

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

Ymateb gan Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, | Evidence from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board,

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?

- Improve children and young people's engagement with learning
 - Improve children and young people's confidence in their own abilities, building resilience and improving wellbeing/their sense of independence
 - Boosts cohesion and a sense of belonging
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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;Health reasons;Disabilities;Additional Learning Needs;Patental anxiety / uncertainty;Child anxiety / uncertainty;Possibly post-covid nervousness (amongst parents and schools), fewer schools offering the opportunities ;

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

Children and young people from lower income and or ethnically diverse communities are less likely to have opportunities to play and learn in natural environments. Children and young people from these communities are most likely to experience health and learning inequalities. The proposed Bill provides

these children with the opportunity to benefit from the experience that residential outdoor education provides.

Learning in natural environments may also benefit children and young people that are experiencing mental distress, those with low social and personal skills and those with additional learning needs. Residential outdoor education provides a safe space for these children to learn in a less formal learning environment.

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?

There are unlikely to be any significant negative impacts, as long as the offer is made fully accessible to ensure all children have the opportunity to participate. In particular, consideration needs to be given to how those with additional learning needs, physical disabilities and also emotional needs (such as anxiety) can be supported appropriately to encourage take up and accessibility.

Some children may feel compelled to take part. Some children prone to anxiety may find being away from home difficult. If children choose not to take part they may feel excluded from an experience that the majority of their peers are participating in, which may make their anxiety worse. The Bill could ensure that the ratio of 'trusted adults' to children is high enough to ensure that all children feel fully supported.

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)

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

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).

There are a number of considerations relating to the best length of a residential experience. A standard approach may not work for all schools or all children, therefore the Bill may need to consider how it will enable schools to offer residential experiences, whilst being flexible in terms of length. Four nights / five days may be quite long for some children who may be away from home for the first time. Leaving school on a Tuesday and returning on a Thursday could work well. Attending school 'normally' on a Monday allows the school to undertake some preparatory activities to promote re-assurance. Returning to school on a Thursday allows for an opportunity to debrief during the school week, helping to ensure, and reaffirm a positive experience for all. If children return on a Friday and then go straight home, any worries or concerns may fester over the weekend. Three nights may be better for children in this age group not used to being away from home. Additionally, many children and families are still working through the effects of the pandemic / cost of living crisis, and levels of anxiety are high. Schools tell us that many parents with mental health issues like having their children at home, as it helps them feel safe. So, for the child to be away for a few days overnight is a very big thing for such families. However, inclusive of travelling time, less than 4 nights has the tendency to make activities rushed and/or the potential for pupils to miss out on certain activities. So as a positive, 4 nights/5 days is preferable from a residential experience point of view.

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?

Children being offered the 'opportunity' is key. No one should be pressured to access a residential outdoor educational experience. From a public health perspective there are many benefits to be gained from learning in the outdoors, these include; building healthy relationships, building confidence, promoting wellbeing, as well as providing opportunities to be physically active.