

AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Google Scholar (Available at: <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>) for the purpose of research for Module 18 – Sustainability in the Early Years (ECEY6005).

I acknowledge the use of COPILOT to locate current sources (including e-books, journal articles, and webpages), dated between 2015 and 2025 for the purpose of research for Module 18 – Sustainability in the Early Years (ECEY6005).

I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Prompts:

1. What is Sustainability?
2. What is food sustainability?
3. How does food sustainability effect early years education?
4. National Policies that support food sustainability?
5. How does Supermarkets impact locally produced food?
6. Is local produce more expensive?
7. How can we help children in learning about Food Sustainability
8. How do farms impact sustainability?
9. What are food miles and long chains?
10. Where does the UK food mainly come from

Module: ECEY6005

- Part 2A – Reflection – Pages 3-6
- Part 2B- Critical Evaluation - Pages 7-11
- PowerPoint Presentation link:
<https://1drv.ms/p/c/7066E5C2A7E22198/AQQp2tQuNb9Husv6dhN4h8?e=Df3ocx>
- **References** – Pages 12- 14

Part 2A- Reflection



Prynhawn da, I am Rachael, and for my Sustainability in the Early Years scrapbook I chose a farm as my wild place, focussing specifically on Ty Poeth Farm in Pontypool. Ty Poeth Farm is a small, family-run local farm known for its seasonal produce, pick-your-own events and community activities. It's a place where children can see animals, crops and natural cycles up close, and where families can experience farming in a hands-on accessible way. Because my own family has visited for years, it felt like a meaningful and familiar wild place to explore for this project.

Discover - In my discover section, I realised that my connection to farming and sustainability began long before this module. As a child in primary school, it was my dream to be a farmer, inspired by the Sophie's Adventures book series, where a young girl starts saving her pocket money to buy a farm in the Scottish Highlands. When I started this module, that childhood memory resurfaced immediately, and I knew a farm would be the wild place I wanted to explore. As I researched and began compiling my scrapbook, I discovered Beatrix Potter's farming and conservation work, also rooted in the landscapes of the Scottish Highlands and Lake District. This made the connection feel even stronger. It felt as though my childhood interests, my

adult commitment to sustainable living, that has shaped me all came together naturally in this project.

Explore - My Explore section allowed me to look more closely at Ty Poeth Farm and understand how local farms support sustainability. Visiting the farm and reflecting on our family's long-standing connection to seasonal activities and pick-your-own events helped me see how farming practices, food miles and seasonal eating are all part of the wider sustainability picture. Exploring the farm's produce and the rhythms of seasonal growing helped me recognise how local food systems provide fresher, less processed foods that do not rely on preservatives or long ingredient lists to survive transport. I also became more aware of the interconnectedness of nature: how animals, weather patterns, soil health, plants, flowers and wildlife all work together to support the farm's ecosystem. Seeing these relationships in action helped me understand sustainability not as an abstract idea, but as something rooted in everyday choices and local landscapes. This section made me created a sensory experience designed to bring the farm into early years settings for children who may not have the opportunity to visit a farm themselves. Using natural textures, farm-themed materials and sensory elements helped me recreate the sights and feel of the farm environment, making sustainability learning accessible and meaningful for all children.

Conserve - In my Conserve section, I realised how many local sustainability communities already exist around us. Visiting Zero Waste Torfaen and community growing groups showed me how people use public spaces to grow food, support wildlife, and create circular systems by recycling and reusing materials. These visits helped me understand that conserving resources is not only an environmental action but also a shared community effort. I recognised how seasonal eating can reduce waste, and how recyclable materials, such as glass milk bottles and cardboard cartons, support systems where resources are reused rather than thrown away. This section helped me see how local farms and community initiatives can work together to protect resources and reduce environmental impact. Seeing my children engage in these experiences, the questions they asked, the things they already knew, and the ideas they were able to develop, showed me how important it is for us, as adults and practitioners, to actively teach and model sustainable behaviours. Their curiosity and

existing knowledge reminded me that young children are capable of deep thinking when sustainability is made visible, hands-on and connected to real life.

Share - My Share section helped me translate sustainability into practical early years experiences. Creating grow your own packs using old egg cartons and crushed eggshells showed me how simple everyday items can be repurposed to support natural cycles. Sharing these activities with my children highlighted how hands-on learning helps them understand where food comes from, how it grows, and why caring for the environment matters. Involving my children in this project made me appreciate the importance of reconnecting children with nature and wild spaces wherever possible even through small allotments on site, shared growing areas or opportunities to explore local produce. These experiences help children develop respect for living things, understand natural cycles and build lifelong environmental awareness through authentic, hands-on learning.

