. It has also inspired educators and facilitators to explore new ways of delivering employability and skills training on a longer-term basis.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any Covid-19 guidance and regulations for your area and think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these and being outside.

Employability and skills training often focuses on group work and interaction between people is important. Delivering this outside can offer new opportunities, such as using different areas outside for different types of activity, and provide the space for physical distancing. There may be a need to alter the way some sessions are delivered to enable users to interact with the environment and use the space available.

Remember people have had very different experiences during the pandemic and so it is important to find ways to understand your service users and their needs. Some may be anxious about participating in activities again – they may need additional support or a phased introduction. Others may not be able to take part due to health reasons, and so some flexibility will be needed within your planned training and skills sessions.

Things to consider

Keep in touch with your regular participants to let them know what measures are in place, and how services or activities have changed. Ask service users for their ideas on how to change things to allow a wider range of activities to take place.

Quick wins: think about the things you can quickly and easily move outside. This might, for example, include doing some simple planting or cleaning up; this has the added benefit that those carrying out the activity can see immediate benefits from what they are doing. This will help in inspiring not only service users but also other people using the greenspace.

Think imaginatively about how to deliver some of the indoor elements of training and skills sessions. It is unlikely you will have access to tools such as presentations so consider alternatives such as drawing in the sand.

Consider the practical resources you may need to adapt your activities to meet current guidance or to do more outside. You might need additional funding for items such as storage units, shelters, handwashing stations, face coverings, suitable clothing and appropriate footwear.

Using online platforms like Zoom can be a good way to run group information sessions or meetings to keep participants informed about what to expect from outdoor sessions.



Photo Credit: Lanark Community Development Trust

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, as well as keeping up to date with latest Covid-19 guidance for your area, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.

Other practical things to consider include location, shelter, clothing, toilets, handwashing and getting your wider community involved. Take a look at [Better Outside Technical resources](#)

Who can help?

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have produced comprehensive [guidance](#) outlining general principles and information on working safely outside during Covid-19.

[Branching Out](#) is an innovative development by Forestry Commission Scotland for adults who use mental health services in Scotland.

Finding a space: [OS Greenspace](#) lets you search by postcode to find parks, playing fields, sports areas, playgrounds and community gardens.

Real life examples

Fife Employment Accessibility Trust (FEAT) have adapted their long running 'Employ Your Mind' programme to run fully outdoors in 2021 with the launch of the 'Grow Your Mind' project.

Skills Exchange SCIO has developed 'Let's Grow' as a new outdoor employability programme. This gives young people the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications in employability, personal development, enterprise, horticulture and environmental work through a blend of group work, individual support and work placements.

The Ridge secured a Licence to Occupy the Empire Close to develop a larger, socially distanced community garden. This outdoor site is used to deliver National Progression Awards in Construction and National Certificates in Rural Skills to High School children from across East Lothian.

Stramash Outdoor Nurseries Apprenticeships have been working to support our communities in Fort William, Oban and Elgin throughout the Covid-19 pandemic as key-worker hubs.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/employability-and-skills>

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Health
and wellbeing
outside

Photo Credit: GP Dr. Pete Churn,
Harbours Medical Practice
Cockenzie



At greenspace scotland, we've always talked about how parks and greenspaces are our natural health service. During the first lockdown, many people discovered the positive benefits of using outdoor spaces close to home for their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

As well as informal exercise, leisure and recreation, there are many organised green health activities like health walks and green gyms, as well as therapeutic activities in greenspace.

Covid-19 has also encouraged people think about how to make much more use of outside spaces, particularly around health care facilities for activities, waiting rooms and as outdoor 'wobble' rooms to provide respite and relaxation.

Making it happen

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any guidance and regulations for your area and think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these and being outside.

Working together - if you are a greenspace or community garden manager, think about what other organisations work in your area, for example, GP surgeries, health centres, hospitals, mental health charities, care homes, dementia support groups or other health service delivery groups. What are the challenges they are currently facing and might they be interested in delivering some of their activities in your outdoor space?

