

OE-016 - Estyn

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

Ymateb gan Estyn | Evidence from Estyn

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

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**Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response**

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<b>Dyddiad / Date:</b>	17.03.23
<b>Pwnc / Subject:</b>	<b>Consultation on the Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill</b>

**Background information about Estyn**

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Tertiary Education and Research Act 2022 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, all age schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

## Response

### Introduction

We broadly support the aim of the Bill to make residential outdoor education an entitlement as there will be many benefits for learners.

Currently, schools in more affluent areas are twice as likely to offer such experiences, and legislation will help to address this significant inequity and enhance the education experience for learners from low-income households in Wales in particular.

We think that further consideration could be given to the wording of the entitlement to take account of factors affecting both learners and schools.

### Are you submitting this response in a professional or personal capacity?:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Professional capacity (including on behalf of an organisation)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Personal capacity</b>
Are you responding on behalf of an organisation? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Age: <input type="checkbox"/> I am under 13 years old <input type="checkbox"/> I am aged 13 to 17 <input type="checkbox"/> I am aged 18 or over and wish my contribution to be anonymised <input type="checkbox"/> I am aged 18 or over and happy for my name to be published with my contribution
Are you (your organisation) currently a provider of outdoor education? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	In what capacity are you responding? <input type="checkbox"/> Child / Young person <input type="checkbox"/> Parent / Carer <input type="checkbox"/> Other

If professional, or a provider of outdoor education, your role and the name of organisation for which you are responding:

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## Consultation questions

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

- Very important
- Quite important
- Don't know
- Not very important
- Not at all important

2. What are the main benefits to children and young people from having a residential outdoor education experience? Please list your top three benefits:

Becker et al carried out a meta-study of research into the effectiveness of outdoor learning and found that all but 13 of 7830 studies 'suffer from poor study design and lack of methodological rigour'<sup>1</sup>. From the available, reliable evidence, Jucker and von Au recently concluded that 'outdoor learning ... cumulatively promotes learning processes and health on seven different levels:

- Academic learning success: better recall of learning content, improved language competence (reading, writing, talking to adults, vocabulary), better solving of complex, interconnected tasks, better reasoning and analytical skills.
- Social competencies: strengthened social interaction, cohesion and trust between teachers and students, positive socio-emotional development, bearing in mind that a functioning learning community between teachers and students is a central condition for successful learning.
- Self-competencies: Increased intrinsic motivation and willingness to learn, higher concentration, fewer disciplinary problems, high self-efficacy experience through discovery, experience-based and action-oriented learning, building a sense of identity, develop pro-social behaviour and personal executive functioning through risk-taking.
- Physical and mental health: Teachers and learners are significantly more in motion, which makes learning more successful and makes learning content available in the long term, training of gross and fine motor skills, easier access to daylight and fresh air than in classrooms, emotional and behavioural problems as well as hyperactivity are significantly reduced, especially in boys.
- Real-world learning: Rich and meaningful learning in real-world situations, different learning spaces serve the diverse learning needs of children in a variety of ways, which is more and more important in increasingly diverse classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, C., Lauterbach, G., Spengler, S., Dettweiler, U., & Mess, F. (2017). Effects of regular classes in outdoor education settings: A systematic review on students' learning, social and health dimensions. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(5), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14050485>

- Twenty-first century skills: Communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, creativity, critical thinking, resilience, self-regulation, dealing with the unexpected and complexity thinking are fostered.
- Familiarity with nature: Being close to nature and constructively dealing with the destruction of nature leads to increased environmental awareness and sustainable action.<sup>2</sup>

These benefits are not ranked in order and will be dependent on, for example, the context of a residential outdoor education experience, the activities involved and the age and stage of development of the learner. Irrespective of the success or otherwise of this Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill, it's worth noting that many of these benefits can be gained through day visits and through regular use of the outdoors as the context for learning.

The proposal sets out how it supports the delivery of Curriculum for Wales, and we agree with this.

