

Summary of consultation on proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

May 2023

Sam Rowlands MS

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1. Introduction

This document summarises the response to the consultation on Sam Rowlands MS's proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill (the Bill) which ran from 31 January to 17 March 2023.

Responses were received from **175 organisations and individuals**. Further detail on those who responded can be seen in Section 3 of this summary.

This document is not intended to be an exhaustive account of every comment received. It summarises the key issues raised that are directly focused on the policy objectives of the proposed Bill. The respondents' full comments can be found in their submission documents.

2. Main messages

There is a **very significant level of support for the principles** behind the proposal:

- Everyone responding agrees that outdoor education is important to children and young people's overall education and development (94% saying Very important).
- The vast majority believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity to participate in residential outdoor education (only 3% said No).
- A large majority (85%) believe this guaranteed opportunity should be free of charge at least once (6% said No, 9% said Don't know).
- 84% agree with the need for the Bill (9% disagree, 7% are neutral).

11 of the 175 responses (**6% disagreed with the principles** behind the proposal. 7 of these were head teachers, while another was the union, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT). Those in disagreement predominantly gave the following **reasons** (section 5 of this briefing summarises these more fully):

- Concern that funding will be diverted away from schools' core budgets, which they believe should be the priority for any available spending on education.

- Staffing implications if this is made statutory – having sufficient numbers of school staff to accompany pupils and the impact and pressure on those that are willing to go.
- Fears that schools will not receive funding for the full costs of the staffing requirements – either paying overtime to those supervising visits or sourcing supply cover during their absence.

The **most commonly identified benefits** of residential outdoor experience were increased confidence, independence and team-work skills; improved health and well-being; and positive connections to, and understanding of, the natural environment.

The **most commonly identified barrier at present** to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education was financial constraints. Other frequently identified barriers were parental and child anxiety/uncertainty.

While around half of responses agreed with the preference given in the question to Year 6 being the most suitable age, there was **quite a strong indication that there is no optimum age**, that it depends on several factors and it is **probably best not to prescribe an age**.

Similarly, while around half of responses agreed with the preference given in the question to four nights/five days, there was **quite a strong indication that the most suitable duration depends on several factors and it might be best not to prescribe** how long experiences should last.

Asked to identify **which groups of children might particularly benefit** from the proposal, respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring quality and access by all. They particularly identified children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) or disabilities, ethnic minorities and those who struggle in a traditional classroom environment.

Asked to identify **which groups of children might be negatively affected** by the proposal, respondents most commonly identified children with anxiety. This also extended to children whose parents may have anxiety about their child attending a residential visit. Appropriate support measures, which may include extra staff to support children, were highlighted as essential to help children with anxiety. Nevertheless, the right of parents and children to opt out of residential outdoor education is seen as important. As well as children with anxiety, pupils with ALN or disabilities were identified as possibly negatively affected, either if

inclusivity is not embedded into the visits they do go on, inappropriate support measures during their visit or from alienation if they do not go.

While broadly supportive of the principles behind the proposal, there were **many observations of matters respondents believe require further consideration**. These include:

- Staffing implications if this is made a statutory requirement.
- Whether this should be a universal free entitlement or whether resources should instead be targeted at those who face specific barriers such as low income households.
- Seeing residential outdoor education not just a one-off but something that is consolidated with lead-up and follow-up activities and learning.
- The quality of provision and how appropriate standards will be ensured.
- The capacity of the sector and the arrangements in place (including governance and funding) between the Welsh Government, local government and providers.
- The range and diversity of outdoor education provided, recognising that children and young people have different needs and interests.
- The practicalities and importance of meeting some pupils' complex needs, for example those with medical, emotional or learning needs, or disabilities.
- Whether outdoor education necessarily needs to be residential and how it can also be embedded within school and community life.
- How the proposed Bill can complement the promotion of the Welsh language and culture, including increasing opportunities for children and young people to hear and speak Welsh.

3. Who responded?

There were 175 responses – 141 via the online survey form and 34 submitted via e-mail. (Other than a few, the e-mail responses still followed the question format, just the method of submission was different.)

Of the 175 responses, 133 were in a professional capacity and 42 were in a personal capacity.

Of the 133 responses in a professional capacity, 84 were on behalf of an organisation. 49 were as an individual.

Of the 84 responses on behalf of an organisation, 32 were from outdoor education providers while 52 were not. Of the 49 responding in a professional capacity but as an individual, 17 were outdoor education providers while 32 were not.

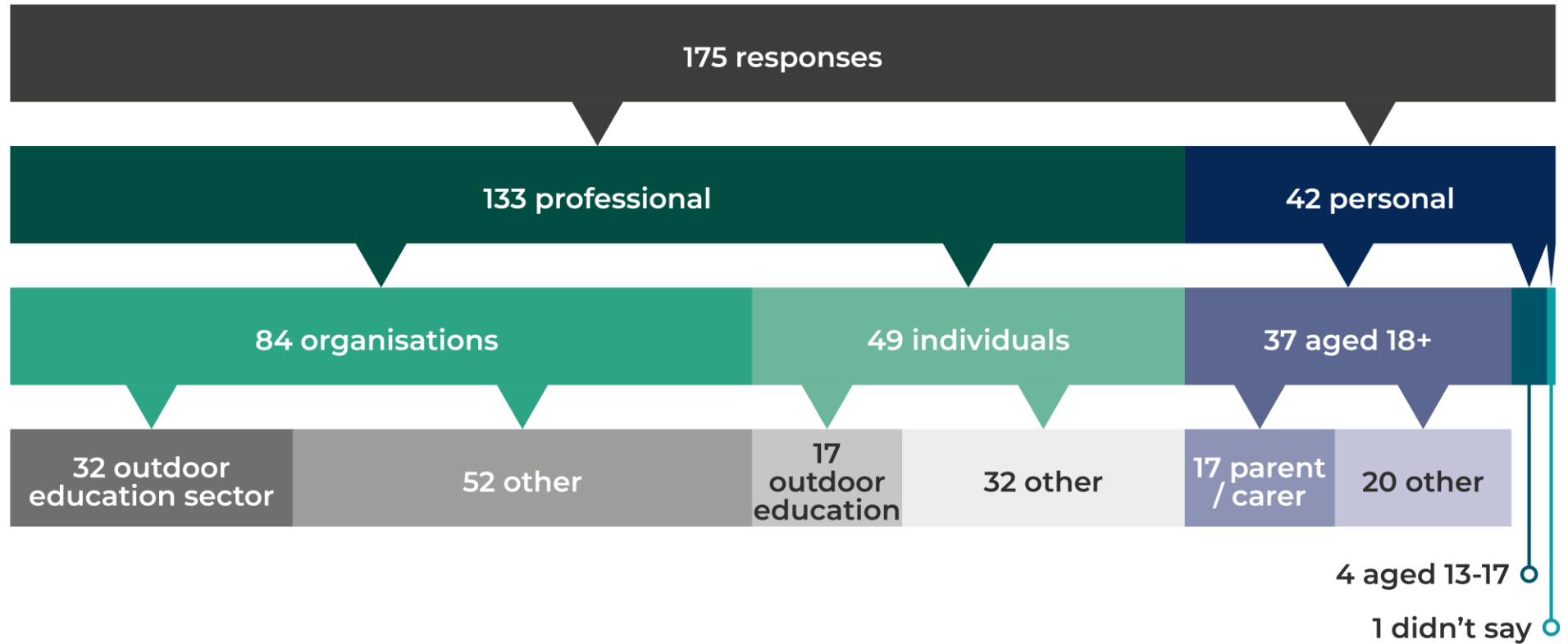
So of the 133 responses in a professional capacity, 49 were from the outdoor education sector while 84 were not.

Of the 42 responses in a personal capacity, 4 were aged 13-17, 37 were aged 18 or over, and one did not state their age.

Of the 37 adults, 17 responded as a parent/carer and 20 responded from another perspective.

In total, 49 of the 175 responses were from the outdoor education sector.

Who responded?