Finding a space - as hospitals, health centres, care homes and support groups are starting to look to make more use of local greenspaces, you can use NatureScot's [Greenspace Map for Outdoor Learning](#) or [OS Greenspace](#) to search quickly and easily for greenspaces nearby and within a 5 minute walk.

Things to consider

5 ways to wellbeing is a well recognised structure to improve personal wellbeing. The 5 actions can easily be integrated into outdoor group activities:

- > **Connect**
- > **Be active**
- > **Take notice**
- > **Keep learning**
- > **Give**

The actions were originally identified from an evidence review by the New Economics Foundation. Find out more <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-postcards>

To make sure everyone remains safe in your outdoor space, as well as keeping up to date with latest Covid-19 guidance for your area, you will need to do a full risk assessment and review your insurance.

Other practical things to consider include location, shelter, clothing, toilets, handwashing and getting your wider community involved. Take a look at [Better Outside Technical resources](#)



Photo Credit: Garthdee Field Allotments Association

Who can help?

Your local **Third Sector Interface (TSI)** can help you find out which local charities are working in your area and reach out to them to see if there are obvious connections.

Health and Social Care Partnerships bring together a wide range of services to support people with a focus on community based and preventative approaches. **Health and Social Care Scotland** has a map of the 31 partnerships across Scotland.

Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing is an alliance of independent, community-led health improvement organisations, and an advocate for community led approaches to improving health and wellbeing. They can help make connections and partnerships with local and national organisations, statutory services, primary health professionals and local and national decision makers.

Green Health Partnerships in Dundee, Highland, North & South Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire are piloting ways of bringing together the health, social care, environment, leisure, sport and active travel sectors to make more use of local greenspace as a health-promoting resource.

NHS Greenspace uses a range of pilot sites to show how hospital staff and local organisations can encourage more people to use greenspaces around health facilities.

Trellis Scotland is Scotland's network for therapeutic gardening. Health professionals, those working in care settings and community settings can contact others who use gardening to augment care services via the **Trellis Project Network**. They also provide online resources, training and networking events.

TCV Scotland offer a wealth of practical and project experience to help people do practical activities outside and feel good as a result. They run Green Gyms in community and hospital settings, and their **Green Health in Later Life** programme aims to build natural exercise into supported living arrangements with housing associations and 'extra care' organisations who work with older people, as well as developing new programmes within hospital grounds.

Paths for All has volunteer led health walks across Scotland. Find an existing group, or access training and resources to set one up in your area.

Real life examples

Nature Recovery Project – the Woodlands Community Garden responded to seeing the detrimental impact the first lockdown was having on the mental health of their community by developing a range of practical and creative interventions. These include Nurture through Nature and wellbeing sessions in the garden.

GP led group walks – a doctor's surgery held a series of six, monthly walks as a group intervention for patients with mild to moderate mental health issues. The walks covered two miles, stopping at five locations for the GP-led chat about areas of lifestyle change, enabling small peer-group walk and talk between stops.

Waiting Room in the Park – the new Stobhill Hospital sits beside Springburn Park, where a waiting area in the park and bird box walk has been created, encouraging walking as well as connecting the natural themes explored in the hospital artworks to the natural environment of the Park.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing-outside>

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Youth work al fresco

Many youth groups moved their sessions online and continued to connect with their young members through delivery of food parcels and activity kits. As lockdown restrictions started to ease, many groups began to find ways of taking the indoors – outdoors, moving activities from community centres, village halls, schools and leisure centres into local parks and greenspaces.

Making it happen

Returning to face-to-face youth work during a pandemic takes careful planning and adherence to guidelines, of which there are many!

Guidance for the youth work sector has been surprisingly steady since August as youth work is considered a vital activity for our young people supporting both their mental and physical wellbeing.

Youth Scotland has developed a practical action plan for groups to work through to return to indoor and outdoor youth work.

Risk assessment - the sooner you can begin your risk assessments of the venue/site and the activities you plan to deliver the better. You will already have risk assessments, but now staying safe from Covid-19 must be considered. Youth Scotland has developed helpful resources, as have many other associations, for example, Scouts and Scottish Hockey.

