

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Bil arfaethedig – Bil Addysg Awyr Agored (Cymru) | Proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan Sian Wilkinson, Headteacher, | Evidence from Sian Wilkinson, Headteacher,

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?

1. The benefits of being in the outdoors has a huge impact on wellbeing - biophilia. Playing and learning in a natural environment, connecting with animals and other species. Helps children to be ready to learn by grounding them emotionally to the natural world around them, providing them with an opportunity to reflect and to completely immerse themselves in their learning. Also develops a sense of awe and wonder.
2. Lifts their eyes above their current horizons, offering them an alternative to what they know and possible aspirations. Can break generational cycles and show children what is out there. What other things they could do, the other ways that different people live etc. Possibly give them a sense of freedom and perhaps being someone else.
3. Initiative and autonomy can develop in an outdoor environment. Staff and children can work alongside one another in a non-threatening way. The joy in seeing a child's realisation that "I can do this", "I just did that". Could be traversing a climbing wall, making a packed lunch, helping another child. It can build confidence and lessen anxiety. Remove the fear of making a mistake

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?

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds / children who have suffered trauma - reducing stress, building confidence, giving an outlet for nurturing capabilities.

Children with disabilities - developing a sense of belonging to a group - we did this together etc

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

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?

Younger (please state below)

Across the primary age range from ages 7/8 upwards

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

No

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

From experience, 4 nights can be a little too long away from home, even for children aged 10-11.

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?

Agree

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

Outdoor education residential trips have become a casualty of Covid and school budget cuts. It is right that it should be at the top of a "Things to do" list for primary aged children to tick off before they transfer to high school.

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