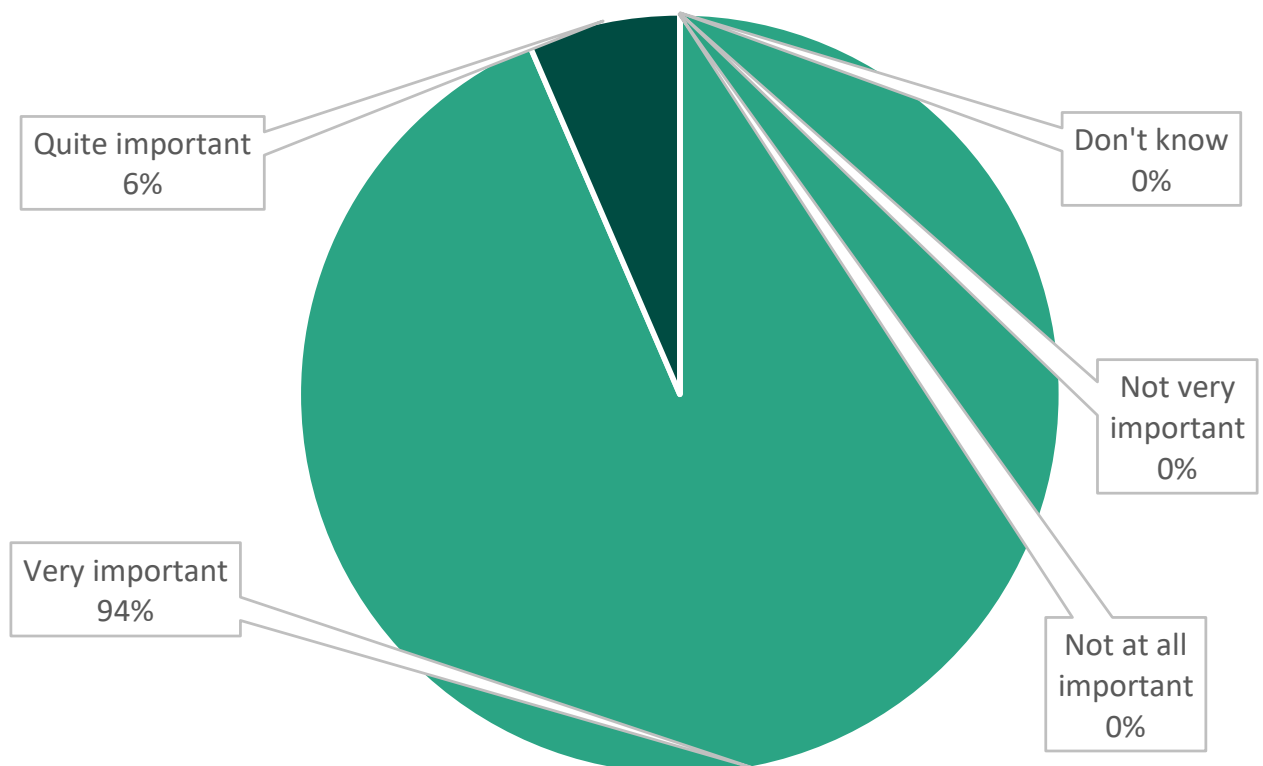


4. The main principles behind the proposal (Questions 1,3,4,9)

How important is outdoor education to children and young people's overall education and development? (Q1)

All responses (170 responses)

- Very important 159 (94%)
- Quite important 11 (6%)
- Don't know 0
- Not very important 0
- Not at all important 0



Responses from the outdoor education sector (48)

- Very important 47 (98%)
- Quite important 1 (2%)
- Don't know 0
- Not very important 0
- Not at all important 0

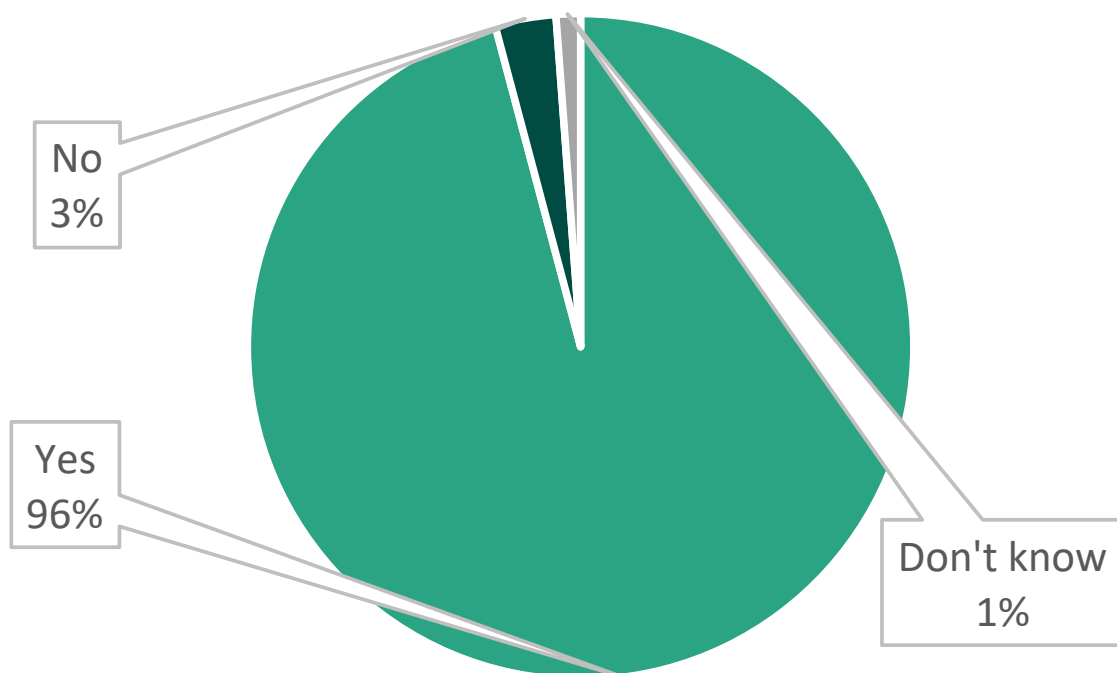
Responses not from the outdoor education sector (122 responses)

- Very important 112 (92%)
- Quite important 10 (8%)
- Don't know 0
- Not very important 0
- Not at all important 0

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? (Q3)

All responses (170 responses)

- Yes 163 (96%)
- No 5 (3%)
- Don't know 2 (1%)



Responses from the outdoor education sector (49)

- Yes 48 (98%)
- No 0
- Don't know 1 (2%)

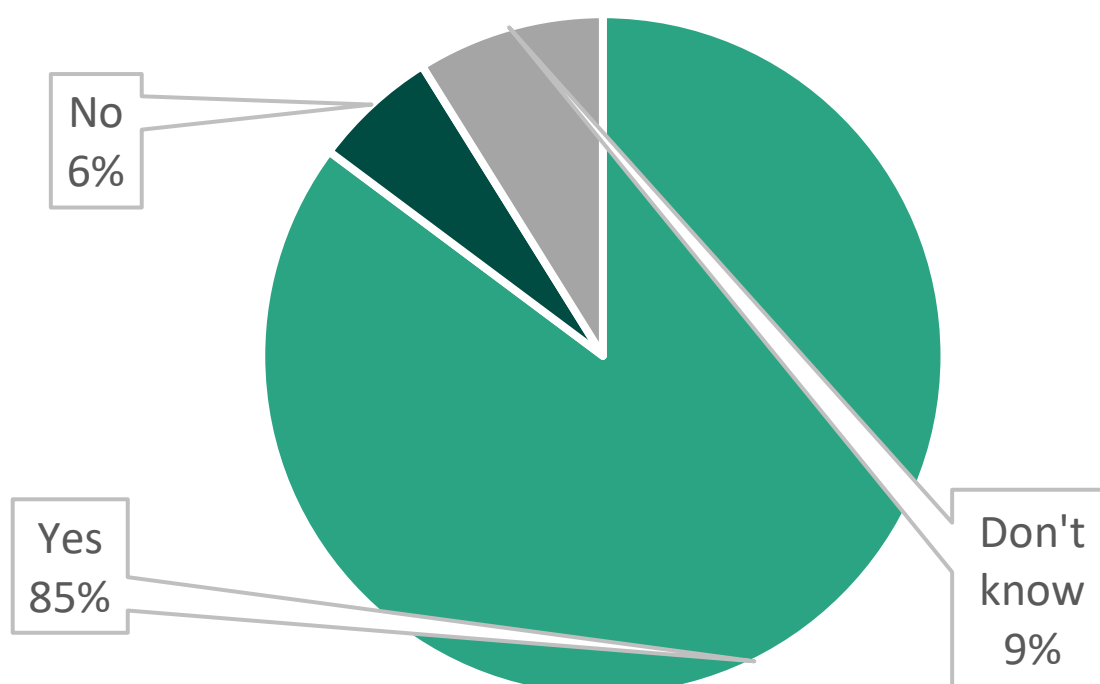
Responses not from the outdoor education sector (121)

