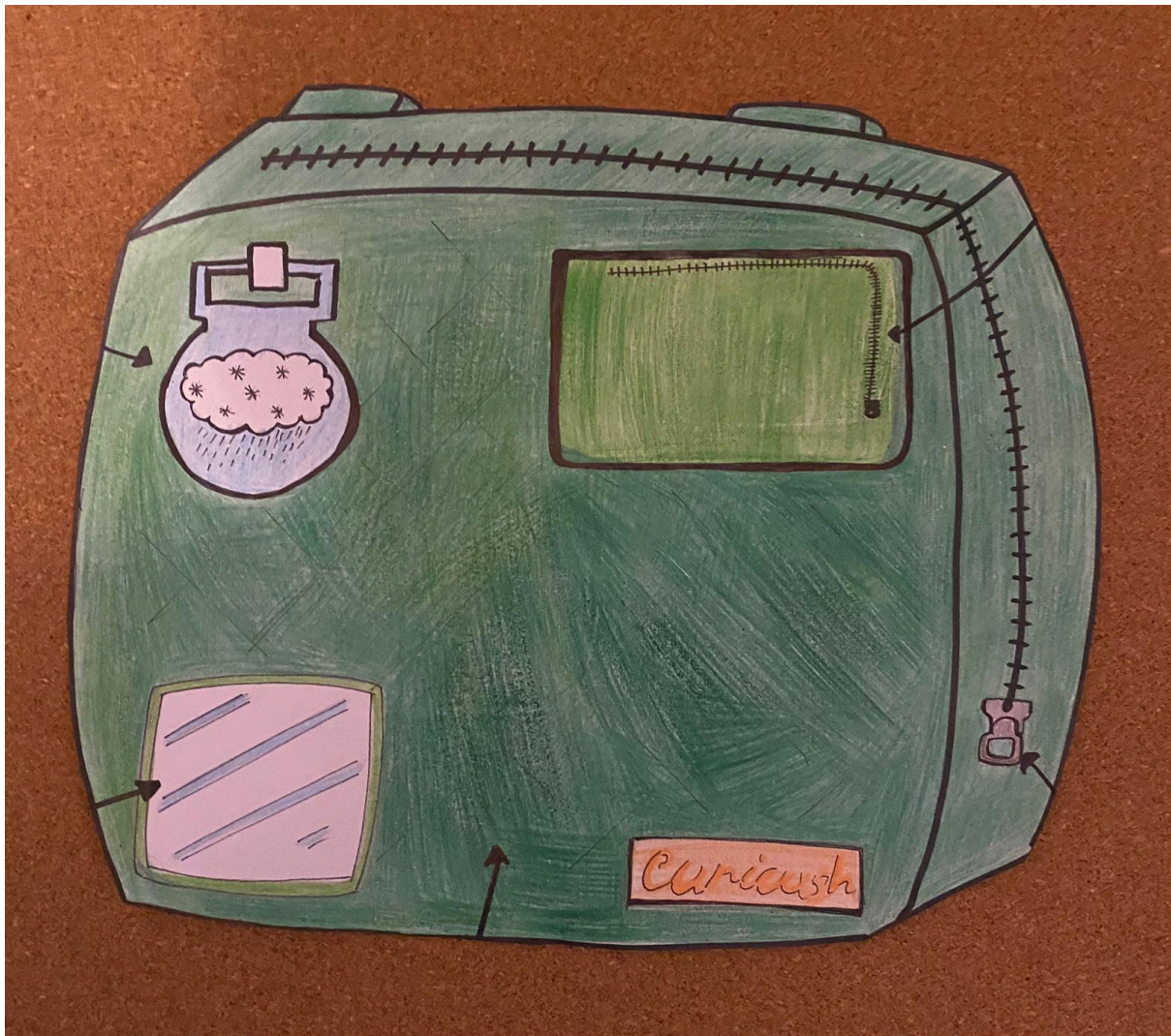


Part one

Curicush



The Curicush. (Parry, 2024a)

.....It's in the bag!!

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Introduction of myself

My name is Rachael, I am a mother of five with a passion for the outdoors. I have worked within The Early Years sector for twenty three years, where I have gained a wealth of hands-on, practical experience. I have worked as a playworker at my current setting for ten years, the last two years I have also enjoyed time in a managerial role.

