

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil Addysg Awyr Agored Breswyl \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Residential Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

ROE 08

Ymateb gan: Undeb Addysg Cenedlaethol (NEU)

Response from: National Educational Union Cymru (NEU)

Residential Outdoor Education Bill NEU Cymru Stage 1 Briefing

NEU Cymru supports the Residential Outdoor Education Bill in principle.

NEU Cymru agrees with the aims of the Bill and believes that cost to a family should be no barrier to children being able to attend Residential Outdoor Education.

To support our Oral evidence to Children, Young People and Education Committee we wish to provide the following briefing, which summarises our key points:

Benefits

We believe that residential outdoor education can be beneficial to children and have a range of benefits – we agree with those benefits as identified in the Explanatory Memorandum¹ to the Bill.

We believe that this offer could particularly benefit those children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who otherwise may be unable to afford a residential school trip.

Outdoor education has a range of benefits, and should be seen as enriching the opportunities for learning for all children in school. We especially welcome the reference to disabled children and those with additional learning needs, who may find the accessibility of school residential trips more difficult.

¹ <https://senedd.wales/media/kdzlomeq/pri-ld16167-em-e.pdf>

Barriers

There are a range of barriers to implementation of this Bill, as tabled, which we have set out below.

Funding

School budgets are already under significant challenge. We would be concerned that any additional costs associated with this Bill be met by the government, and go to the local authorities in the form of hypothecated/ specific grant funding, as it cannot come from existing school budgets.

Additional items

We are concerned that the cost of a school trip is not simply the cost of the trip itself, and some children may not be able to access their entitlement without additional clothing, and other equipment, such as a sleeping bag.

We understand that Outdoor Education providers are likely to provide equipment – such as buoyancy aids and hard-hats, but an outdoor education trip requires a significant amount of suitable clothing and other items, such as a bag. Our members tell us not all children will not necessarily have access to these.

We would recommend that eligibility for support for additional suitable items should be those children whose parents are on Universal Credit – eligibility for those who get the School Essentials Grant is very minimal at this stage. We don't believe that the School Essentials Grant should be used to pay for any extras needed without increasing the grant itself – otherwise this would be a cut to the Grant, which is needed by families on a low income to buy uniform.

Workload

We believe there could be significant extra workload impact with implementation of this Bill – especially around tracking of the children to see whether they have already had access to their funded residential trip.

We know that many school staff do not get the time back for attending a residential trip – we believe they should be able to get this time back as a minimum, and should be paid for any extra hours worked.

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

We have concerns that children within EOTAS provision are excluded from the offer. Children who attend Pupil Referral Units, for example, will often be on roll at a mainstream school. They should therefore have access to this offer, regardless to whether the curriculum has been disapplied.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

We believe that the Equality Act should mean that residential outdoor education experiences are accessible to disabled children. However, we do believe that disabled children and those with additional learning needs may need extra support – including medical support – for overnight stays. If this Bill amends the Curriculum and Assessment Act, it should also mean that explicit reference is made in a child’s individual development plan (IDP), to what support they will need to undertake a residential trip. Any extra costs should not be met by the school.

Other issues

Members tell us that there are a range of other barriers which could prevent children from attending overnight stays, and these are often more complex for children from the most disadvantaged families, and certain groups. These will include those children with caring responsibilities for example, as many children are young carers – will there be money available for respite care for family members, and how will this be accessed, to enable children to go on a residential trip without leaving their family member(s) without appropriate care?

Suggested amendments

Some critical amendments are suggested below.

Amend – “MUST make provision in respect of schools’ staff costs in respect of residential outdoor education; and **(71,3,(h)).”**

Reason - We believe that Welsh Government must make provision in respect to school budgets. School budgets are already under significant strain, so funding for this must be clear and distinct.

Insert new provision – “(71,3, (i)) Must undertake a workload impact assessment for staff in schools and set out steps to mitigate any adverse impacts, in respect of residential outdoor education; and”

Reason - We are concerned that significant amounts of workload will be created by this legislation.

Amend - 64A (3) A course of residential outdoor education **MAY** be comprised of at least four nights and five days stay in residential accommodation.

Reason - We believe this will allow greater flexibility for those children who do not want – for mental health or other reasons – to stay away from home for more than one or two nights, for example.

Unintended consequences

There are a range of unintended consequences from this legislation which need further clarification. Whilst we recognise that this is framework legislation, there will be significant workload implications for schools, if further information is not provided.

Other School Trips

The biggest issue appears to be whether ALL Residential Outdoor Education, which is in line with the Curriculum for Wales, will be considered within scope of this Bill.

For example, if a child has already had their entitlement – e.g. has been on a week's long school trip, in year 6 - are they able to go on a further curriculum related trip – e.g. a geography field trip in year 9? Or do trips which are not part of the curriculum, and are outside scope of the Bill, only count as those which they are able to otherwise attend?

Tracking

It is not clear how children's entitlement will be tracked and paid for.

E.g. – children will move between schools and may move between authorities – does their entitlement move with them? Who will be responsible for tracking this information? This would be a significant extra workload if passed to schools.

Contact

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