Transcript: Cowgate Under 5s - Using the outdoors

**Female voiceover**: Then from the sala, we can move directly out on to the veranda where it's instant access to the outdoors. This is where we have our bug hostel which is so-named because one of our children said it couldn't be a hotel because bugs don't have any money. It's also where our shelter is, which is heated so that we can dry out wellies and waterproofs so that there's an in between space between the outdoors and indoors just to facilitate that being outside all the time. So there's no hindrances to children being able to access the outdoors.

We have a little area here for growing and planting and just for messy play, mud kitchen type play. This is where we hang our washing, because being an eco-school, we don't have a tumble dryer. So we rely on the not-so-reliable Scottish weather to get our stuff dried. Then our children can just go down into the garden, which is just a veritable oasis. We're right in the middle of the Old Town and, when you're in this space, you can be forgiven for thinking that you're in the middle of the country. It's very much a space of peace, of tranquillity, but also a space that our children can freely move about.

It has very different topographies, with the hill and the sand and the bark and the stones, so our children get to experience lots of different surfaces; opportunity for climbing and sliding and again lots of little spaces where our children can be away from this, the constant observation of adults, and for children to be risk aware which is what we would like them to be. They need an environment that encourages exploration, that encourages risk. That's not to advocate dangerous play. That's just to advocate risky play that our children need. The Icelandics call it this feeling of ice in the belly.

Our children need opportunities to discover exactly how far and how able they are. They can't do that if they don't have things that they can jump off or things where they can climb on, or things that they can swing on. They want to experience all that vestibular motion. It's hugely important [for a child] to discover, to transport. I mean, it's not, by any means, a pristine environment. Our children do transport sand and stones and sticks all over the place. The bark and the sand get mixed, but how else do you create dirty drinks and perfume if you're not mixing things together? These are all fundamental, because when you ask most people about their memories of their childhood, it will involve the outdoors, usually to a greater degree.