3. 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
- No
- Don't know

4. 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
- No
- Don't know

5. What are the main barriers which you believe currently exist to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education experiences? (please tick all that apply)

- Financial constraints
- Health reasons
- Disabilities
- Additional Learning Needs
- Parental anxiety/uncertainty
- Child anxiety/uncertainty
- Other (Please state) The first barrier is the absence of opportunity provided by a school for pupils to access residential outdoor education experiences

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<sup>2</sup> Jucker, R. and von Au, J. (Editors) (2022). High-Quality Outdoor Learning: Evidence-based Education Outside the Classroom for Children, Teachers and Society, p11-12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04108-2>

- None

#### 6. Equalities considerations:

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

The positive impacts identified in question 2 will be relevant for all children. Some groups of children, for example those from low-income families, may have less experiences outside of school that might have similar positive impacts.

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?

There are no known negative impacts of residential outdoor education experiences, apart from any residual risk inherent with activities undertaken. Outdoor activities must be risk-assessed and led by suitably qualified and licensed providers.

There would potentially be a negative impact on learners who are unable to participate in the residential outdoor education experiences alongside their peers. Schools will need to ensure that residential outdoor education experiences do not exclude any learners because of a disability, health condition, additional learning need or behaviour record unless this goes against professional advice.

7. 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)
- Younger (please state)
- Older (please state)
- Not at any age

The benefits of residential outdoor education experiences are not exclusive to a particular age group. The benefits for learners will vary by their stage of development.

For example, one study highlights the benefits of using residential outdoor education experiences at the start of Year 7. Allan found 'Compared to school-based induction activities for year 7 pupils, outdoor residential which focus upon the skills needed for life in secondary school deliver the strongest scale of change in pupils' psychological wellbeing.'<sup>3</sup>

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

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

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<sup>3</sup> Allan, J., McKenna, J., Buckland, H., Bell, R. (2014) Getting the right fit: Tailoring outdoor adventure residential experiences for the transition of schoolchildren, *Physical Education Matters*, 8, 37-42.

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

Requiring a single experience of four nights could be limiting. It could seem like too long a period away from home for learners who haven't previously stayed away from home and who struggle with trauma or anxiety. Also, it may be hard for schools to organise a full week rather than a shorter stay, partly because of the impact on staff.

A separate issue with a general requirement for one stay of four nights at any age is that as most providers of primary and secondary education are governed independently of each other, there could be disagreement about which provider should be offering the residential experience.

One alternative option would be to require a minimum free experience during primary years of two nights/three days and a minimum free experience during secondary years of two nights/three days.

This would still ensure that all learners had access to four nights of residential outdoor education experiences during their school career, but might make these experiences more accessible to all learners, easier for schools to organise and involve both primary and secondary schools in integrating residential outdoor learning experiences into their curriculum.

9. 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
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The explanatory note to the Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill highlights that, based on data from Outdoor Education Association Panel Cymru, 'double the percentage of children who live in the most affluent local authorities attend an Outdoor Education residential visit compared to those pupils in the local authorities with the highest levels of deprivation'. A significant benefit of legislation is to address this notable inequity and the particularly positive impact it will have for learners from low-income households.

Speaking about the affordability of residential trips to WalesOnline in 2022, Chief Inspector Owen Evans said: "I would say do these things, but enable all to go."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [Parents' despair over expensive school trips that divide children and leave too many missing out - Wales Online](#) (21 June 2022)

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

Our inspection reports often refer positively to the impact of 'trips' but this includes day trips and is not exclusively related to residential outdoor education. The couple of examples below may be of interest.

[Crwys Primary School](#) in Swansea has a very positive report about outdoor learning generally as well as the use of residential. It was the first school to win an award for its work in this area and features in research by Swansea University's Happen project.

[Cowbridge Comprehensive School](#) is highlighted for the way it pays for every eFSM learner to participate in a residential trip free of charge.