- Yes 115 (95%)
- No 5 (4%)
- Don't know 1 (1%)

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? (Q4)

All responses (170 responses)

- Yes 145 (85%)
- No 10 (6%)
- Don't know 15 (9%)



Responses from the outdoor education sector (49)

- Yes 43 (88%)
- No 1 (2%)
- Don't know 5 (10%)

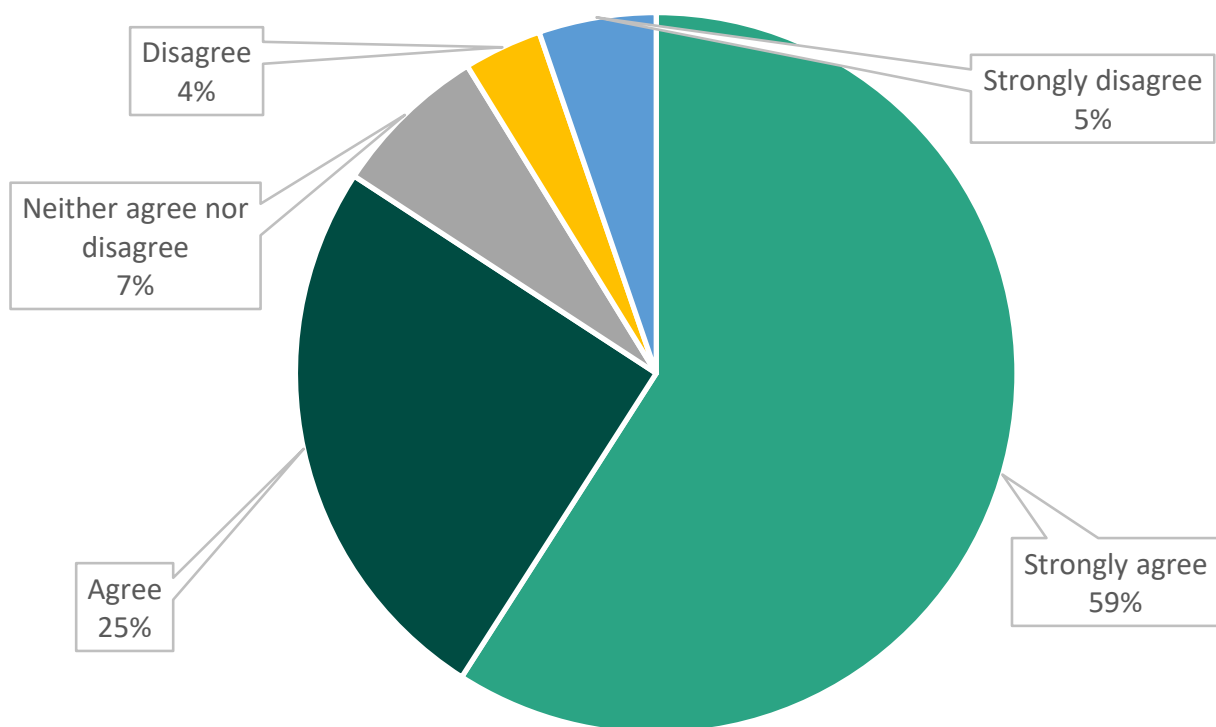
Responses not from the outdoor education sector (121)

- Yes 102 (84%)
- No 9 (7%)
- Don't know 10 (8%)

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? (Q9)

All responses (171 responses)

- Strongly agree 101 (59%)
- Agree 43 (25%)
- Neither agree nor disagree 12 (7%)
- Disagree 6 (4%)
- Strongly disagree 9 (5%)



Responses from the outdoor education sector (49)

- Strongly agree 34 (69%)
- Agree 7 (14%)
- Neither agree nor disagree 4 (8%)
- Disagree 1 (2%)
- Strongly disagree 3 (6%)

Responses not from the outdoor education sector (122)

- Strongly agree 67 (55%)
- Agree 36 (30%)
- Neither agree nor disagree 8 (7%)
- Disagree 5 (4%)
- Strongly disagree 6 (5%)

5. Summary of views of those who do not support the main principles behind the proposals

This section summarises responses from those who disagreed with one of more of the four questions (Q1, Q3, Q4, and Q9) asking whether people agreed or not with the main principles behind the proposals. It is based on the free text answers to other questions.

No respondent said that outdoor education was not important. 158 (94%) said it was very important and 11 (6%) said it was quite important (Q1).

Furthermore, a large majority (96%) believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity to participate in residential outdoor education (Q3) and 85% believe this should be free of charge (Q4). 83% agree or strongly agree with the need for the proposed Bill (Q9).

A minority of respondents did not agree with these fundamental principles behind the proposals.

- **5 respondents (3%) do not believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity** to participate in residential outdoor education. These are respondents POE13, POE19, POE31, POE36 and OE4. [Note: PO denotes online survey response, OE denotes response submitted by e-mail.]
- **10 respondents (6%) do not believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity which is free of charge.** These are respondents POE13, POE19, POE33, POE57, POE62, POE63, POE87, OE3, OE4 and OE21.
- **15 respondents (9%) do not believe there is a need for the legislation.** These are respondents POE7, POE11, POE13, POE19, POE31, POE35, POE36, POE49, POE54, POE57, POE62, OE 3, OE4, OE21 and OE29.

There is some lack of crossover between answers to these questions. For example, two of those who said there should not be a guaranteed opportunity, said they didn't know if this should be free of charge. Three respondents agreed with the need for the Bill, whilst disagreeing that there should be a guaranteed opportunity free of charge. Four responses agreed there should be a guaranteed opportunity and this should be free of charge, but did not agree with the need for the Bill. Two responses said there should be a guaranteed opportunity, and

agreed with the need for the Bill but disagreed the guaranteed opportunity should be free of charge.

In total, there are **18 responses which stated disagreement with one or more of the fundamental principles of the proposals** – that there should be a guaranteed opportunity, it should be free of charge and that legislation is needed.

The table below summarises these views.

The four responses, which stated they disagree with the proposal, despite their other answers indicating they do in fact support it, are shaded in grey to enable them to be distinguished from the 14 that expressed consistent disagreement. Furthermore, three of these 14 (POE33, PO63 and POE87) agreed with the need for the Bill and believed there should be a guaranteed opportunity but answered 'No' when asked if this should be free of charge. This **arguably brings the number expressing clear disagreement down to 11 (6%)**.

The **main areas of concern** can be summarised as

- **Funding will be diverted away from schools' core budgets, which should be the greatest priority** and where money can be put to best use.
- **Staffing implications** – having sufficient numbers of school staff to go on the visits and the impact and pressure on those that are willing to go.
- **Fear schools will not receive funding for the full costs of the staffing requirements** – either paying overtime to those supervising visits or sourcing supply cover during their absence.

Summary of views of those who do not support the proposals

	Believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity	Believe there should be a guaranteed opportunity free of charge	Agree with the need for legislation	Paraphrased summary of respondents' views
POE7 Community Development Worker	Yes	Yes	No	Answered 'Disagree' to the need for the Bill but all of their other answers indicate they support the proposal. Possible they believe legislation is not the right route but haven't given any explanation to suggest this. May therefore have selected Disagree by mistake.
POE11 Individual	Yes	Yes	No	Answered 'Disagree' to the need for the Bill but all of their other answers indicate they support the proposal. Possible they believe legislation is not the right route but haven't given any explanation to suggest this. May therefore have selected Disagree by mistake.
POE13 Head teacher	No	No	No	<p>Not all schools will have the staff to facilitate this. They get paid no overtime, are expected to leave their own families and it is a huge responsibility. Schools will have to pick up the cost of releasing extra staff.</p> <p>This is a significant ask of already exhausted and overburdened teachers, which falls outside their terms and conditions.</p> <p>School budgets are tight as it is. It is difficult to support existing programmes let alone new initiatives like this. Any extra money should be given directly to teaching and learning, which is schools' core purpose.</p>
POE19	No	No	No	The ambition is worthy but is a non-starter in the current financial climate. The money this would cost would be better spent on