I have overcome challenges and enjoyed success when I had the opportunity to lead in the implementation of the Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. This is a play based curriculum, focusing on supporting each unique child to learn and develop through their own interests. Outdoor play is a crucial element of the Curriculum. The Welsh Government (2020) states that the outdoors provides opportunities to inspire awe and wonder. Providing rich and authentic opportunities that stimulate the senses, further enhanced by the ever changing weather, sounds, smells and textures that nature has to offer. My passion and belief of the benefits of outdoor learning has been ignited further since studying towards a degree in early education and care. My studies are providing me with invaluable knowledge, information and the confidence to implement ideas to further enhance and support children's learning and development in their crucial early years.

The benefits of the outdoors

Outdoor play is fundamental for young children. When children are given the freedom to engage in play in the natural world, it positively impacts their physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and cognitive development as well as their well-being (Welsh Government, 2020).

The outdoors offers first hand experiences enriched by the wonders of nature, where children can learn through their own curiosities. Ephgrave (2020) believes that Hands-on, purposeful experiences, makes learning more engaging and meaningful and when children are deeply engaged their brain is developing, they are progressing and they are learning. Welsh Government (2020) emphasises the importance of outdoor play in the The Curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings, maintaining that outdoor experiences can inspire awe and wonder, offering rich and authentic opportunities to stimulate the children, enabling exploration and the opportunity to experience and assess risk, which develops their resilience and confidence. With the use of natural and open-ended resources imagination, creativity and curiosity are also developed.

Outdoor play can also provide opportunities for multisensory experiences.



Outdoor fun. (Parry, 2024b)

Froebel was an advocate for outdoor play believing that children do not just learn about nature, they learn through engaging with nature, Likewise Montessori was a proponent of outdoor learning, with the emphasis being on understanding the real

world (Lillard, 2011). Both theorists believed hands-on, active learning was vital for children's learning development.

The benefits of outdoor learning is evident in the growing popularity of forest schools around the world. The forest school movement was influenced by the Froebelian approach. (Tovey, no date). According to Waller *et al* (2017) Forest schools benefit children in a multitude of ways including positive changes in children's self-esteem and confidence, increased concentration and motivation, and developing knowledge and understanding through physical contact with the world. The hands-on learning approach allows children to develop skills that may be difficult to teach in the classroom. Additionally Berg (2024) points out that some children who may struggle being inside can unlock their potential when taken outside.

White (2020) claims that young children love to be outdoors, stating that they need to be outside for a minimum of three hours a day, everyday.

The outdoor environment offers children freedom to explore, experiment and be creative on a bigger scale than is possible in an indoor environment. They can use all of their senses and use their whole body and be more active, noisier and messier. Many children relate better to learning outdoors rather than indoors. Additionally, Hansen Sandseter, Storli and Johan Sando, (2022) state that children are often constrained in their movement and exploration when inside.

According to Maynard and Waters (2014) All children have the right to experience and enjoy the outdoors as playing in an outdoor environment gives children the opportunity to identify their unique skills which lead to meaningful, purposeful experiences. The outdoors is an effective environment to enable all areas of the curriculum to be experienced. Additionally, Bruce (2015) believes that children need to splash in puddles, to dig and explore the properties of mud and to kick leaves. Experiencing the weather is in itself a learning opportunity. Children can enjoy exploring and experimenting with puddles, ice, wind and the natural changes in the environment the seasons bring. According to Knight (2011) practitioners have a duty to enable children to go out in the rain and for them to discover how to deal with the conditions that come with the rain.



Teamwork (Parry, 2024c)



Collaboration (Parry, 2024d)



Mud kitchen (Parry, 2024e)

The Inspiration



Warming hands (Parry, 2024f)

The inspiration for my idea came from my experience in practice and the want to keep the children outside for longer periods of time, whatever the weather. We do not want children, staff or parents to see the weather as a barrier to the opportunities available from playing outside. I recognised that the cold can have a negative impact on some of the children after a period of time. I introduced 'a warm hand box' to the children at our setting. The warm hand box is simply a box containing hot water bottles wrapped in blankets. I witnessed that this simple opportunity for the children to warm their hands enabled play to continue for longer. Further thought led me to The Curicush.

