

OE-029 - Individual

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

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

Ymateb gan Unigolyn | Evidence from Individual

Are you (your organisation) currently a provider of outdoor education?: No

Proposed Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

Consultation: Response form

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Professional capacity (including on behalf of an organisation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal capacity
Are you responding on behalf of an organisation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Age: <input type="checkbox"/> I am under 13 years old <input type="checkbox"/> I am aged 13 to 17 <input type="checkbox"/> I am aged 18 or over and wish my contribution to be anonymised <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I am aged 18 or over and happy for my name to be published with my contribution
Are you (your organisation) currently a provider of outdoor education? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	In what capacity are you responding? <input type="checkbox"/> Child / Young person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent / Carer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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:

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

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?

See my elaborated response below

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?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

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).

See my elaborated response below

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

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?

Click or tap here to enter text.

I need to separate outdoor education and residential experience to be able to explain my view on this matter.

I see it as a positive step that this suggestion has been made and an initial discussion has taken place. I strongly support the idea of all pupils having a residential experience once during their school time as I agree the personal gain for the pupils are significant, and in particular the pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The fact that it is not all pupils in a class who are going on a residential trip seems in stark opposition to many policies of the Welsh Government aiming at equity and inclusivity. A residential trip that includes all pupils would certainly be a step in the right direction in terms of moving the well-intended (and often brave) ideas from policy papers to implementation in reality. However, I do not see the residential experience as something that needs to be confined to an Outdoor Education Centre as I do not think it is valid to claim that residential experiences in these centres do not necessarily promote for example "a real love for the environment." I think the personal gain from a residential trip can be gained *almost* irrespective of the setting, being away from home with your class-mates is a valuable experience in itself, it does not have to take place in an, often costly, outdoor centre.

I cannot agree more in terms of pupils in Wales need more outdoor experiences and learning in natural environments during their school time. I do however think (in line with the education minister's views expressed during the Senedd debate) the money is better spent on securing that outdoor experiences are more embedded in school's daily activities in their local environment, preferably facilitated in corporation with Local Authorities, the wider community and other relevant stakeholders/organisations. Why confine those experiences to a particular "fenced off" site, away from where the children's daily lives are? Why not see it as an educational aim to let pupils explore and feel attached to their local "free of charge" environment? Multiple international research has shown how children increasingly are getting detached from their own local natural environments and their communities and how this has negative implications for both desire to protect the environment and for the children's and their communities well-being. I have two children who are almost through primary school in Wales my experience is that Outdoor Learning very rarely moves beyond the school yard and most teachers do not engage more extensively with the wider aim and purposes of outdoor learning. This is truly sad in a country like Wales with stunning

landscapes and many opportunities for varied outdoor experiences and stories to be told and made all over the country not confined in a school yard or an "Outdoor education centre."

I am undertaking doctoral research (Educational research) on this very topic. Looking at a rural region in Wales with a comparative aspect to a rural region in Denmark. The aim is to understand and map out how the outdoors are being used in the learning experiences in Foundation Phase aged children in Wales. On paper (both policy paper and in the "open-style" curricula) Denmark and Wales are more or less aligned in their visions, commitment and approach to Outdoor Learning, however the preliminary findings in my data shows a stark contrast in practice and the supporting framework. As the Foundation Phase including the Outdoor learning aspect was inspired by the Scandinavian countries it makes good sense to look towards these countries for developing this aspect in Welsh schools. It is clear there is a sincere commitment in Wales to level the playing field in educational terms, creating a sense of Cynefin, securing the Wellbeing of future generations (both on an individual level and in relation to the naturel environment) and the New curriculum for Wales is a great opportunity to materialise some of these ambitions and Outdoor Learning seem to be quite central to these. However, it seems there is a need for debate about how Outdoor Education and Outdoor Learning is defined (considering the subtle differences between the two might say important things) and who should be responsible for "facilitating" it, schools, teachers, Local Authorities, Welsh Government (via a stronger core of the aims in the curriculum) or should it be a co-construction between all the stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of Outdoor Learning and it's multiple purposes? Equally important is it to clarify the very purpose of Outdoor Learning in a Welsh educational context? It was clear from watching the Senedd debate on the proposed Bill that the many individuals in the debate had very different feelings of their childhood experiences in the outdoor education centres and there seemed to be confusion about what the aim of a residential trip in an Outdoor Education is.

I will leave it here but I am happy to elaborate further on the thoughts expressed in the above should you find it useful.

Kind Regards,
Mette Jensen