Head teacher				<p>improving the daily experience of pupils in schools – school estate and the outdoor environment surrounding school buildings. There will be extra costs of supply teachers to cover teaching staff who are willing to go.</p> <p>There are also logistical obstacles, such as finding staff to volunteer to take the significant responsibility of acting in ‘loco parentis’ after school hours. In addition, there will be increased burden on head teachers and school leaders.</p> <p>Compelling local authorities to make this provision adds an increased burden to a system already struggling. The proposed universal provision, whilst laudable in its aims, is unsustainable and unrealistic.</p>
POE31 Individual	No	Don't know	No	<p>The proposal seeks to micromanage the way schools approach the needs of their pupils. It gives little flexibility and runs counter to the approach of the new curriculum of responding to pupils’ needs rather than a one-size fits all approach. There are benefits to residential activities but legislation is not the correct way to do this.</p>
POE33 Nature Days (Field trip provider)	Yes	No	Yes	<p>The respondent agrees there should be a guaranteed opportunity and strongly agreed with the need for legislation but did not believe the opportunity should be free of charge, They did not give any reasons.</p>
POE35 Expeditions Wales	Yes	Don't know	No	<p>Doubts whether there will be space in the school year to accommodate this. Believes the proposal is too idyllic and tokenistic. It puts pressure on education establishments to find additional resources, time and funding to deliver on a vague outline.</p>
POE36 Head teacher	No	Don't know	No	<p>Concerned why this is determined a priority, for example why outdoor pursuits are prioritised over other activities such as taking children to see a show. Whilst some children benefit from outdoor education, some would benefit far greater with an opportunity to visit a European city etc.</p>

POE49 Freelance outdoor educator	Yes	Yes	No	Supports the principle of a guaranteed opportunity free of charge so possibly doesn't believe legislation is the best route or may have selected 'Disagree' by mistake. Concerned about profit driven companies taking over the sector and that some children will be excluded. The quality of those providing outdoor education is paramount and whether they are highly trained and skilled not just in the activities but in working with and motivating people and teaching life skills.
POE54 Outdoor education trainer	Yes	Yes	No	This respondent 'Strongly disagrees' with the need for legislation, despite answering positively to the other questions and saying "it's a brilliant plan".
POE57 Head teacher	Yes	No	No	Schools already offer visits without being instructed to do so. If this is to become law, consideration needs to be given to how visits are staffed 24 hours per day rather than relying on school staff who currently give up their time 'free of charge' to support these visits.
POE62 Head teacher	Yes	No	No	The proposal is that the statutory responsibility for ensuring residential visits will fall on local authorities, which is incorrect as schools currently arrange provision. Schools already have other means to support families in need such as the Pupil Development Grant. Questions whether there is any evidence that primary schools are not taking pupils who cannot afford it. Charging policies are voluntary and many schools pay for children out of their own budget. Asks if funding will be taken from other areas of school budgets and what consideration has been given to the well-being of staff who already give up their own time and time with their families. Will schools be given funding for the cost of agency staff? A year 6 visit with 30 children requires at least 3 staff members. Will transport costs also be included?

POE63 Year 6 teacher	Yes	No	Yes	If this becomes law, funding must come from separate government funding and not from already stretched school budgets .
POE87 Primary School	Yes	No	Yes	No reasons given.
OE3 Head teacher	Yes	No	No	Questions how this is going to be funded . If it comes from existing school funding, it will be very negatively received. It is very difficult to staff residential visits as it often requires backfilling existing staff at additional costs. Many staff do not want to attend residential due to family commitments.
OE4 Head teacher	No	No	No	There are hidden costs to this proposal . In addition to the cost of providing the accommodation and activities, there are transport costs and supply teacher costs to cover the staff going on the visit. Concerned that any funding provided would not be additional money to education and would come from existing education budgets. Does not want to see more ring-fenced grants at the expense of schools' core budgets .
OE21 NAHT	Don't know	No	No	Main concerns relate to the opportunity costs of the proposal and taking away scarce resources from where they are needed in schools . They recognise the clear benefits of outdoor education but point to considerable costs of staffing visits. Highlight a twofold deficit of loss of funding from schools to pay for the guaranteed opportunity and additional costs to schools of staffing visits, plus cost of providing cover to pupils who may still not go because the visit is not appropriate to their needs or they decide not to go.
OE29 Individual	Blank	Blank	No	Respondent selected both 'Neither agree not disagree' and 'Strongly disagree'. In their additional comments, they explain that they strongly support the idea of all pupils having a residential experience once during their school time but do not see why it should have to

				<p>be an outdoor education visit. The personal gain from a residential trip can be gained almost irrespective of the setting.</p> <p>The money to be spent on this proposal would be better spent on embedding outdoor experiences in school's daily activities in their local area, rather than a week away at a site detached from pupils' everyday lives and their own environment.</p> <p>The Senedd debate in October showed there are many different perspectives of childhood experiences in outdoor education centres and there seems to be confusion about what the aim of a residential outdoor education visit is.</p>
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6. The main benefits (Q2)

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

The main benefits highlighted relate to **personal attributes that respondents say can be acquired or developed** through participating in outdoor residential education. The most frequently highlighted ones were **confidence, team work, independence, resilience, social skills and general holistic personal development.**

Connection with, and appreciation and understanding of, nature and the environment was frequently identified. Around 40% of respondents cited benefits associated with this, including that it instils positive attitudes and behaviours towards the environment in later life.

Broadening experiences and introduction to new experiences and activities was also a commonly highlighted benefit. Providing an opportunity, which many children and young people might otherwise not get, also featured in the context of inequalities.

The benefits for **health and well-being** were highlighted by many. Around 40% cited this, whether physical or mental health and well-being.

Positive risk taking in a safe, controlled environment was highlighted by some respondents along with **experiential learning** in real-world scenarios, bonding with peers and generally being outdoors.

Educational benefits were highlighted from **both from an academic and non-academic perspective.** Some stakeholders said residential outdoor education boosted academic progress and complemented the Curriculum for Wales. Others highlighted the value of learning and activities of a non-academic or non-traditional nature, in terms of a child's development.

Below is a table and a word cloud showing benefits which were identified by at least two respondents. (Note these terms are categories which have been drawn up from analysis of the responses and are not necessarily the exact wording used by respondents.)

In the table, the numbers in brackets denote the number of respondents who cited benefits which were then assigned to these categories. The size of words in the word cloud represents the frequency with which benefits assigned to these categories were cited.

What are the main benefits to children and young people from having a residential outdoor education experience? (175 responses)

Confidence	59
Connection to natural environment	54
Team work skills	52
Health and well-being	49
Independence	41
Personal development and acquisition of skills	37
Resilience	36
Social skills	36
Broaden horizons and new experiences	33
Opportunity some might not otherwise get	22
Positive attitudes towards the environment	19
Complements academic progress and Curriculum for Wales	19
Positive risk taking and overcoming fears and challenges	16
Being outdoors	15
Mental health	13
Bonding with peers	13
Non-academic learning and development	12
Physical literacy	12
Leadership skills and taking responsibility	11
Experiential learning	10
Lifelong memories	9
Problem solving	8
Sense of accomplishment	7
Connection with Welsh culture and language	7
Better relations with teachers and other adults	6
Fun / Enjoyment	6
Time away from electronics	5
Determination and perseverance	4
Creativity and imagination	4
Adventure	4
Time away from urban areas	3
Escape pressures of daily life	3
Societal recovery from pandemic	2
Social and economic return on investment	2

Better relations with teachers and other adults

Broaden horizons and new experiences

Physical literacy

Determination and perseverance

Fun / Enjoyment

Being outdoors

Confidence

Problem solving

Positive attitudes towards the environment

Societal recovery from pandemic

Positive risk taking and overcoming fears and challenges

Opportunity some might not otherwise get

Adventure

Time away from urban areas

Team work skills

Time away from electronics

Creativity and imagination

Health and well-being

Leadership skills and taking responsibility

Personal development and acquisition of skills

Experiential learning

Mental health

Bonding with peers

Resilience

Connection to natural environment

Complements academic progress and Curriculum for Wales

Escape pressures of daily life

Lifelong memories

Sense of accomplishment

Social and economic return on investment

Independence

Social skills

Non-academic learning and development

Connection with Welsh culture and language

7. The main barriers at present (Q5)

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

Respondents were invited to select as many that apply from a list of 8 choices. One of these choices was 'other' and they were asked to give details.

