



SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: Rural Respecting Difference Programme COVID-19 Response

THEME:

Building Positive Relations :
Regional

FUNDING (ERDF + Match):

£1,224,045.08

MATCH FUNDERS:

The Executive Office NI, De-
partment for Rural and Com-
munity Development Ireland

LEAD PARTNER:

Early Years - the
Organisation for
Young Children

PROJECT PARTNERS:

The National Childhood
Network

Rural Development Council

Start Date: 01/04/2018

End Date: 31/12/2021



[https://www.early-
years.org/rrdp?](https://www.early-years.org/rrdp?)



@RuralRespecting



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The Rural Respecting Difference Pro-
grammes team have continued to offer
support to early years settings engaged
in the programme throughout the COVID-
19 pandemic. One of the ways they have
done this is to continue to engage with
the leaders in their settings about any
concerns they have had to deal with as a
result of the pandemic and subsequent
restrictions. As a response to these con-
cerns, the team designed and delivered
bespoke training, which for the first time,
was rolled out online in accordance with
social distancing guidelines on 15 Sep-
tember 2020 in five settings.

One example of this new way of working was the delivery of online workshops on the role of adults in outdoor play. This virtual training piece came about as a direct response to the concerns voiced by many practitioners, who were feeling particularly anxious around the transition back into settings following a period of lockdown.

The benefits of outdoor play, for both children and adults alike, have long been noted. With this being the case, the RRDP team were on hand to provide support to early years practitioners who were keen to ensure that the outdoor spaces and play opportunities they were providing were both effective and within guidelines. Given Early Years' commitment to celebrating and respecting difference, the workshops also helped practitioners to develop their thinking around any challenges that could emerge during outdoors play from a Good Relations perspective.

Workshop participants explored together how they could encourage gender neutral play in all outdoor spaces and avoid certain spaces or activities becoming dominated by one gender. The workshop also examined how cultural differences or disabilities may impact on outdoors play and how practitioners can ensure, through careful planning, that all outdoors play is accessible to every child within their settings.

In addition to the provision of advice and guidance from Early Years Special-
ists and the Good Relations mentor, the workshops provided a space for
practitioners to share ideas and encouragement with each other, which was a
particular highlight for many participants.