The product

The Curicush is a lightweight, waterproof, practical bag that doubles as a cushion, storing items that will keep the children warm and therefore outside for longer. The stylish bag has two padded straps, meaning children can carry the Curicush on their backs or hang it on a nearby tree or fence. Unzipping the chunky, sturdy zip reveals the contents.

Contents includes;

Waterproofs mittens,

Hand Warmers,

A neckwarmer

And a small cotton bag.

- ☐ Mittens to warm little hands, mittens tend to be warmer than gloves as fingers are less exposed, and they're easier for smaller children to put on without needing assistance.
- ☐ A neck warmer is practical as they keep the chill from the children's necks and stay in place.
- ☐ Reusable hand warmers are perfect for particularly cold days.
- ☐ A small cotton bag may be used to pack up wet, muddy items ready to wash or to collect treasures found on adventures.
- ☐ There is space to store additional resources such as mark making items or a drinks bottle or tissues for example.

The Curicush is waterproof to ensure items inside are protected from the elements. The children can sit on the Curicush when in the den that they have just constructed or when mark making, kneel on when digging or mixing up their mudpies or maybe rest their heads when quietly watching the clouds pass by.

On the front of the Curicush is a window for children to slot in a tag that they can design. This will enable them to recognise their own belongings with ease. There is also a reflective keyring attached to add a little extra little detail.

The Curicush is made of PVC fabric which is flexible, waterproof and is hard wearing.

There is a range of designs available. The designs are simple, yet attractive and fun.



Available designs. (Parry, 2024g)

Benefits of the Product

Having read the benefits of outdoor play I hope this makes clear that the time children spend in the outdoor environment is fundamental and has a multitude of benefits that the Curicush supports, impacting positively on their wellbeing, learning and development of children.

Most young children require some assistance dressing appropriately for the outdoors. At an early years setting, precious time is taken as practitioners try to assist multiple children to change into items such as wellies, coats, hats, scarves and gloves. The smooth transition between environments and engagement in play can unfortunately be disrupted.

The solution?.....The Curicush!

If each child had a Curicush on their individual peg, they would be free to explore the rich outdoor environment with less time and disruption and have easy, instant access to their warming items when they need them.

By being aware of how outdoor conditions are making them feel and how they can solve the problems that come with this, the children's self awareness, self care and independence are all encouraged. Wellbeing will be positively impacted as children enjoy the sense of pride that comes from recognising a personal problem and solving it independently. This supports the aim of the Welsh Government to nurture children who are ambitious, capable learners ready to explore and learn throughout their lives.

Target audience

The target audience for the Curicush are early years settings who value the wonders of the outdoors whatever the weather. There are over 14,000 registered early years settings in the United Kingdom, 368 of which in Wales alone (Livesey, 2024). These figures show just how many children could benefit. Early years practitioners who purchase The Curicush for children at their settings will be providing children with a practical tool to enable them to enjoy play, discovery and experimentation in the outdoor environment for longer periods of time. Supporting Independent, resilient children who can comfortably and confidently engage at deeper levels in meaningful, purposeful play opportunities in the outdoor environment.

The short term goal is to manufacture and begin supplying The Curicush to settings within Wales.

The long term goal is for The Curicush to be a staple product at early years settings around the world.

Cost

Production of the bag including the contents will cost £15.00 per unit. The recommended retail price will be £50.00 per unit. I would like to offer early years settings placing bulk orders at a discount of 10%. Even with this discount I expect the profit to be £30.00 per unit. I believe with further investment and as the brand grows the product could be manufactured at a lower cost therefore increasing profit margins.

I have set up my business as a sole trader as this offers more flexibility in regard to decision making. I have raised enough capital to produce 500 units at a cost of £7500 leaving £2500 for costs to include, marketing, advertising and deliveries. I am looking for an investment to mass produce the Curicush and provide children around the world with just what they need to stay warm and comfortable so that they can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors for as long as they wish.

I strongly believe that this product will enhance the early years sector. The benefits for children are clear. I believe the Curicush will save early years practitioners valuable time and also offer greater opportunity for observations, and teachable moments to benefit even further. By offering a bulk discount to early years settings it is not only a small incentive for settings to purchase a higher volume but also gives me an opportunity to give a little back to my passions that are children, the early years sector and the great outdoors.

Curicush.....It's in the bag!