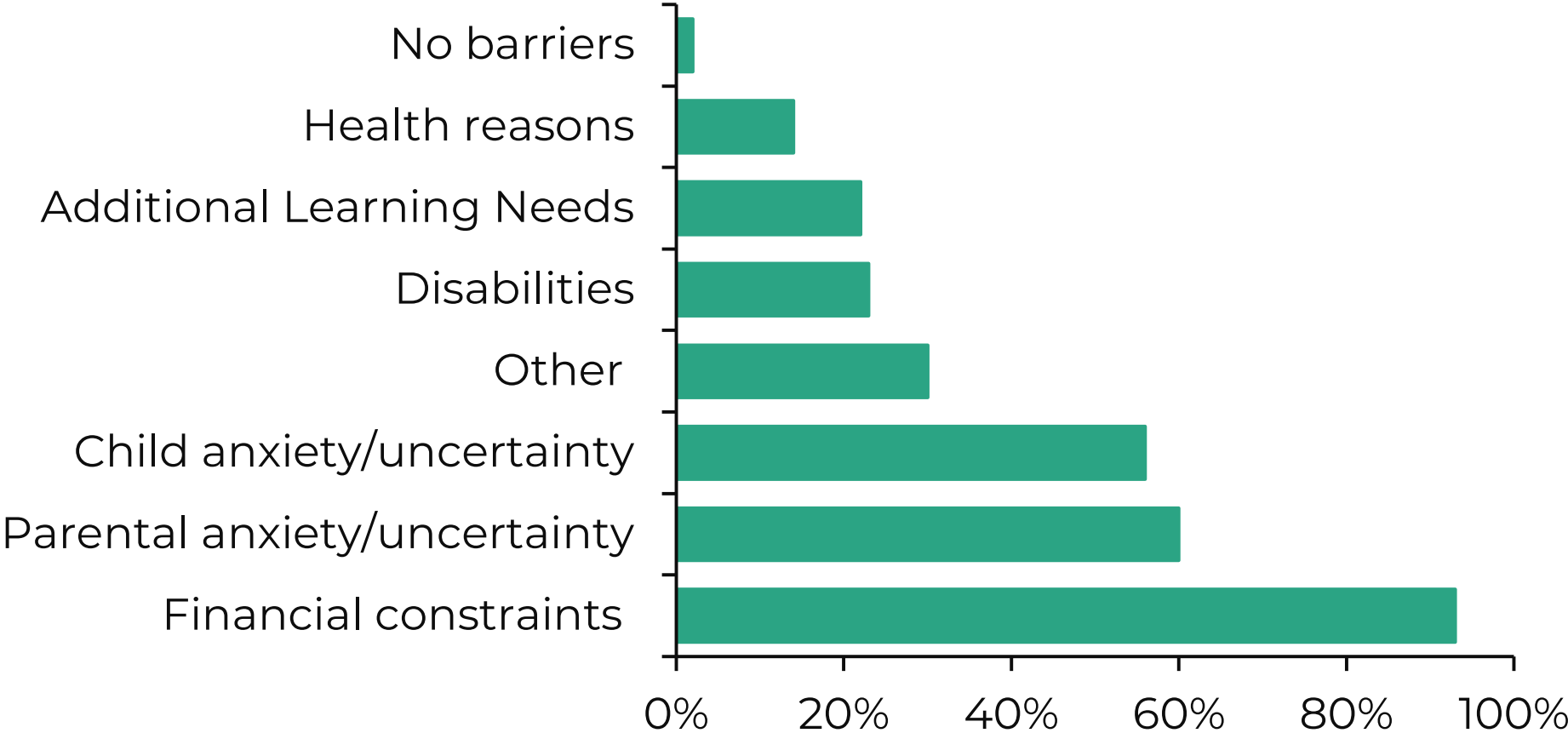
All responses (168 responses with these selecting a total of 500 barrier options from the list provided)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Financial constraints | 157 (identified by 93% of respondents who selected an option) |
| ▪ Health reasons | 24 (14%) |
| ▪ Disabilities | 39 (23%) |
| ▪ Additional Learning Needs | 36 (22%) |
| ▪ Parental anxiety/uncertainty | 100 (60%) |
| ▪ Child anxiety/uncertainty | 94 (56%) |
| ▪ Other | 50 (30%) (see below for detail) |
| ▪ None | 3 (2%) |

[Number in brackets denotes number of respondents selecting the option from the provided list. Number for 'Other' denotes number of respondents providing an 'Other' barrier, not the total number of other barriers identified.]

This information is also presented in a bar chart below

Percentage of respondents who identified these as a barrier to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education experiences



Other barriers identified

Other barriers identified, in addition to the list of options provided in the survey, have been grouped as themes and assigned to the categories below. These are ordered by frequency (numbers in brackets refer to number of respondents citing, if more than one).

- Staffing issues (11)
- Availability/capacity of residential outdoor education provision (11)
- Not prioritised by schools and local authorities (9)
- Lack of knowledge and confidence of school leaders and teachers to arrange (6)
- Transport costs (6)
- Lack of awareness of residential outdoor education as an option or its benefits (6)
- Cultural and religious issues (5)
- Lack of staffing and specialist centres for ALN or behavioural issues (4)
- Timetable pressures, crowded curriculum, and too narrow a focus on academic standards (5)
- COVID-related issues (3)
- Lack of parental engagement (2)
- That it is left to schools' discretion
- Profit driven companies taking over the sector
- Lack of imaginative programmes
- Lack of opportunity
- Risk-averse society, compensation culture and schools' fears
- Child/young person availability (e.g. caring responsibilities)
- Lack of LGBTQ+ sensitive provision
- Competing priorities that are statutory

- Inflexible approach to what is regarded as residential outdoor education

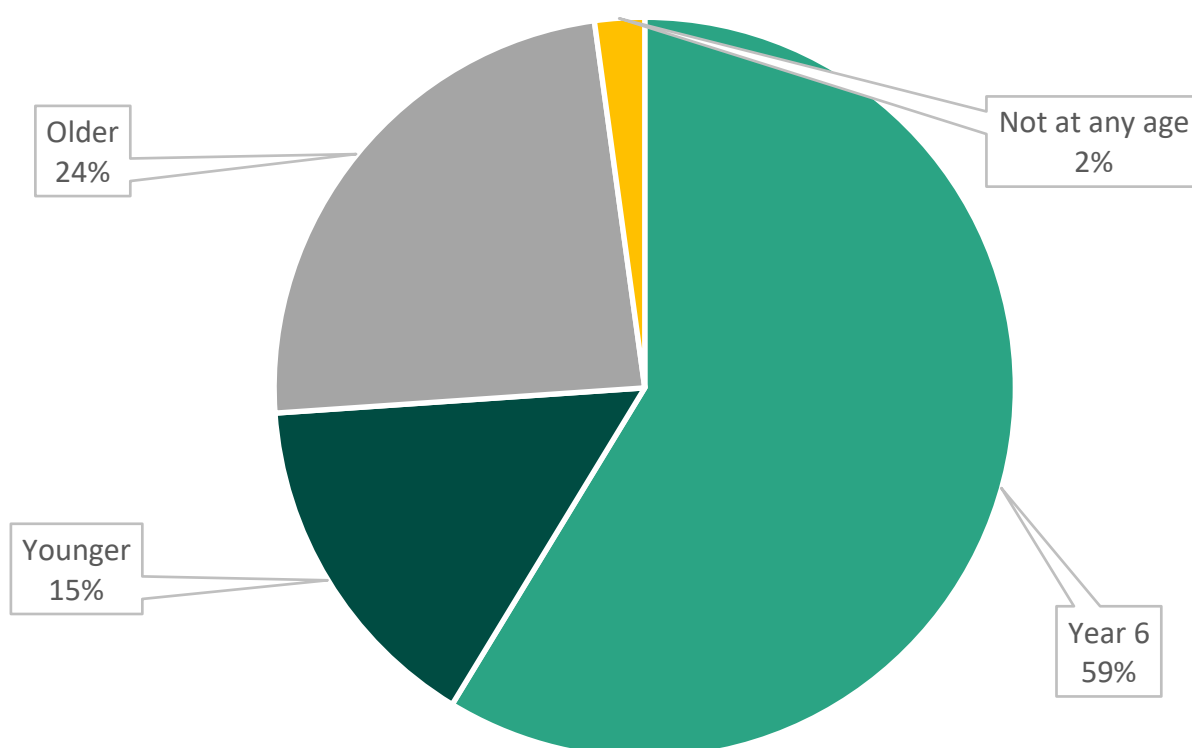
8. The most suitable age (Q7)

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?

The results for this question are presented separately for the online responses and for the email responses. This is because in the email responses, respondents were able to select more than one age group and adapt the answers themselves, whereas the online respondents could only select one option.