Reflecting on the experience of the scrapbook has helped me to realise how interconnected sustainability issues are. Watching programmes such as Clarkson Farm and Plastic Detox on Netflix made me think about the packaging, preservatives and additives used to keep food fresh during long food miles; meaning we often eat chemicals we don't need. In contrast, local produce avoids this completely it's fresher, cleaner, and less processed. At the same time these programmes also highlight the challenges related to farming due to climate change, rising costs and sustainability when competing with supermarkets. This has deepened my understanding of sustainability and helped me recognise how food miles, packaging, additives, climate change, and farming practices all form part of the same chain.

Completing Part 1 also made me reflect on the pace of modern life. Much of daily living is shaped by convenience, fast consumption and guidance or legislation that encourages efficiency rather than connection. Through this project, I realised how important it is to slow down, adopt gentler pedagogies and create space for children and families to engage with sustainability in ways that feel achievable. Small sustainable swaps such as choosing seasonal produce, reusing materials or growing simple foods that fit realistically into family routines and still make a meaningful difference. Taking opportunities to reconnect children with the natural world, even in small moments, supports their wellbeing and helps them build the deep ecological

awareness that fast-paced modern life often pushes aside. It has made me value how essential it is to reconnect children with nature and wild spaces wherever possible even small allotments on site, shared growing areas, or opportunities to explore local produce. As these experiences help children understand the world around them, develop respect for living things, and see themselves as part of natural cycles. It reminded me that sustainability in the early years is not just about recycling or reducing waste, but about giving children real, hands-on experiences that build lifelong environmental awareness by fostering natural curiosity and authentic learning.

Visiting community projects and initiatives also highlighted the social side of sustainability and how communities can work together to create greener, healthier environments. This inspired me to create an allotment in our garden this summer, and my children are already excited about growing their own produce. We are even considering getting chickens so we can produce our own eggs and share them with family, continuing the cycle of local, sustainable living

Conclusion- Overall, taking part in the scrapbook experience has supported me to develop a deeper, more practical understanding of sustainability. It showed me that small, realistic actions, like supporting local farms, reducing waste, choosing whole foods and reconnecting with the earth can make a meaningful difference. My scrapbook helped me recognise where we are already making sustainable choices and where we can grow, both as a family and as part of our wider community. Most importantly, it helped me understand the importance of how sustainability can be embedded into early years practice in a way that is meaningful, hands-on and connected to real life.

Part 2B- Critical Evaluation

In this final part of the presentation, I will critically explore how taking part in this project, where I have explore supporting local produce and growing your own, can support the philosophy and principles of early childhood education for sustainability. Sustainability is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. This idea underpins the United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals, which emphasise responsible consumption, environmental protection and community wellbeing. UNESCO (2026) also highlights that education for sustainable development helps learners develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to act responsibly and care for the planet. In Wales, sustainability is a statutory duty through the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Welsh Government (WG), 2015), and both the Curriculum for Wales (WG,2022) and the Non-Maintained Curriculum (WG, 2022) encourage nature connection, real-world learning and ethical citizenship from the earliest years. Current policy developments also require all education settings to appoint a sustainability lead and develop a climate action plan (Department for Education, 2025), reinforcing that sustainability is now a leadership responsibility embedded across early years practice.

Food sustainability is a global challenge. Wang *et al.*, (2025) highlight that modern food systems create environmental pressures across the entire life cycle, while Andrews *et al.*,. (2023) argue that food systems must become central to sustainability policy because current consumption patterns contribute to resource depletion and health inequalities. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Food Security (2024) report indicates that the UK's reliance on imported fruit and vegetables makes our food supply vulnerable to climate change, global conflict and transport disruption. Additionally, Bowman *et al.*, (2024) reinforce that reliance on imported foods reduces local resilience, suggesting that the UK does not have strong food security because its supply chains depend heavily on external markets and global stability. Furthermore, Sustain (2024) further argues that long, supply chains leave the UK highly exposed to global shocks, and that strengthening local and seasonal food systems can improve resilience by shortening supply chains, stabilising prices and reducing vulnerability to climate and geopolitical disruption. The Farm Waste Report (Food Rise, 2018) indicates this long supply chain

contributes to food waste at farm level, as produce is rejected due to cosmetic standards or market pressures, reducing the availability of affordable fresh produce and creating environmental and economic barriers for families. Terry (2022) adds that imported produce carries a much higher carbon footprint and recent UK inquiries by The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (2024) into fairness in food prices and supply chains, highlight how supermarket practices and market pressures contribute to rising costs and reduced affordability for families. These suggest that food sustainability is not just an environmental issue it is a systemic challenge that affects health, affordability, access and national food security. Supporting locally produced, seasonal eating, and enabling communities to grow some of their own food, offers a practical way to strengthen community-level resilience and reduce reliance on fragile global supply chains, although such initiatives must be understood as part of a wider, multi-level response to structural food system vulnerabilities of which our children are key.

