

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Bil arfaethedig – Bil Addysg Awyr Agored \(Cymru\)](#) | [Proposed Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

Ymateb gan Chris Near, Educational Visits Adviser, | Evidence from Chris Near, Educational Visits Adviser,

Are you (your organisation) currently a provider of outdoor education?: No

Your opinion

How important is outdoor education to children and young people's overall education and development?

Very important

What are the main benefits to children and young people from having a residential outdoor education experience?

Residential provision of Outdoor Education is one of the highest impact models in education and is often the most memorable event during the time at school . By providing challenging activities away from home it is possible to develop Resilience , Independence , Communication skills , Growth Mindset and better interaction with others. It can show the positive benefits of physical activity to both physical and mental health . In a post-pandemic (and new Welsh Curriculum) world this is a double win as increased academic achievement and long-term health can be addressed through these visits . A residential visit within Wales can further foster a care and greater understanding of the country .

Should children and young people have a guaranteed opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years, if they wish to?

Yes

Should an opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years, be free of charge on one occasion to pupils?

Yes

What are the main barriers which you believe currently exist to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education experiences?

Financial constraints;

Equality Considerations: Could the proposed Bill have any positive impacts on some children and young people in particular? If so, who and why?

YES

During the pandemic , some families had access to rural areas and had the opportunity to undertake outdoor learning with families . Those that did not have this opportunity got left further behind . The equality gap widened . Post-pandemic we have seen peoples real-term incomes decrease and so these

valuable experiences can often not be afforded . And yet, it is for these less fortunate families that these experiences are so valuable and hard-hitting .

Equality Considerations: Could the proposed Bill have any negative impacts on some children and young people in particular. If so, who and why? What could this Bill do to mitigate any negative impacts?

NO

All children in Wales should have these opportunities - not just those that can afford them . Lots of LA's used to run a remission of fees scheme for lower-income families . Many LA's have now got rid of this facility - this has further added to a gap in equality .

What age do you believe is most suitable for children and young people to be offered an opportunity to undertake a residential outdoor education experience?

Year 6 (age 10-11)

Is four nights/five days the best length for a residential outdoor experience?

Yes

Please explain your answer and highlight any possible implications from having a standard approach of four night/five day experiences (whether positive or negative).

Having worked in residential outdoor education for 30 years (although i write this as an Educational Visits Adviser) i speak from experience here . We used to run almost entirely 5 day (4 night) courses . These were incredibly high impact and without doubt better than shorter courses that have become the norm these days . But , these were predominantly Secondary age pupils and top juniors . There would be issues with capacity to provide for a 5 day course for all pupils . We now run mainly 3 day (2Night) courses and , as our schools come from within Wales there is not a huge travel distance / time . One alternative approach would be to have 2 x 2 Night residential at Primary level . Post Pandemic we have seen a massive increase in pupils with anxieties so possibly a 4 night course may be tough for some .

Do you agree there is a need for legislation to ensure all children and young people are given an opportunity to access a residential outdoor education experience, at some stage during their school years?

Strongly agree

Is there anything else you would like to say about this proposal?

This is an opportunity to lead the way in the UK . This Bill seeks to raise academic achievement (appetite for learning) , make strong links to the natural landscape of Wales , provide long term health benefits - physical and mental (and therefore reduce the burden on the NHS in Wales) & give pupils the personal , social and teamworking skills that are demanded by both the Welsh Curriculum and future employers in Wales