

Litter Pick Guidance for Early Years Practitioners

Learning objectives:

Children will begin to understand why it is important to care for their environment and keep shared spaces tidy.

Children will develop skills in following simple safety instructions, working with others and taking part in a group activity.

Children will learn that small positive actions can help their community, local wildlife and outdoor spaces.





Practitioner knowledge:

Litter picks are important because they help children make meaningful connections between their actions and the world around them.

Taking part in a simple community-focused task can support early understanding of responsibility, respect and care for shared spaces.

For practitioners, litter picking also provides opportunities to promote outdoor learning, communication, cooperation and personal safety in a real-life context.

It can encourage children to notice their surroundings, talk about how litter affects people and wildlife, and experience the sense of achievement of helping to make an area cleaner and safer.

Litter picking equipment is expensive so if you don't have them already in your setting you can borrow free kit from one of the Keep Wales Tidy Hubs that are across Wales. To find where your nearest Hub is go to, <https://keepwalestidy.cymru/caru-cymru/home/litter-picking-hubs/>

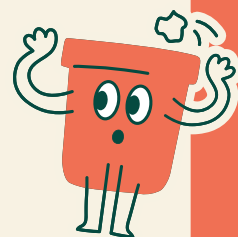


Planning a litter pick in your setting

Before the activity, carry out a risk assessment and make sure the session is suitable for the children, the location and the adults available to support them. Clear organisation before you begin will help the activity run smoothly and safely.

Before starting, talk to the children about what they will be doing and how they can take part safely. Keep the activity simple, well supervised and appropriate for their age and stage of development. The additional points on the next page offer more detailed guidance for planning litter picking activities in the wider community.

Practitioners should also refer to relevant setting procedures and the Keep Wales Tidy health and safety and risk assessment guidance. Litter picking activities do involve risks, but these can be reduced through careful planning, appropriate supervision and clear safety routines.





Practitioner checklist

Before you begin

Choose a suitable location and agree clear boundaries.

Plan a short, purposeful activity that matches the children's age, stage of development and interests.

Check the weather forecast and ensure children are dressed appropriately.

Brief all adults involved so everyone understands their role and the agreed safety procedures.

Take essential equipment, including:

- Child-friendly litter pickers
- Litter bags
- A first aid kit
- A mobile phone

During the activity

- Explain the activity to children using simple, clear language.
- Always supervise children closely.
- Encourage children to use litter pickers rather than their hands.
- Remind children not to touch their face while litter picking.
- Stop the activity if children become tired, distracted or unsettled.
- Leave any item that cannot be collected safely.

After the activity

Dispose of collected litter appropriately.

Ensure everyone washes their hands thoroughly.

Allow time for children to reflect on what they found and celebrate their contribution.

Key safety considerations

Age and ability.

Adapt the length, expectations and level of support to suit the children's age, developmental stage and confidence.



Hygiene

Good hygiene practices help reduce the spread of illness.

Children and adults should avoid touching their face during the activity and wash their hands thoroughly afterwards, particularly before eating or drinking.

Sharps and hazardous items

Children must never pick up needles, broken glass, sharp objects or unknown substances. If found, move children away from the area and follow local reporting procedures.

Manual handling

Do not overfill litter bags. Children should not lift heavy objects, and large or unsafe items should be reported rather than moved.

Plants, insects and animal waste

Consider any known allergies when planning the activity. Encourage children to observe wildlife and plants without touching them, and avoid contact with animal waste.

Weather and outdoor conditions

Review conditions on the day and adapt the activity as needed. Hot weather may require shade, drinks and sun protection, while cold, wet or windy conditions may mean shortening or postponing the session.



A well-planned litter pick can help children develop a sense of responsibility, belonging and care for their environment. Keeping the activity short, safe and enjoyable will help ensure a positive and meaningful experience for everyone involved.