

OE-026 - Royal College of Psychiatrists

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

Ymateb gan Royal College of Psychiatrists | Evidence from Royal College of Psychiatrists

Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales

The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional medical body responsible for supporting psychiatrists throughout their careers, from training through to retirement, and setting and raising standards of psychiatry in the United Kingdom.

The College aims to improve the outcomes of people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities, and the mental health of individuals, their families and communities.

In order to achieve this, the College sets standards and promotes excellence in psychiatry; leads, represents and supports psychiatrists; improves the scientific understanding of mental illness; works with and advocates for patients, carers and their organisations. Nationally and internationally, the College has a vital role in representing the expertise of the psychiatric profession to governments and other agencies.

RCPsych Wales represents more than 600 Consultant and Trainee Psychiatrists working in Wales.

Proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill Consultation: Response form

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

Professional capacity

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

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

No

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

Policy Officer, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Consultation questions

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

Very 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:

1. Health and wellbeing. Spending a total of two or more hours in natural environments per week is associated with better health and well-being. Increased physical activity, inherent in accessing outdoor spaces, directly enhances mood and reduces anxiety.
2. Equality. The most vulnerable and deprived are likely to have least access to green space and therefore require targeted interventions. Various including horticulture, conservation, care farming and more, they tend to

incorporate meaningful activity and social interaction, and offer potential as a rich multimodal approach to improving symptoms and quality of life.¹

For example, for adolescents with behavioural or self-esteem issues, wilderness greenspaces are used as vehicles for reflection over week-long expeditions, with relevant psychological and behavioural improvements frequently reported, such as enhanced self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-image, self-control, self-confidence, self-empowerment and decision making.²

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

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

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

6. Equalities considerations:

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

Yes. Please see answer to question two.

¹ Cuthbert, S., Kellas, A., & Page, L. (2021). Green care in psychiatry. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 218(2), 73-74. doi:10.1192/bjp.2020.166

² Barton, J., & Rogerson, M. (2017). The importance of greenspace for mental health. *BJPsych International*, 14(4), 79-81. doi:10.1192/S2056474000002051

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?

Yes. It may be more challenging for disabled children and young people to access greenspace, which may have negative impacts on the mental health of these children. It's important that the provider of the outdoor education ensures that all children can access outdoor greenspace equitably.

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)

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

Yes

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

Just two hours per week spent in greenspace can improve health and wellbeing. We would support provision for residential outdoor education to be made universal, and importantly equitable. As stated in the consultation, some children already have the opportunity for four nights/five days provision, whilst some miss out.

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

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

No.