

Muddy Movers

The Muddy Movers programme was created to help promote children's physical development from the very early years (partly in response to some findings once children reached High School stage e.g. many were noted to be lacking in core strength & other areas.)
The programme was trialled in East Renfrewshire in 2017 and has been running in ERC Early Years settings ever since with two primary aims:

- ✿ **To develop Children's Physical Literacy**
(a term that incorporates their physical skills, motivation, expression, creativity, activity levels, confidence, ability to negotiate space etc)
- ✿ **To promote Emotional Resilience**
(through increasing their confidence in their physicality and ability to persevere, manage risks and take on new challenges.)

Research shows:

Early childhood exercise :



- ✱ Builds Strong Bones
- ✱ Builds Muscle Strength
- ✱ Increases Lung Capacity
- ✱ May improve Academic achievement

Threats to Outdoor Exercise & Play:



Lifestyle



Safety Fears

Physical Literacy Skills




Muddy Movers focuses on developing skills in these key areas:

- ✱ Core Strength
- ✱ Jumping (*from various heights*)
- ✱ Balancing
- ✱ Co-ordination & Spatial Awareness
- ✱ Climbing
- ✱ Negotiating Obstacles
- ✱ Hand-eye/Foot-eye co-ordination
- ✱ Throwing & Catching



Emotional Resilience

Pilots showed that children who had been on the Muddy Movers programme also demonstrated advances in many other key areas:

- ✱ Increased Confidence 
- ✱ Assessing & Managing Risk
- ✱ Perseverance
- ✱ Mental Wellbeing 
- ✱ Sense of Achievement
- ✱ Team Work, Social Skills 
- ✱ Freedom to Experiment at own pace
- ✱ Problem-solving

Learning to Manage Risk



Risk Averse



v

Risk Aware



A Risk Aware Approach is promoted over a Risk Averse one

Children are encouraged to think for themselves to work out if something is safe for them, or if it is something they feel confident tackling (with adults monitoring).

If a helping hand is asked for it is provided, then it can be gradually withdrawn as a child's confidence increases.

✱ Challenge

✱ Assessing Risk

✱ Do I feel Safe?

✱ What Help do I need?

✱ Scaffolding

Examples:

✦ Balancing

When walking a line, keep body tall, tummy muscles pulled in, head up looking forward, arms out to the side.



"To balance you need to put your arms out to the sides!"



Parks and woods, tree trunks, walls and logs provide great opportunities for balancing...

✱Balancing

Ask children to set up bridges and stepping stones e.g. "to cross Crocodile River".



"Look I just did this all by myself - that's the first time I did it all by myself... I'm gonna keep trying it lots of times."

Perseverance



Here the children set up and increase their own challenges

Jumping



"I'm scared of my first time doing it. It doesn't look safe."

Assessing risk

The height of the jump is built up according to what each child feels safe doing, with adults on hand to monitor and provide support if needed.

"Right, I'm going to Jump. I can do this... Focus, focus, focus..."

Self-motivation



Challenge

"I'm going to jump and you give me a number for how good I am!"

"Can I get a bit of help to jump?"



Encourage children to: stretch; bend knees when landing; keep eyes focused.

Core Strength



"Here's a delivery of logs. We're taking these logs to the factory"

Creativity



Transporting, Lifting, Pushing, Pulling

all promotes core strength. Children could carry anything - buckets of water, stones, gardening tools, watering cans, logs – push wheelbarrows, slide boxes/crates or anything similar. They might be able to do some useful jobs in the garden as they play!



Hill Rolling & Tugs of War

- great for core strength

"I was scared in case I fall down, so we put the boxes there"



Climbing

"We put the boxes there for her 'cos she couldn't do it."

Peer support



"I don't need help any more for this!"

Building Confidence



The joy of tree climbing



✱Co-ordination & Negotiating Space

Dodge, weave, crawl, squeeze under, leap over...

Moving around obstacles with cycles, scooters or on foot promotes spatial awareness and co-ordination as children explore and navigate, twisting their bodies into various shapes.

*Take opportunities to go **over and under**: under ropes, over hurdles, around cones; creep through tunnels, under and over low branches; jump over logs and tree stumps; weave through trees in woods; move up and down various gradients; make or find bridges to crawl under & spaces to squeeze through; create stepping stones or make use of natural ones in the landscape.*

***Change orientation** (e.g. upside down wheelbarrow walking, rolling down hills, hanging upside down, lying flat staring at the sky)*



✱Eye-Hand & Eye-Foot Co-ordination

Throw, catch, aim, shoot, bat, roll, stack...

- **Moving objects around** by carrying, aiming, throwing, batting, kicking etc promotes eye-hand and eye-foot co-ordination.
- **Set challenges:** e.g. “How can we move sand/water from one place to another without dropping it?”
- Use balls, beanbags, stuffed socks, discs, teddy bears, anything to **throw** from child to child or into buckets, hoops or other receptacles.
- **Roll objects** down ramps and children can try to catch at the other end e.g. using old guttering, bamboo chutes, long empty seed trays with grooves. Test different gradients.

Make a basket,
Follow ball
with eyes,
Catch!

Head up, look
straight
ahead, hands
ready, fingers
spread, watch
the object,
catch!