Location – where will the sessions take place? It could be in a park, public space or a privately owned open space. Check how many people the space can safely hold and if there is access to any resources like power and toilets.

Permissions and insurance – if you are using a site that is not your own check who owns the site and get permission to use it. Parks may require you to submit a permission form or sign an agreement. Let the relevant authorities know what you are doing - generally they will be very supportive.

Set up – will you need a shelter and seating, or will participants bring their own? Do they need any physical distancing due to any current Covid-19 restrictions and if so, how do you plan the space, so this happens? Check the guidance for your area and plan this out.

Things to consider

Think about how you can re-create the feeling of your youth centre, so that the young people feel at home. A cold marquee with no atmosphere will probably not entice the young people to join in. The Breathe project in Aberfeldy developed a pop-up youth drop-in kit complete with carpets, inflatable furniture and plants!

'Make sure you give a good welcome. Our young people missed their "Breathe family" more than anything, so we made sure we greeted them outside the marquee without wearing masks, which we wore inside the marquee.'

Toilets and handwashing - ensure participants are aware of the procedure and availability of toilets - if there is no access to facilities, let the young people (and their parents) know. For handwashing, it is possible to rig up temporary handwashing using a camp shower (basically a black bag of water you hang up) but it might be easier to use hand sanitiser. Consider asking participants to bring their own to avoid sharing.



Photo Credit: The Breathe Project, Aberfeldy

Activities - when you plan your activities make sure they are Covid-19 safe – avoid sharing equipment if you can; if you cannot, make sure it is sanitised between uses.

Try something new – if your group is not used to spending time outdoors and you are not sure of what activities to run, there are lots of good ideas online. It might be possible to partner with an outdoor organisation nearby, for example, About Youth in Edinburgh, teamed up with outdoor experience company Bridge8, to provide outdoor activities for the young people right on their doorstep.

Who can help?

Youth Link Scotland worked with the [Youth Work Covid-19 Recovery Group to develop Youth work: Supporting young people through and out of lockdown: A statement on behalf of the youth work sector in Scotland June 2020](#). They also keep the sector updated on guidance from Scottish Government – check out the [website](#).

Youth Scotland has produced a practical [Action Plan, Risk Assessment template and Risk Assessment Example](#) for groups to work through – these complement official guidance. They also have a set of Covid-19 safety posters and an example building plan for groups to use.

sportscotland has a Covid Officer [E-Learning Module](#) to provide guidance to support organisations to return safely to the delivery of sport and physical activity.

The Scout Association has developed a [five-step process](#) that leaders are required to follow to get their section back together safely.

Thrive Outdoors has a wealth of useful [information and resources](#) on how to use greenspaces for outdoor play and learning that can be adapted for any age group.

Real life examples

About Youth & Bridge8 in the Calders area of Edinburgh, started to work together during lockdown to offer young people in the area outdoor activities such as canoeing, mountain biking and outdoor skills.

The Breathe project in Aberfeldy built on their experience of outreach youth work to provide outdoor pop-up youth drop-in sessions.

Kincardine Cub Scouts moved into the woods with an outdoor programme and are working to overcome the challenges of on dark night activities.

For more about these projects, and other examples and ideas, visit <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/youth-work-al-fresco>

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Technical resource sheet

Greenspaces, parks, gardens and streets have become even more important to us as venues for social activities, sports, youth work, learning and cultural events. With a lot of "normal" venues closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, local organisations have looked for new ways of bringing local people together outdoors safely and creating a much-needed sense of community.

This resource sheet covers some of the things you need to think about and infrastructure that may be needed to support activities happening outside in parks, greenspaces, education and health estate grounds.

You can also download thematic resource sheets from our Better Outside webpages www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/better-outside with information about: Arts, culture and heritage outside | Taking cinema outdoors | Free-range community centres | Let's keep growing | Outdoor play and learning | Employability and skills | Health and wellbeing outside | Youth work al-fresco.