The Food Standards Agency Wales (2022) found that many families worry about rising food prices and the affordability of healthy food, with fresh produce often being the first item reduced when budgets tighten. Yingli *et al.*, (2018) highlight that many Welsh communities experience food deserts, where families struggle to access affordable, healthy food due to transport barriers and limited availability of fresh produce, meaning families often rely on nearby convenience stores, which offer fewer healthy options. This reliance on imports limits access to local produce and creates structural barriers that make sustainable food choices difficult for families. The Agriculture Institute (2025) also notes that supermarket-controlled supply chains and marketing practices shape the availability and affordability of fresh produce, reinforcing the need for more localised, community-based food systems.

Families use supermarkets for many reasons. Supermarkets offer convenience, predictable pricing, extended opening hours and year-round availability all essential for families balancing work, childcare and time pressures. Growing food at home, while sustainable, requires time, space and stability, which many families living in flats, temporary accommodation or working multiple jobs may not have. Bowman *et al.*, (2021) add that although Wales has long supply chains and limited local horticulture, local food still has real economic and community value because it supports small Welsh businesses and keeps money within local areas. Community

collaboration such as sharing tools, seeds and produce also makes local food more affordable. This evidence challenges the idea that local food is always more expensive and shows that local food can be cost-effective when communities work together.

Early childhood education plays a vital role in sustainability. Research by Davis (2015) and Elliott *et al.*, (2016) shows that young children learn sustainability best through hands-on experiences. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights how children learn through guidance from more knowledgeable others. Froebel emphasised nature, gardens and outdoor learning as essential for children's development, and growing seasonal produce reflects Froebelian practice by helping children observe natural processes and develop care for living things (D'Ascoli and Hunter, 2022). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) helps explain how children's experiences are shaped by wider systems family habits, supermarket pricing, community initiatives and national policy and early years settings act as a bridge between these systems by modelling sustainable practices and connecting children to local community projects. Elliott and Davis (2024) argue that early childhood education for sustainability should support children to become environmentally responsible citizens through everyday practice, nature connection and climate-aware learning. Elliott (2019) also emphasises that sustainability in early childhood is most effective when embedded in everyday practice through hands-on, community-connected experiences. Adopting a slow pedagogy supports sustainability by encouraging children to take time, notice seasonal rhythms and engage deeply with natural processes; growing food is a powerful example of this kind of slow, meaningful learning.

To respond to these challenges, early years settings can take practical, meaningful steps that help children and families engage with sustainability. Encouraging more community-based initiatives, such as shared growing projects or local allotment groups, can make seasonal produce more accessible and reduce individual costs for families. Strengthening links with local farms and growers gives children authentic experiences of where food comes from and helps them understand seasonal cycles. Replicating home-grown experiences within nurseries for example, growing herbs, vegetables or fruit and sending produce home supports family engagement and

demonstrates that sustainable choices can be simple and achievable. Climate action plans also help settings embed sustainability across teaching, operations and community engagement, ensuring that children learn environmental responsibility through everyday practice. Featherbe, Lloyd-Evans and Moylett (2021) emphasise that developing a culture of sustainability requires whole-setting approaches, leadership commitment and strong community partnerships, reinforcing the importance of these actions. By adopting slow pedagogies, it will support children to reconnect with nature by giving them time to observe, care for and interact with living things, deepening their understanding of sustainability and its interdependence with the wider world. These approaches align with the principles of early childhood education for sustainability by providing hands-on, relational and community-connected learning opportunities that empower children to act as responsible, ethical citizens.

My Part 1 experiences directly respond to these sustainability challenges. Growing seasonal produce using recycled materials helps children understand where food comes from and shows that sustainable choices can be simple and achievable. Visiting Ty Poeth Farm gives children real-world experiences of local food systems and seasonal growing. Creating a sensory farm experience ensures all children can access nature, even if they live in flats or areas with limited outdoor space. Working with community groups such as Zero Waste Torfaen and the Llantarnam Residents Conservation Society helps children understand community action and environmental responsibility. Sharing produce with families supports community resilience and helps families who may not have the time, space or money to grow food themselves. These experiences align with the John Muir Award principles Discover, Explore, Conserve, Share and help children develop environmental awareness, responsibility and connection to nature.

