

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 16

Ymateb gan: Anabledd Dysgu Cymru

Response from: Learning Disability Wales

18 January 2024

About Learning Disability Wales

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. We want Wales to be the best country in the world for people with a learning disability to live, learn and work.

We work with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector so we can create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

Our response to the consultation

We broadly welcome the principles of the Bill to widen access to residential outdoor education given the benefits such opportunities afford children and young people. The Bill reflects the goals of Well-being of Future Generations legislation in improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by widening horizons for young people as well as supporting the Curriculum for Wales's objectives of creating independent and inquiring pupils as they move through the nation's education system.

Ensuring Welsh pupils are given the chance to experience at least one week on a residential outdoor course during their time in full-time education is a laudable aim.

However, Learning Disability Wales has some concerns about the legislation from the perspective of those with a learning disability.

- i) While provision for people with a learning disability is embedded in the legislation, in practice this may prove more challenging given differing and often unique needs of individuals. An unintended consequence of the

legislation may be that those needs go unmet because of the pressure to provide opportunities for the majority of young people who do not have a learning disability. Inclusivity can only truly happen if funding capacity is sufficient to accommodate specialist provision. Children and young people with a learning disability might be among those who would benefit the most from the experiences outdoor education offers. There need to be assurances that they do not miss out on such experiences, that the offer provided by the legislation is equitable despite the extra costs that might incur from inclusive access.

- ii) While outdoor residential education might be something that many young people would want, it is not something in which all pupils would want to participate. Particular thought should be given to those for whom such opportunities are inappropriate, unattractive or difficult to enjoy, and that may be for an intersection of reasons encompassing challenges such as mental wellbeing, family circumstances or disability. We would endorse a robust monitoring system to ensure a rich source of data is available to provide for a better understanding of the characteristics of pupils taking part in these sessions and those who are not.
- iii) Given this is about residential education, there are questions around regulation of these centres, and the standards to which they are regulated. We know that children with a learning disability are at a heightened risk of being exploited. The opportunity to experience outdoor education must come with an assurance that such environments are safe and responsible and operate under a robust regulatory framework. This is something that would be beneficial to all pupils.
- iv) The cost and funding of the aspiration to provide for a week of residential outdoor education for every child in Wales cannot be burdened upon families already encumbered by a high cost of living. Likewise, school budgets that are similarly under pressure might face further difficulties under the obligation to fund residential outdoor education. Staff resource might also be placed under further pressure given the need to ensure adequate supervision for children and young people enjoying residential outdoor education opportunities. This is particularly relevant to pupils with learning disabilities.
- v) We would ask that future consultations and publications in this area of legislation are accompanied with Easy Read literature to ensure information is accessible and understandable for everyone in Wales.

Given concerns around accessibility, funding provision and regulation outlined above, Learning Disability Wales has some concerns about the legislation as it stands. The aspiration to provide for at least a week's residential outdoor education for all pupils in Welsh schools is something that we endorse. However, this needs proper funding, support for those families facing financial difficulties, and adequate provision to support the specialist needs of pupils with a learning disability. Without these things, then the legislation is not truly inclusive and could have the effect of excluding those who might benefit the most from these resources.