

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Bil arfaethedig – Bil Addysg Awyr Agored \(Cymru\) | Proposed Outdoor Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

Ymateb gan Matt Shouler, Teacher of outdoor education, MEd in outdoor education, | Evidence from Matt Shouler, Teacher of outdoor education, MEd in outdoor education,

Are you (your organisation) currently a provider of outdoor education?: Yes

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## Your opinion

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

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Very important

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

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Summary of my recent masters thesis: It is already established that residency significantly increases the gains from schooling to self-discipline, maturity, independence, cooperative learning, and critical thinking. Taking advantage of COVID lockdowns, which made expeditions shorter and more local, and their preparatory phases more sedentary, I studied whether residency similarly increases the gains from outdoor education. My survey data showed that residency increases gains from outdoor education: very much increasing the gains to confidence and relating to others; much increasing gains to problem solving and managing feelings; and somewhat increasing gains to decision making, staying on track, communication, and environmental consciousness. My interview data also showed that residency increases gains from outdoor education: very much increasing gains to confidence; much increasing gains to other interpersonal skills such as managing feelings, relating to others, and communication; and somewhat increasing gains to personal skills such as decision making, problem solving and staying on track. My interview data suggested that residency produces these gains to interpersonal skills through enforced communal downtime and reflection time; and to personal skills through enforced reflection time. Young people aged 16-25 should take part in wilderness expeditions, since they are likely to gain more from wilderness expeditions than from non-residential outdoor education.

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?

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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?

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Yes

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

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Patental anxiety / uncertainty;Child anxiety / uncertainty;

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

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?

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Some children with particular learning needs, such as autism or agoraphobia, need adaptive approaches to outdoor learning, just as they and others may need adaptive approaches in the classroom. There are potential negative impacts, essentially from putting children too far outside their comfort zone, but these can be mitigated and significantly outweighed by the benefits of the bill, provided the bill allows for sufficient funding and discretion in implementation.

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?

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Older (please state below)

My research compared 14-16, 16-18, and over 18. My evidence showed that 16-18 gain the most.

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

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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).

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Four nights is a minimum. My research suggested that gains increase with expeditions up to around 3 weeks long, but that the benefits to additional time tail off after around 5 weeks. There is very little benefit to stats of only one or two nights.

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?

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Agree

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

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I'd be happy to share my thesis, or give evidence.