



WILLOW DEN

IMPACT REPORT

EDITION 1
2022

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

WILLOW  DEN

WHERE CHILDREN THRIVE OUTDOORS

Introduction

Willow Den was founded by Inspiring Scotland in 2020 to meet two clear objectives; to provide more opportunities for children in Scotland to play and learn outdoors and to improve pay and benefits to the ELC sector. Willow Den measures its achievements through its sustainable profit-for-purpose model, and its social impact. In addition to the start up investment from Inspiring Scotland, a small pool of investors committed to the development, this included a successful application to Social Investment Scotland's Growth Fund.

We start our first Impact Report in January 2020 with the opening of our first fully outdoors nursery, Willow Den at Spartans. Scotland's first fully outdoor nursery in a football stadium. This isn't just any football stadium, it's Spartans Community Football Academy. With a clear goal to help North Edinburgh thrive and to change lives through sport, we found our first perfect match.

Opening in a post-pandemic climate presented challenges and opportunities. People were wary of physical contact, children had been born or were babies during lockdown. We offered the opportunity to step outside in your local space to stay and play with your child. These early adopters became the first registered children in Willow Den at Spartans. Some of these children leave us to go to primary school this year, others are choosing to stay on.

This report provides a snapshot of our first operating year, which I hope will be the first of many.

We are Willow Den, where children thrive outdoors.



Deborah Grant, CEO

In numbers

Through innovative and demand-led provision Willow Den has delivered **13,876** hours of outdoor play based learning to children through:

- our core nursery provision
- flexible childcare Forest Fridays
- summer holiday nursery places
- Drop in Stay & Play sessions



In words



Hammers and food, sounds like a custom-made activity for our son. Every day we feel so lucky that he is going to Willow Den

“Willow Den is a little piece of the outdoors that has helped H to Thrive”



WATCH NOW: Willow Den Impact of Outdoor ELC Year 1 Film

Sustainability and Environment

Sustainability and caring for our environment is at the heart of what we do here at Willow Den. We are raising the next generation to care for their planet.

Our first steps have been engaging with conservation volunteer teams and building relationships with organisations such as Zero Waste and Learning through Landscapes. We are breathing new life into forgotten woodlands and repurposing waste with new life as learning and play resources.

Our next steps are to build on these relationships as we expand our operations in 2023.



WATCH NOW: Learning Through Landscapes
Conservation and Nature Play Part One