Things to consider

Keep up to date with restrictions and adhere to any Scottish Government guidance and regulations for your area. Think about the resources and equipment you will need to adapt your activity to meet these and being outside.

Risk assessment

The sooner you can begin your risk assessments of the venue/site and the activities you plan to deliver the better. You will already have risk assessments, but now staying safe from Covid-19 must be considered. Youth Scotland has produced a practical [Action Plan and Risk Assessment template](#) for youth groups - this can be adapted for activities with adults.

Location

Decide where your outdoor sessions will take place - it could be in a park, public space or a privately owned open space. Check how many people the space can safely hold and if there is access to any resources like power and toilets. [OS Greenspace](#) lets you search by postcode to find parks, playing fields, sports areas, playgrounds and community gardens.

Shelters and clothing

Sometimes it rains in Scotland! But that's no reason not to get outside. For outdoor events and activities, encourage people to dress for the weather - wearing waterproofs and wrapping up well.

If you are running regular outdoor events and activities, you may want to provide somewhere to shelter from bad weather. Temporary shelters can be made cheaply and quickly. Use of ropes and tarpaulins tied to trees or other existing structures, tipi tents or gazebos do not usually require planning permission and cost little (they can be as cheap as £50 to £400). They are also flexible and portable, allowing you to move them around the park or between several spaces.

More permanent buildings may need planning permission. Speak to your local authority as early as possible and consider gaining pre-application advice from your planning department. Yurts (canvas or wooden), wooden huts, bothies or lean-tos can all be used. Think carefully about what would work well in your site and canvas views of other people and groups. The cost of permanent structures varies hugely from a couple of hundred pounds to several thousands. Where planning permission is needed, you will need to allow at least three months from submitting plus installation time.



Photo Credit: Alan Kain

Design ideas for shelters

greenspace scotland engaged erz landscape architects to gather examples and good practice of permanent and temporary shelters – you can download the guide from Better Outside [Technical Resources](#).

Social Farms and Gardens Scotland worked with Mayfield & Easthouses Development Trust and Greig Reynolds to develop a low-cost open-source design for a shelter - download the "How to guide" from Better Outside [Technical Resources](#).

Toilets and hand washing

Regular handwashing is more important than ever to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Providing hand sanitiser and encouraging people to regular sanitise their hands is an option for many outdoor events and activities. There are other ways of providing handwashing facilities outside.

Handwashing requires running warm water and liquid soap. At its simplest, warm water can be provided using a large plastic tank topped up from a thermos flask. For community gardens and other activities that regularly use the same spaces, installing a solar powered water heater might be an option.

Solar-powered water heaters

Watch the YouTube [video](#) about the solar water installation at The Back Garden in Glasgow.

Open-source designs are available online, for example, [DIY solar water heater](#), as well as other [low tech ideas](#). These may require planning permission, so speak to your local planning authority as soon as possible.

If you are able to use a space beside existing washing and toilet facilities, managing safe access to them is usually the best option. Depending on the frequency and permanency of your outdoor activities, you may consider hiring portable toilets, or constructing off-grid composting toilets. Check out the info from Forth Valley & Lomond Leader about [Eco-Loos](#).

Lighting

During the winter months evening activities outside can be a challenge due to darkness. Investing in good torches and lanterns can be a quick solution along with using fairy lights. Depending on the frequency and permanency of your activities it may also be useful to consider more permanent lighting solutions, possibly powered by the sun or wind. If you invest in this now it will stand you in good stead for years to come and you will also help contribute to Scotland's net-zero ambition.

Getting your wider community involved

Involving your community

The COSS publication [Involving Your Community](#) includes advice on why involving your community through information, consultation and engagement is so important and provides tips on the best methods to use and where to go for further ideas, advice and support.

Your community greenspace Q&As

greenspace scotland has produced a useful guide to help individuals and groups navigate through the wealth of useful information, support and advice available to help you to make the most of your local greenspace. [Your community greenspace](#) is structured around some of the most frequently asked questions: from finding out who owns it, to organising events and volunteering activities, fundraising for improvements and responding to planning applications, through to community leasing and ownership options.

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