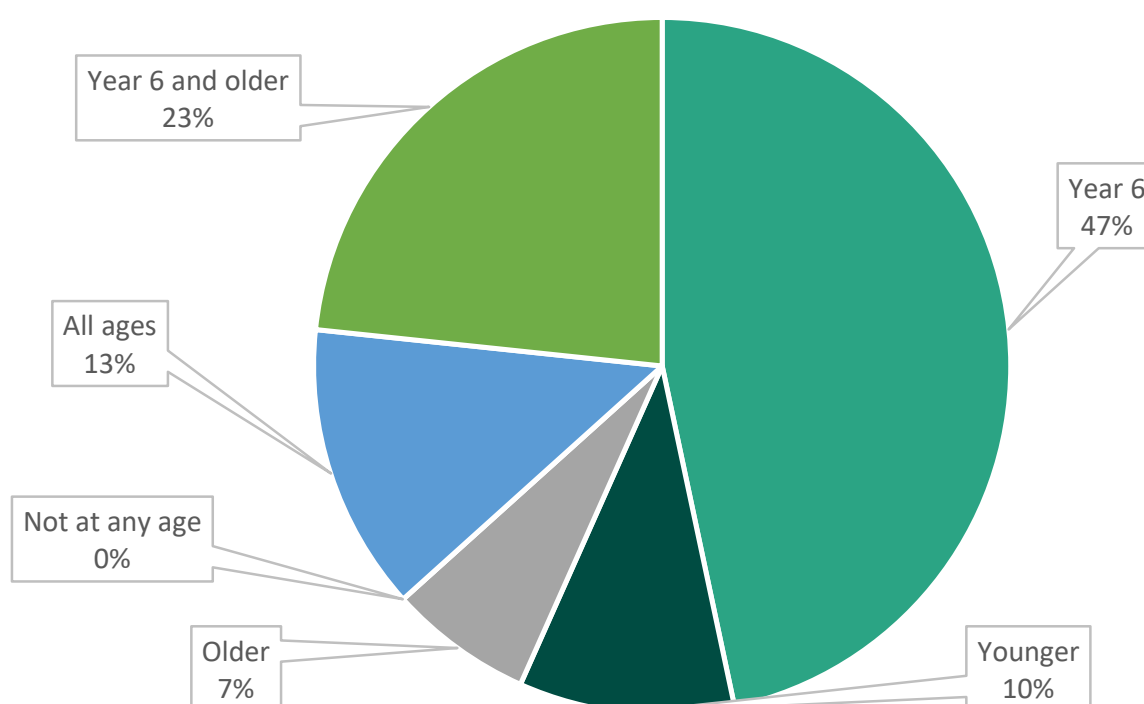
Online responses (138 responses)

- Year 6 81 (59%)
- Younger 21 (15%)
- Older 33 (24%)
- Not at any age 3 (2%)



E-mail responses (30 responses)

- Year 6 14 (47%)
- Younger 3 (10%)
- Older 2 (7%)
- Not at any age 0
- All ages 4 (13%)
- Year 6 and older 7 (23%)



Explanation of answers: 65 online responses

Of the 138 online responses to this question, 65 gave an explanation for their answer:

- 20 of the 21 responses who said Younger and all 33 of the responses who said Older (they were prompted to say an age).
- 11 of the 81 responses who said Year 6 gave an amplification to their answer (despite not being prompted to)
- One of the 3 people who said 'not at any age' said they actually meant they believed any age is suitable so their response better resembles 'All ages'.

The 11 who said Year 6 and gave an explanation for their answer

Most of those who agreed Year 6 is the most suitable age used their explanation to actually say that all ages were suitable or that **Year 6 and later** was the best time.

Two respondents who stated Year 6 said it was a reasonable age for children to have independent experiences and that it provides opportunities before transitioning to secondary school.

In summary, therefore, the indication from these that agreed with Year 6 but gave an explanation was that it **should not be restricted to Year 6**. For example, the Outdoor Council advocates a progressive programme with some experiences being accessed at around Year 6 and then developed further as pupils get older.

The 20 who said Younger and gave an explanation for their answer

Most of those selected 'Younger' than Year 6 as the most suitable age specified **Year 3 or age 7-8**, therefore roughly the start of the junior phase of education (until recently this was known as the end of the Foundation Phase and the start of Key Stage 2).

Several respondents said any age was suitable/preferable, whilst stating that it could start before Year 6.

One respondent said it should be for schools to decide when children are ready for residential outdoor education, not politicians or government. Schools know their pupils and it depends on the maturity of the child.

The 33 who said Older and gave an explanation for their answer

- 13 respondents who selected 'Older' than Year 6 as the most suitable age specified Years 7-9 or ages 11-14.
- 10 respondents said Years 10-11 or ages 14-16.
- 7 respondents said it depends and/or it should be up to the school.
- 2 respondents specified that it should be undertaken twice – at either Year 6 or 7 and again at Year 9 or 10.
- 1 respondent said age 16-18.

Explanation of answers: 3 email responses

Only three of the 30 email responses provided an explanation for their answers. However, they were able to select more than one age group and adapt the answers themselves, whereas the online respondents could only select one option. This is reflected in the breakdown of the 30 email responses above, with 7 (23%) essentially stating an option not on the list – Year 6 and older.

- An outdoor education centre commented that Year 6 was a good age as it provides a confidence boost at a time of transition to secondary school and becoming more independent. They also selected 'Older', explaining that it provides a good bonding experience for a newly formed group taking on new challenges or developing finer skills, although this can be difficult if they had not experienced residential outdoor education before.
- Estyn selected all ages and said the benefits of residential outdoor education are not exclusive to a particular age group and benefits to learners will vary by their stage of development. They cite one study suggesting the start of Year 7 is particularly beneficial as, compared to school-based induction activities, outdoor residential which focus upon the skills needed for life in secondary school deliver the strongest scale of change in pupils' psychological well-being.
- The Wales Council for Outdoor Learning selected all ages but said Years 5/6 and Years 8/9 fit well as they avoid the Year 7 settling period and exam years, whilst informing GCSE choice. They commented that residential outdoor education can be offered at any age once children are independent and confident to be away from home. What is important is when the benefits of the visit can be maximised, regardless of age.

Summary

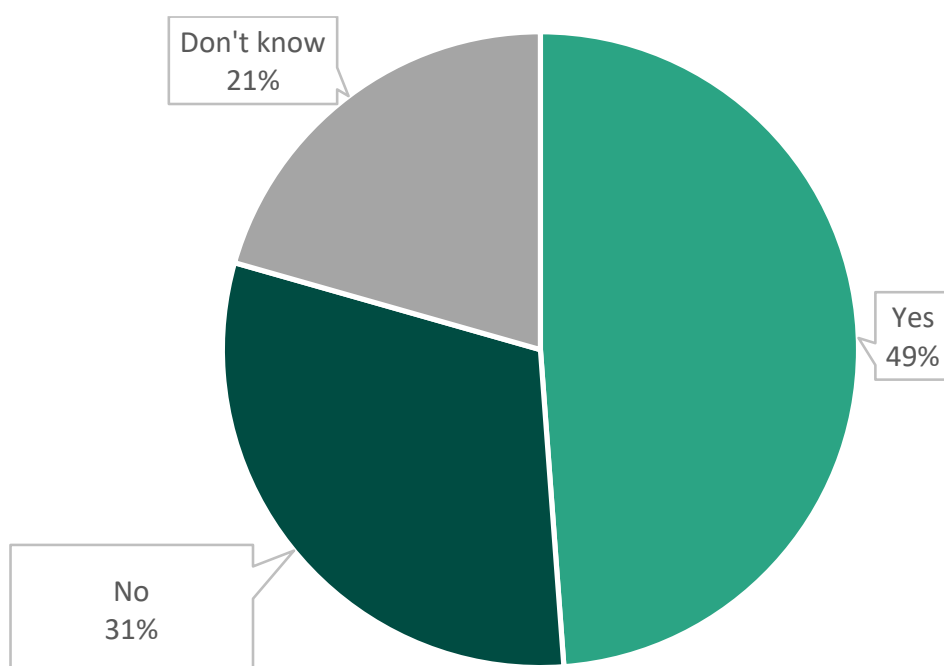
In summary, just **over half of the responses agreed that Year 6 was the most suitable age**. However, there is mixed opinion among others as to whether younger or older is preferable. There were quite a lot of **indications that there is no optimum age**, that it **depends on several factors** and that it is **probably best not to prescribe an age**.