Nicholson's Theory of **Loose Parts**

Using materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways leads to greater creativity and learning.

- ✿ Empowers creativity & imagination
- ✿ More stimulating and engaging
- ✿ Allows children to develop their own ideas & explore their world
- ✿ Allows children to play in many different ways on many different levels.





Ways to do Muddy Movers in Lockdown...

This Spring the great weather, combined with the lockdown situation, has meant many families have been getting outdoors more than usual and also getting creative in their ways to keep fit and active.

Parks and local wild areas provide countless opportunities for running, climbing, balancing on rocks and logs and negotiating obstacles. Many children have been building up their stamina and core strength using their own imaginations. Sometimes having time to get “bored” can have positive and imaginative results!

Let's have a...

Virtual Sports Day!

As part of our Virtual Sports Day there are many ways you can join in the Muddy Movers programme in a garden or local open space.

It doesn't *have* to be muddy, though if you are feeling ambitious you could create your own Tough Mudder course if you really want...

Or you could use a tarpaulin/plastic tablecloth & hose to create a water slide...



But there are many simpler, less messy ways to join in too....

And the Busby Staff are with you in spirit!

Are you ready?



Lockdown Obstacle Course - Ideas...

A simple effective way to do Muddy Movers is to set up any kind of obstacle course which includes balancing, jumping, negotiating obstacles, ducking & diving, lifting etc

At home try using objects from the house or garden:

- walk along planks balanced on bricks;
- jump over skipping ropes/lowered washing lines;
- weave through rows of pots & pans;
- erect hurdles by laying a row of cushions, or sticks across flower pots;
- jump from a height into a pile of pillows;
- throw stuffed socks, teabags or water balloons into a bucket or paddling pool;
- bounce a ball in a frying pan for keepy-uppies;
- use a big stick with a tennis ball for hockey;
- run with buckets of water between markers;
- slide/manoeuvre downhill on a tray;
- make bin bag sledges and pull one another around;
- have a cushion race balancing cushions on your head, a wheelbarrow race or the time-honoured classic Potato and Spoon race!



Natural Obstacle Course -

In a park or woods you can make use of natural objects already there, such as hills and gradients, trees, tree stumps, logs, rocks, low hanging branches (as Mrs MacLeod will now attempt to demonstrate...)



Under...

...and Over



The Stream Balance



The Log Balance



Rock Jumping



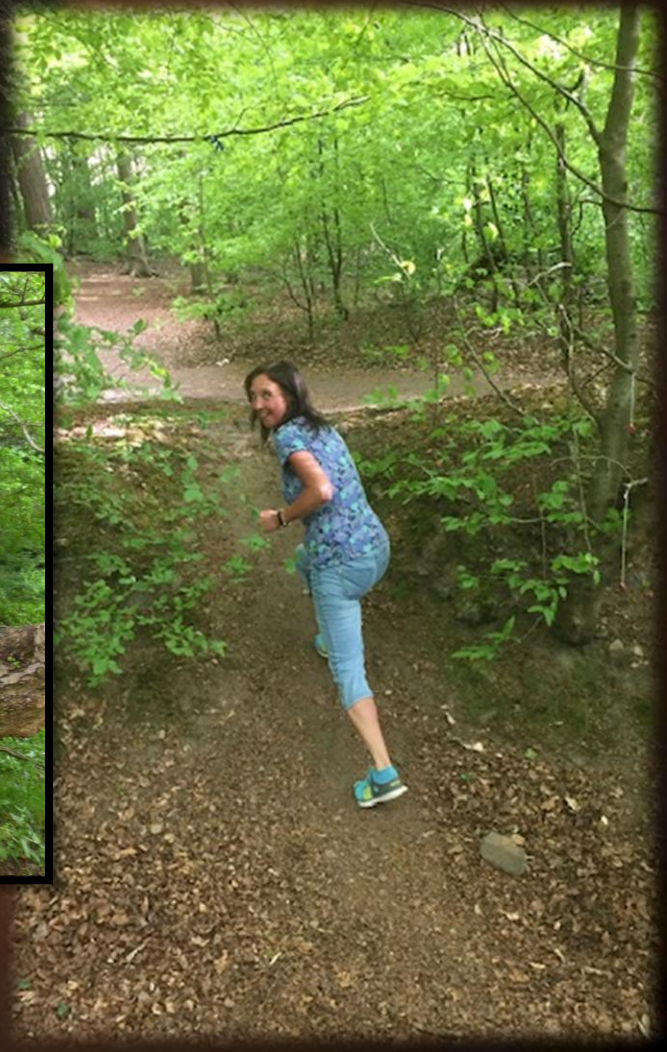
Hill Sprinting



Tree Climbing



Hanging around



Yoga

For more relaxed strength building you can also try various yoga poses with children to improve their balance, flexibility and core strength. Try out some Animal and Superhero poses.

[Cosmic Kids Yoga](#) is a great online tutorial in children's yoga using creative movement and storytelling that they can follow on YouTube by themselves indoors (especially when Mums and Dads need a break!).



Good luck!
We are sure you
will think of
many innovative
ways to be fit,
active and
resilient!

**Please send us
photos of your
Virtual Sports
Day!**