

# Forest School Play Project

Delivered by **Get Out More**  
From **April 2018 to March 2024**

The Forest School Play Project is an adventurous nature-based play programme, bringing an array of learning opportunities for three-year-olds, their families and the early years workforce. Based on the Forest School model, it was redesigned by Better Start Bradford and Get Out More to meet the needs of this younger age group.

## How it was delivered

Working with early years settings in the Better Start Bradford area, Get Out More took three-year-olds out to local woodlands and greenspaces to learn through active play, crafts, games and exploration - in all weathers. They worked with settings to improve their resources for outdoor play, including equipment and grounds development.

They also delivered Forest School training to staff, volunteers and parents/carers, and ran weekly outdoor fun, family play sessions for families with 0-3s in parks across the Better Start Bradford area.

## Why this project was developed

There was limited evidence around the benefits for pre-schoolers in Forest School play, but there is growing evidence on the importance of the outdoors and natural environment on child health and development. This led Better Start Bradford to initiate the development of a Forest School type project for this younger age-group.

## The project set out to:

- Improve children's social and emotional development, including confidence, sharing, attention and co-operation.
- Build language and communication skills through interactions between worker and child and between children.
- Improve parents and carers' perceptions of local green spaces, and increase the likelihood that they would continue to take their children to play in outdoor natural spaces beyond the end of the project.
- Improve and increase frequency and quality of outdoor play opportunities within early years settings.

## Impact and findings\*

- Schools and nurseries reported significant and clear changes in children's development, including improved confidence, social interactions, communication, physical skills (fine and gross motor skills) and greater self-regulation. These are important areas of development in school readiness preparation.
- Practitioners reported a change in attitude with parents and carers. Some, who were very reluctant to join in at the start and didn't want their children to go outside to do the sessions, were actively taking part by the end and wanted their children to do more of it.
- Family play sessions showed parents and carers how accessible these activities are, that they don't need to spend much money or travel far to have fulfilling family experiences that benefit their children.
- 35 nurseries now have improved resources for outdoor play, including all weather clothing, wellies and replacing equipment with more natural, heuristic items.
- Some nurseries have created outdoor Forest School type play areas.
- In one school, a staff member trained to level 3 in Forest Schools now runs sessions three times a week with children of different ages.
- Get Out More now delivers level 1 and 3 training within the Bradford district.

*\*This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project*

26

NURSERIES  
TOOK  
PART

with 57 programmes  
delivered in total

633

THREE-YEAR-OLDS  
ATTENDED AT  
LEAST ONE  
SESSION

with 64%  
completing a full  
programme

OVER

500

drop-in outdoor  
family play  
sessions delivered  
in green spaces  
and parks over  
the 5 years

22

Level 1 and Level  
3 Forest School  
training programmes  
delivered, with over  
100 early years staff  
and parents /  
carers attaining  
accreditation