9. The most suitable duration (Q8)

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

All responses (170 responses)

- Yes 83 (49%)
- No 52 (31%)
- Don't know 35 (21%)



Explanation of answers: 150 responses

150 of the 170 responses gave an explanation:

- 73 of the 83 who answered Yes
- 50 of the 51 who answered No
- 27 of the 35 who said Don't know.

The 73 who answered Yes who gave an explanation

- Just under half of those agreeing that five days/four nights is the best length specifically mentioned that it was enough time for children and young people to gain independence and get over any anxiety or

homesickness (implying that any shorter time might not be enough for this).

- Around 10 respondents specified that four nights was not too long a period (implying that any more might be).
- Around a third said that it was the **right length to deliver a meaningful programme and experience** for participants to benefit. Reasons given included that shorter trips focus much of the time on travel and simply being away from home rather than the activities, five days gives chance for participants to bond with the instructors and anything less feels rushed. Others commented that it fits with the pattern of a school and societal week.
- Challenge Wales summed up participants' emotional journey throughout a week of residential outdoor education along the following lines:
 - 1st day, they're not always happy – first time away from home and familiar surroundings;
 - 2nd day, start to come out of their shell and adjust;
 - 3rd day, now becoming more confident and working well as individuals and as a group;
 - 4th day, they're becoming more self-sufficient, able to start conversations with others and able to understand what they need to do;
 - 5th day, they feel sense of accomplishment and recognise their achievements.
- Some respondents, whilst agreeing that five days/four nights is the best length, said this **could be a long time for some children, such as those with ALN**, highlighted the impact on staff, or **questioned whether there needs to be a standard model**. One indicated that the outdoor education residential sector may not have the capacity to meet the demands for four night visits from all pupils. Several suggested that different lengths of stay would suit different ages of learners and dividing up a week's entitlement across more than one trip.

The 50 who answered No who gave an explanation

- Just under two thirds (31) of respondents who answered No and gave an explanation thought that four nights is too long, particularly for primary school children, including Year 6. A common reason given was that this will often be the first occasion children are away from their parents and it is **a long time to be away from home at that age**. Some respondents also felt sufficient benefits could be gained from a shorter visit and that **negative impact from home sickness, tiredness, and emotional fatigue could undermine the benefits accrued** in the first few days. Some of the respondents who felt that four nights is too long pointed to the impact on school staff supervising the visit of having 24-7 responsibility.
- 5 respondents who did not necessarily disagree with the principle of four nights in terms of suitability for children, said it **might not be viable due to staffing issues or that it was unrealistic due to costs and the capacity** of the outdoor education sectors.
- 2 respondents felt that visits longer than four nights would have greater impact.
- 8 respondents raised the **need for flexibility and argued that it should be up to schools to decide** the best length of time to take their pupils, suggesting that legislation should not seek to prescribe a standard length.
- 8 respondents advocated having **different length of visits at different ages**.

The 27 who said Don't know who gave an explanation

- 5 respondents who answered 'Don't know' indicated that they believed residential should be shorter than four nights/five days.
- 9 respondents believe that the **length of visits should not be prescribed**, giving reasons such as the **quality rather than the quantity** being of prime importance and that it should be a matter of school judgement and discretion.
- 10 others made similar comments, indicating that what is suitable **depends on several factors** such as the age of the child, any needs they have and the aims of the visit.

- Several respondents appeared open to visits of varying duration.
- One respondent (Estyn) said requiring a single standard length four night trip may be limiting and said there could be disagreement locally between the primary and secondary school over who should provide this. **Estyn suggested an alternative could be to require a minimum two night visit in each of primary and secondary school..**

Summary

In summary, **just under half of the responses agreed that five nights/four nights is the best length of stay**, mainly to allow for participants to gain the full benefits of such an experience. **However, 30% disagreed** due to reasons such as believing this is too long a time to be away from home particularly at primary school age. Some felt that having too long a stay may undermine the benefits gained in shorter periods.

As with age, there were quite a lot of indications that **it might be best not to prescribe how long experiences should last and that the most suitable duration depends on several factors**, not least the age of participants. Some respondents suggested further consideration of how a week long entitlement may be **configured**, for example dividing it into two shorter minimum periods.

10. Equalities considerations (Q6)

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

The majority of responses noted the Bill would ensure equality by giving every young person the opportunity to participate in outdoor education regardless of their background. There was particular focus on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with Additional Learning Needs. There were also mentions for young people from ethnically diverse communities and with disabilities.

Respondents highlighted a range of positive impacts on young people participating in outdoor education (also reflected already in section 6 of this briefing), which included:

- Improving physical and mental health
- Developing social and communication skills
- Building resilience and independence
- Team-building

A number of respondents pointed to outdoor education enabling young people to learn in different settings with responses also focusing on the positive experiences for those young people who struggle in a classroom environment.

There was also mention of the Bill supporting the new curriculum in Wales to enhance and enrich the education experiences of children and young people.

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?

Of the 175 responses to the Consultation, **43 respondents (25%)** said there would be **no negative impacts of the Bill**, **5 respondents** replied “Not Applicable/N/A” to the question and **38 respondents (22%)** did not reply to the question. 3 responses were unclear and 2 responded “Don’t know”.

There were **83 responses (47%)** that said there may be potential negative impacts, the majority of which did not offer possible mitigations.

Anxiety, whether on part of the child or parent, was cited as the most common possible negative impact (**17 responses mentioned anxiety**). To counter this, suggestions included the option of an opt-out to the visit for children who may suffer particularly with anxiety due to being away from home. Some respondents felt that children or parents should have a choice in whether they attend the visit. **Appropriate support measures, which may include extra staff to support children, were highlighted as essential to help children with anxiety.**

Regarding anxiety, Cyngor Ynys Mon said that any residential outdoor experience would need to be **planned well and provide for learners with anxiety, ensuring opportunities such as differentiated activities to suit learners**. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board highlighted that should children choose not to take part they may feel excluded from an experience the majority of their peers are participating in. Cardiff and Vale University Health board suggest a **mitigation to concerns regarding anxiety in children would be to ensure the ratio of ‘trusted adults’ to children is high to ensure all children feel sufficiently supported.**

Regarding the length of a week-long stay as a cause of anxiety in children who have not slept away from home, Ysgol Cae’r Nant suggest **splitting a week long residential trip into two shorter residential visits to different sites**. One respondent suggested meeting with parents prior to the offer of the visit to ask questions may help to address parental anxiety.

Whilst not directly addressing anxiety, The Outdoor Partnership highlighted apprehension on part of the children and parents which could be mitigated by ensuring the education offer has reference to what goes before and what follows after the trip. The Outdoor Partnership suggest that parental apprehension could be mitigated by providing a quality educational offer such as the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Mark and a regulated safety framework.

A potential negative impact on children with **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) or with disabilities was highlighted in 12 responses**. The Outdoor Learning Centre (Cardiff Metropolitan University) said that if inclusivity is not embedded into the Bill, children with ALN will feel excluded. Additional support for children with ALN and physical disabilities was the most common mitigation.

One response suggested that as a mitigation, **stricter supervision ratios around children with ALN could help to prevent any negative experiences**. One outdoor education teacher who responded to the consultation suggested **adaptive approaches**, which are used in classrooms, could be extended to outdoor learning to support children with learning needs.

The NEU highlighted that all **appropriate adjustments and support would need to be put into place to make any trips as accessible as possible to learners who suffer with mental health conditions, disabilities or other health conditions**. The NEU also suggested that alternative activities would need to be arranged to ensure learners who do not go are able to undertake enrichment opportunities whilst others are away. A parent/carer who responded to the consultation highlighted that **suitable activities should be provided for children with disabilities**. Additionally, they also said some children with mental or physical health considerations may not feel comfortable being on a residential trip and should have the option to opt-out.

The issue of cost or funding was highlighted in **11 responses** to the consultation. The Federation of Kymin View and Llandago Primary Schools were concerned whether the Bill would sufficiently cover **residential, transport, school staff costs**, whilst also covering the costs of the learners kit which some families may find difficulty in sourcing financially.

The Outdoor Partnership said if finances/transport are not put in place, then it is a **barrier to those who cannot afford it**. Powys County Council said that without financial support the empowerment of the legislation **would be difficult to enforce**.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award said that the Bill could include any flexibility for any funding to be **spent as required to support young people's attendance** by supporting them to source the basics required to attend. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award also highlighted that the offer to young people may not be equal in all cases, particularly as the most exciting centres could be furthest away and booked up quickly by schools that have additional resources to meet ancillary costs such as transport and additional staffing. As a mitigation, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award suggested the amount that is allocated for a young person

it must **cover all the costs associated with attending including transport, staffing and provision of any specialist support required**. Addictive Adventure said that it is vital that teachers are paid to be away, they refer to having seen too many residential visits cancelled due to staff not being given their hours back.