Part two

The product has been designed as a result of reflection in regard to challenges faced in practice. The aim is to enable all children quality time playing and learning in the outdoors, whatever the weather.

The changeable weather conditions and differing climates should not be a barrier to outdoor play. There is no such thing as bad weather, It is important that children and adults alike dress appropriately for adverse weather conditions. Some children do attend settings with inappropriate or inadequate clothing for the colder temperatures. This may be due to a lack of knowledge or understanding in regard to the importance of time outdoors, or the amount of time children should spend outside. White (2019) explains that the weather can pose challenges to outdoor play. Extreme temperatures, rain, snow and strong winds can all make it uncomfortable for the children to play outside. Finding ways to embrace the weather conditions can teach children to be resilient and adaptable. Children can boost their immune systems and experience and appreciate nature in all its forms.

Financial implications of families providing items for their children could form another barrier to outside play. Settings who provide the Curricush for children at their setting are helping families with financial concerns and breaking down a barrier for children, enabling them to experience the stimulating outdoor environment. Maynard and Waters (2014) suggests that the inclement weather should be accepted and embraced, however this isn't always accepted in the United Kingdom. Light showers and cold temperatures are often perceived as reasons to avoid time outdoors.

Providing children with the clothing and resources to be prepared and comfortable makes it possible for children to engage positively with the environment, gaining a sense of the changing seasons, time of day and the weather first hand.

Deep learning experiences are offered to children by enabling them to recognise what cold feels like, to think and understand how to deal with it. By being outside in all seasons the children learn to value the difference in each season and appreciate what each contributes to our environment. The product provides children with items that provide warmth when needed, the children can recognise the feelings of cold and react to it appropriately. The child should experience nature in all its aspects. (Froebel, 1967)

Cost to settings in the initial outlay when purchasing enough of the product for all children is a potential barrier. The product offers value for money as all of the items are reusable, durable and beneficial to the children. The fact that this product enables extended time in the outdoors, promoting children's learning and development and also saving practitioners precious time, arguably makes the product priceless.

Mariotti and Glackin (2016) explain that an entrepreneur is a person who has recognised an opportunity to set up a new business to be successful. The individual should be passionate, creative, motivated and independent. Additionally, Pakroo (2020) informs that a business plan should show that the product is just what the consumer will want to purchase and also that the entrepreneur is the right person to ensure success. Princes trust enterprise programme (No date) sets out a clear template that can be used when drawing up a business plan.

When marketing and advertising the product It is important to understand what influences individuals buying decisions. Passion and first hand experiences from practice offers valuable information and insight into what could benefit children and practitioners in the early years and how to deliver the right marketing message to the target audience. The unique selling points of the Curicush include the high quality complete set. The contents could be purchased separately, potentially at a lesser quality and cost. Market research has been carried out and a cushioned bag with the warming contents designed and created by an early years practitioner is not available anywhere else, making the Curicush truly unique.

The target audience will be reached via Social media, a cost effective and entertaining way to reach a large audience to advertise the practical play resource that could change practice for the better. A brochure introducing the product alongside its benefits would be sent to early years settings, with a follow up telephone call or a personal visit to provide further information about the product and its unique selling points. Engagement with potential customers through a variety of channels aims to build relationships, trust and loyalty which could potentially lead to sales. The customer service will be of excellent quality, customers will receive a positive experience dealing with the Curicush brand.

In the search for information to implement a successful marketing strategy the concept known as the four P's. Product, price, plan and promotion are key factors that can influence consumers buying decisions. (50minutes, 2015)

According to Kotler *et al.* (2016) building brand awareness is a key factor when the aim is to successfully market a new product.

The burnt orange Curicush logo is distinctive. The "It's in the bag" strap line is simple and catchy. There is also potential for further development of this product. Early years settings may be interested in providing children with a "A Curicase" This is a A wooden locker, coat peg and welly peg that could be manufactured and installed at settings to store the practical items that support outdoor learning. This idea comes at a greater cost than the Curicush, this would be a long term permanent fixture installed in settings. Children learn to appreciate and care for their belongings by storing them in their own locker readily accessible when needed. The idea of a "Curicwtch" may also be of interest to settings who value their outdoor environment. Warming equipment and opportunities could be provided and based at the purpose built, sheltered area .

Curicush.....It's in the bag!

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