

6. Being with babies outdoors

Despite the diverse learning, development and wellbeing benefits of regular access to natural environments, babies and toddlers are often excluded.

“Contrasted to Froebelian understanding of the importance of time spent from birth ‘with the clear, still objects of nature’ contemporary outdoor provision seems both limited and limiting.”

(Josephidou & Kemp, 2024, p.15)



Look at the photo. Think about what this interaction is offering the baby.



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What the research tells us

Being outdoors and in nature is often seen as less of a priority for babies and toddlers than for older children. The outdoors is valued primarily as a place to be physically active; one that is seen as most relevant for children who can walk and run ⁽¹⁾.

- There are significant inequalities of access to high quality, natural environments for babies and toddlers, both in home and setting contexts. A national survey of babyroom parents found that almost a third do not have access to a private garden. Many parents rely on settings to provide regular outdoor access ⁽³⁾. However, an online survey of outdoor provision in English babyrooms found marked variability in both quality and quantity ⁽²⁾.

- Most babies and toddlers have limited opportunities to engage with nature whilst attending a setting. Nature is considered to be 'risky', meaning that natural elements are often removed resulting in an absence of grass, plants or trees. The outdoor spaces in babyrooms tend to be artificial, flat and bounded ^(4,5).
- Even in challenging urban contexts, it is possible to develop nature based pedagogies that support the wellbeing of the youngest children and the environment ^(5,6,7).

Find out more:

1. Kemp & Josephidou, (2023a)
2. Josephidou et al, (2021).
3. Kemp et al. (2025a)
4. Kemp et al, (2024);
5. Kemp & Josephidou, (2023b)
6. Josephidou & Kemp, (2024)
7. Kemp et al., (2025c)

Download the Froebelian inspired **babyNENE toolkit** for babyroom educators at bit.ly/BabyNENE



You don't have to 'do' activities – just 'being' outdoors can be valuable and enjoyable for both babies and adults.