There were concerns that children who are **home schooled or in alternative education** may miss out on this opportunity and, as mitigation, the legislation should consider how these children will receive their entitlement to this opportunity. It was suggested this Bill should also extend to local authority Play and Youth Services to prevent children who are not in school-based education from missing out.

The **importance of choosing whether to opt in/out** of the opportunity was highlighted in **10 responses**. The Wales Council for Outdoor Learning said that young people should have the option not to go and should be supported to ensure they are not alienated from others. A parental decision for the young person to not attend should also be supported. A mitigation offered by the Council for this includes **providing education to parents and guardians on benefits and learning from good practice e.g. the Peak District project with the local Muslim community**.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award said that if a child/young person is unable to attend then the **funding available should be used to provide a meaningful non-residential alternative either in school or using local providers**.

11. Additional comments (Q10)

For and against

In total, 111 of the 175 responses made additional comments – 81 of the 140 online survey responses and 30 of the 34 email responses.

47 of these additional comments were explicitly positive, making comments such as the proposal was a ‘great idea’, they ‘fully support it’, it is ‘much needed’ or ‘long overdue’, or generally restating the benefits of residential outdoor education. Respondents’ views about the benefits of residential outdoor education are covered in **section 6** of this briefing.

11 additional comments expressed opposition to the proposal in their additional comments. These respondents were the same as those who disagreed with one of the main principles behind the proposal and their comments are summarised at **section 5** of this briefing.

Issues to consider

Other additional comments made observations and highlighted things that they believe should be considered further in developing the legislation. These are summarised below.

The most common issues raised related to the **staffing implications**, for example how schools will meet the requirement to take pupils on visits if they do not have staff willing or able to go, and how and whether the **funding** provided will cover the full cost of paying and/or covering staff to go. The specific question of how the proposal will be squared with teachers’ terms and conditions was raised.

There are two **unions representing head teachers** – the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). One of these – the **NAHT** – responded to the consultation. The NAHT disagreed with the main principles behind the Bill and their response (OE-021) is summarised in section 5 of this briefing.

There are three main **unions representing teachers** – the National Education Union (NEU), the NASUWT and UCAC. The **NEU** was the only one of these to respond to the consultation. Their response (OE-024) showed they agree there should be a guaranteed opportunity to participate in outdoor residential education but they didn’t know if it should be free of charge. They selected ‘Neither agree nor disagree’ to the question asking if they agreed with the need for the Bill. The NEU highlighted the “huge cost implication” at a time “when

school budgets are squeezed”, pointing not only to the importance of giving teachers who supervise visits time in lieu but also the costs of covering their absence, if some children don’t go and remain in school. They call for a cost/benefit analysis of the proposal.

Several respondents **questioned the universal nature** of the guarantee offer, for example whether financial support would be better targeted at families who cannot afford rather than paying for everyone. Another respondent believed the majority of schools offer residential visits already and argued it would be better to support the schools that can’t/don’t, to provide this opportunity. On the other hand, others argued that residential outdoor education should become an **“entitlement of” rather than an “enrichment to”** the curriculum or wider education offer.

A fairly frequent theme was that the opportunity to access outdoor education should not be a one-off and it **should be consolidated by both a lead-up and follow-up of activities and learning**. For example, the Outdoor Partnership said it was important to ensure progression and exit pathways for children and young people before and after their residential experience.

Some respondents emphasised the **importance of the quality of the residential outdoor education provision**. For example, ER Outdoors highlighted that providers who have prioritised and invested in training for their staff to ensure quality may be more expensive but that the quality of delivery really counts in maximising benefits young people get. CMC Adventure suggested there should be a definition of quality in the Bill so that quality and standards are clear to all those involved and ensure providers do not take shortcuts. Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools suggested a universally used and recognised accreditation such as the Learning Outside Classroom Quality badge as a means of ensuring all providers deliver quality experiences. Natural Resources Wales suggested Agored Cymru’s range of certificates and awards.

Others highlighted the **importance of the educational nature of the experience** and that it should complement the curriculum, rather than simply providing short-term fun with no meaningful lasting impact. OEAP Cymru said the proposal gives schools an opportunity to “really bring their curriculum alive”.

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award warned of a possible outcome to the Bill being that companies may enter the outdoor education market to provide ‘off the peg’ solutions to schools and local authorities keen to meet their statutory duties. They said **attention is needed to ensure appropriate standards of delivery and**

safeguarding. They urge careful thought to be given to the mechanics of how the funding is provided.

The WLGA said **local government would need a formal arrangement in place with suppliers** of residential outdoor education, and for the system to be failsafe, accountable and meet expectation without risk of litigation. They said they also “require reflection on what a ‘guarantee’ in this context means”.

Some responses referred to the **capacity of the residential outdoor education sector to meet the additional demand** that may arise from establishing a statutory entitlement, particularly as the sector has been weakened by the pandemic. It was also commented that there would be a need to consider where centres are located in Wales and to ensure equality of access by all local authority areas.

Several respondents highlighted the **need for the outdoor education offer to reflect the diversity of needs and interests of children and young people**. There should not be a one size fits all approach, for example, the assumption that all children like high ropes and kayaking can perpetuate negative perceptions of the outdoors. The University of South Wales said residential outdoor education can take many forms such as nature and art workshops, woodland craft activities, which can be more suitable for children who fear more ‘traditional outdoor’ activities.

The **practicalities and importance of meeting some pupils’ complex needs**, for example those with medical needs (e.g. diabetes), emotional needs (e.g. anxiety) or learning needs or disabilities, was also highlighted. The significance of this being an opportunity was mentioned, i.e. no child or young person should be pressured to go on a residential, although there are many benefits if they choose to do so.

Some respondents argued that **outdoor education needs to be considered in a wider context than purely residential outdoor education**. There were calls for outdoor learning to be more embedded in every day school experiences rather than relying on a one-off week-long visit. Estyn, whilst supportive of the proposal, said that many of the benefits can be gained through day visits and through regular use of the outdoors. They also noted that their school 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 Outdoor Partnership emphasised the importance of community-based outdoor activity provision to facilitate life-long engagement.

Natural Resources Wales believe the Bill should be broadened to encompass outdoor learning in its entirety and not just limited to residential stays. If not, they suggest the Bill should be renamed as the Outdoor Residential Education Bill to reflect its focus and avoid it being interpreted as covering outdoor education more generally when it does not do this.

The **Children's Commissioner for Wales** welcomed the proposal, citing the benefits of outdoor education to children and young people. However, she said it would be welcome if the Bill enabled wider opportunities for outdoor learning beyond just those of a residential nature. She said outdoor education can take many forms, some of which are provided within the school setting and local community.

For some, the proposal **does not go far enough**. One respondent commented that the Bill should legislate to make outdoor education mandatory for all ages within the school timetable, whilst another said it should be more explicit about how it will support connections with nature, understanding of climate change and personal well-being. Valleys Regional Park recognise the value in providing one week but believe the priority should be to deliver systemic change to provide more regular, meaningful outdoor education in general.

Several respondents commented how outdoor education centres in Wales frequently host schools from England and stressed that **Welsh children should have this experience**, especially when it is in their own country/locality.

The Welsh Language Commissioner said the Bill had the potential to increase **opportunities for children and young people to hear and use the Welsh language**. She said specific provisions should be included to ensure this happens and suggested four main ways this could be done:

- A robust research base to understand the sector's capacity to make Welsh language or bilingual provision.
- Opportunities to work with the Urdd at a national level, who they say are probably the largest single provider.
- Linking the proposal to other Welsh Government strategies and policies, for example Welsh language education and the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales in respect of the language.
- Accreditation and approval criteria for providers could include criteria in relation to promotion of the Welsh language.

Dyfodol i'r Iaith welcomed the proposal and note occasional references to **Welsh language and culture** but would like to see these more explicitly specified. They call for the Bill to promote a truly Welsh experience in outdoor pursuits and refer to the CAMU campaign in North Wales as an example of this.

The Outdoor Partnership mentioned its '**Outdoor Partnership – Adventure Learning Framework**' (TOP-ALF), which is being trialled in schools, as a model for delivering outdoor learning in a way aligned to the Curriculum for Wales.

Annex A: 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:

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)
- 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?

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?

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

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

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

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

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

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