

## Tool Use Policy

### Staff use

As an outdoor nursery, Stramash recognises the need for continuous site maintenance and construction. In this way, Stramash recognises that staff will be using tools throughout their working patterns at various points for a variety of tasks such as gardening, fire lighting, bushcraft, building and ground maintenance.

Stramash as an employer will provide on-site, in-person training for all staff as part of their induction training or as part of their return to work training after a period of absence or maternity leave. Team Leaders on site will also regularly observe staff using these tools and will model, coach and train as needed.

When carrying out work with tools, staff should ensure that they are suitably protected whilst able to suitably carry out the task - it may be beneficial to wear gloves when pruning gorse etc, or to wear goggles when sawing. Stramash will ensure that suitable PPE is available for staff use when using tools.

All sites have a risk benefit assessment of staff use of certain tools such as an axe for chopping wood, loppers for trimming vegetation or hammers when doing woodworking with children. Team Leaders will continue to monitor the safety of such tasks and put in safety procedures where deemed necessary to keep staff and children safe. (*For more information on these assessments, see the risk benefit assessment document*).

### Child use

Stramash believes in providing an open ended and creative opportunity to explore tool use with children in everyday play. Stramash promotes the positive impacts that tool use can have in the early years such as

- Providing opportunities for children to create freely
- Give children a sense of responsibility
- Promoting hand eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills
- Providing authentic experiences

Within the nursery's continuous provision, Stramash aims to offer opportunities to explore tool use throughout the sessions - including but not limited to gardening, bushcraft, building dens, cooking and doing woodwork, as promoted within the **Loose Parts Toolkit** (2019)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Loose Parts Toolkit \(2019\) Inspiring Scotland](#)

At all times when using tools, Stramash staff will set up an area in which to do the toolwork (such as using a woodwork area, a table specifically for cooking etc). When setting up an area to do tool work staff should ensure that there is enough room for children to safely use the tools. Within these areas, the amount of children using tools should be limited - for example 3 children at a time using hammers. This is so that staff can monitor the levels of safety, can track the tools and can offer responsive support where necessary. The cap of participants may differ from activity to activity and may differ based on the competence and confidence levels of staff and the levels of support needed by the individual children involved - for example, there may be able to be 4 children exploring fire lighting with strikers at once, however it may be easier to only have 2 children using hacksaws in the woodwork area at once. When discussing safety with the nursery group, children should be made aware that the limits are in place for safety reasons.

Stramash strives for authentic experiences for children and as such will ensure that all tools and resources are suitably scaled for safe and accurate use by children. In this way, all Stramash nurseries will have child sized tools and workbenches and will have child sized gardening tools and so on. Where children are using an adult sized tool, an adult should be supporting them as necessary.

Staff should dynamically risk assess when doing tool work with children and insist upon PPE such as goggles and gloves where necessary. Stramash acknowledges that in some cases, however, traditional PPE may hinder the child's abilities to control the tool safely. For more information, see Stramash's tool use risk benefit assessment.

As with all of Stramash's provision, Stramash staff will endeavour to allow independence with tool use, promoting responsibility and creativity where a child will only be supported if necessary. As in Stramash's Equal Opportunities Policy, staff will ensure that children of all ages and abilities are able to explore the use of tools in their play.

#### Storage/maintenance of tools

When using tools, either staff or child use, staff will ensure that all tools are fit for use before commencing the activity. If tools are not fit for use, they will be removed and then reported to the Team Leader.

Team Leaders for each site will ensure there is a safe, lockable area to keep tools that are fit for purpose. This should include a lockable box for knives and other sharp tools.

The amounts of tools will be monitored and staff will ensure that the amount of tools taken from storage is the same amount as being returned. If this is not the case, then the Team Leader should be informed. An inventory will be kept on site of all tools.