Overall, undertaking experiences such as those in Part 1 provides a strong foundation for early childhood education for sustainability. By engaging children in hands-on, meaningful activities related to food sustainability, practitioners support children's understanding of environmental issues, promote responsible citizenship and align with global and national policy frameworks. Integrating local and seasonal food experiences shows how early years settings can make sustainability accessible,

achievable and connected to children's everyday lives.

References

Agriculture Institute (2025) *How Supermarkets Are Shaping the Marketing of Fresh Produce*. Available at: <https://agriculture.institute/horticulture-agro-forestry-systems/supermarkets-marketing-fresh-produce/> (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

Andrews, E. Sanderson Bellamy, A. and Food Policy Alliance Cymru (2023) 'Putting food in the driver's seat: aligning food-systems policy to advance sustainability, health, and security', *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*. 7 (September) article 1204194. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1204194>

Bowman, A. Froud, J. Johal, S. and Williams, K. (2014) *The end of the experiment? From competition to the foundational economy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

D'Ascoli, H. and Hunter, D. (2022) *Re-engaging with nature: A Froebelian approach*. Available at: https://files.froebel.org.uk/production/documents/FT_Re-engaging-With-Nature_Pamphlet_INTERACTIVE_REV-1.pdf (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

Davis, J. (2015) *Young children and the environment: Early education for sustainability*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Department for Education (2025) *Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sustainability-leadership-and-climate-action-plans-in-education> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024: Contents*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-contents> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Elliott, S. Arlemalm-Hagser, E. and Davis, J. (2016) *Researching early childhood education for sustainability: Challenging assumptions and orthodoxies*. London: Routledge.

Elliott, S. (2019) *Education for sustainability: Pedagogy and Curriculum*. Available at: <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/the-spoke/education-for-sustainability/> (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

Elliott, S. and Davis, J. (2024) *Young Children and the Environment: Early Education for Sustainability*. 3rd edn. Cambridge University Press.

Featherbe, A. Lloyd-Evans, L. and Moylett, H. (2021) 'Chapter 4: Developing a culture of sustainability in ECE', *Early Education*. Available at: <https://early-education.org.uk/chapter-4-developing-a-culture-of-sustainability-in-ece> (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

Food Rise (2018) *Farmers talk food waste: supermarkets' role in crop waste on UK farms*. Available at: https://foodrise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Farm_waste_report_.pdf (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Food Standards Agency (2024) 'The public's interests, needs and concerns around food in Wales', *FSA Research and Evidence*. Available at: <https://science.food.gov.uk/article/138452-the-public-s-interests-needs-and-concerns-around-food-in-wales> (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (2024) *EFRA Committee sets out to examine issues across UK food sector*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/52/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news/204524/efra-committee-sets-out-to-examine-issues-across-uk-food-sector/> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Sustain (2024) *Beyond the farmgate: Unlocking the path to farmer-focused supply chains and climate-friendly, agroecological food systems*. Available at: <https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/beyond-the-farmgate/> (Accessed: 12th July 2026).

Terry, A. (2022) *Benefits of buying local, seasonal and sustainable food*. Available at: <https://onehome.org.uk/topics/food-and-drink/sourcing/nine-benefits-of-buying-local-seasonal-and-sustainable-food/> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

UNESCO (2026) *Education for sustainable development*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education> (Accessed: 9th July 2026).

United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at: (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Vygotsky, L, S (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. London: Harvard University Press.

Wang, Y. Wu, L. Zhao, J. Yu, Yajuan. Huang, K. (2025) 'Navigating the sustainability challenges of food systems: A review of life cycle-based environmental footprints and future directions', *Journal of Environmental Management*. 392. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2025.126794>

Welsh Government (2015) *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2025/2/2/1740501518/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials.pdf> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Welsh Government (2022) *A Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/1f581142-6b91-41e4-845d-3d6c7765df20/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Welsh Government (2022) *Curriculum for Wales: Health and Well-being*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Future*. Available at: <https://www.brundtland.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Brundtland-Report-1987-Our-Common-Future.pdf> (Accessed: 09th July 2026).

Yingli, W. Touboulic, A. and O'Neill, M. (2018) 'An exploration of solutions for improving access to affordable fresh food with disadvantaged Welsh communities', *European Journal of Operational Research*. 268. pp. 1021-1039. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2017.11.065>