

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 12

Ymateb gan: Y Bartneriaeth Awyr Agored

Response from: The Outdoor Partnership

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16<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Colleague

The Outdoor Partnership works to support the people of Wales and other UK areas to take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit. [About Us – The Outdoor Partnership](#) We strongly believe that an outdoor education residential should fit into a progression of experiences available to Welsh Citizens throughout school life and beyond. Our commitment to this is evident by our Adventure Learning Framework (TOP-ALF) supporting Schools and the National Curriculum in Wales to deliver learning in a variety of environments including the classroom. [Adventure Learning – The Outdoor Partnership](#)

Many of our staff and trustees have extensive experience of working in residential outdoor education centres in a variety of roles from tutor/instructor to head of service. One trustee is a retired Outdoor Education Adviser for a number of Local Authorities and is a former chair of the OEAP and one of the original 'architects' and writers of National Guidance [oeapng.info](http://oeapng.info) Two current officers work part time with PAA/TOP and part time as outdoor education advisers. One of these is employed by a consortium of Local Authorities in Northwest Wales. Many of our regional stakeholders are heads of outdoor education centres and/or Outdoor Education Advisers. Graham French is the chair of the North Wales Stakeholder group and was interviewed by your committee last week.

• If residential outdoor education was free for all children, are there any other barriers that might prevent children attending?

• The Bill doesn't cover the costs of clothing or footwear for children attending residential visits. Is a lack of appropriate clothing an issue you've come across? If so, what can be done and by who to address this?

Many of our staff and trustees have extensive experience of working in residential outdoor education centres in a variety of roles from tutor/instructor to head of service. One trustee is a retired Outdoor Education Adviser for a number of Local Authorities and a current officer works part time with PAA/TOP and part time as an OEA for LAs in Northwest Wales.

Most schools and centres work together to ensure there are as few barriers to participation as possible. Heads and SMTs in schools are usually aware of families that need extra support from early years onward. Schools often have strategies in place to support these families with uniform and costs for other activities. Many if not all centres will provide a range of equipment for activities including hats, fleeces, gloves, rucksacks, wellingtons and boots. Some even can provide water bottles and loan thermos flasks. The detail of what centres can provide is part of the pre course liaison between schools and providers. 'Kit lists' are usually produced by schools prior to residential visits and many providers will offer to attend a parent briefing where clothing requirements are usually covered.

• Consultations on the draft Bill found that after financial constraints, the biggest barriers to children and young people accessing residential outdoor education is both children's and parent's anxiety and uncertainty. Is this something that you recognise and, if so, what could be done to address these concerns?

Yes, we agree. In our experience we find that schools which have a progression of outdoor and residential experiences overcome anxieties from both sides at an early stage. This issue is less likely to occur by the time a 3- or 5-day residential experience is offered in years 4 onward. Some schools for example organise the first overnight stay within the school grounds. This is

cost effective and uses existing facilities for toilets, catering and security with which both pupils and carers will be familiar. By the time a five-day OE residential is offered at year 3,4 or above, these anxieties and fears should be allayed.

• How can the needs of all children be met so they can fully participate in residential outdoor education? In particular children with physical disabilities, mental health issues including anxiety, and those children with additional learning needs?

Careful planning that considers fair treatment reasonable adjustment as a starting point. Schools that have a progressive exposure to outdoor education and learning outside the classroom are used to dealing with these issues prior to attendance and can plan and prepare in advance.

• There aren't any providers in Wales who offer specialised provision for children with more complex needs. If the Bill passes, this leaves a serious gap in ensuring equity of provision in Wales. What needs to be done, and by who, to ensure that all children regardless of their needs can access the offer of residential outdoor education in Wales?

Many centres already will have included young people with needs. This might be by adapting activities to cater for individual needs, providing extra staffing and offering extra places for carers if appropriate. Existing centres may benefit from sharing expertise from charity based UK providers such as Bendrigg Lodge [Residential Activity Centre For Disabled People \(bendrigg.org.uk\)](http://bendrigg.org.uk) and the Calvert Trust [Calvert Lakes – Your Adventure Starts Here](#) (or Calvert Exmoor and Calvert Kielder).

Welsh Government recognises the role of the Outdoor Education Advisers National Guidance (OEAPNG) as a primary source of advice, information and good practice regarding many if not all of the issues raised in the questions above.

[Educational visits and outdoor learning | GOV.WALES](#)

OEAPNG advises that each local authority has an experienced and competent Outdoor Education Adviser. NG also advises that each school has an educational visits coordinator who 'should be an experienced Visit Leader with sufficient status within the establishment to guide the working practice of colleagues leading outdoor learning and visits'.

[National Guidance | \(oeapng.info\)](https://www.oeapng.info)

OEAP recognises that Providers holding the LOTC Quality Badge have already undergone sufficient scrutiny to allow schools to focus on the important considerations unique to their visit.

Since 2015, The Outdoor Partnership has been breaking down barriers and improving access to the outdoors for children, young people, and adults with pan-disabilities through their Inclusive Adventure Programme improving community assets (workforce (professional and voluntary), capital, community-based clubs and groups etc). The knowledge and expertise already exist within the network which is the Outdoor Partnership and would be willing to support.

• Are you confident that there is capacity within the residential outdoor education sector to accommodate the potential increase of all schools in Wales using their centres?

Do you mean the provision that currently exists within Wales?

• The Bill provides that a course of residential outdoor education doesn't need to be provided on one visit. Do you think that this is the right approach, or would you like to see a requirement for the course? to always be the full four nights and five days?

If the one-week residential outdoor education wasn't feasible the outdoor education experience could be spread out carefully during KS2 and KS3 with the outdoor experience for the young person being more valuable and impactful with a lead in programme (e.g. on site activities) and progression into community provision.

Value for money V's value for time

•What is your view on setting a minimum level of requirements for providers of residential outdoor education to meet before they provide visits for schools. What would be the benefits and drawbacks from your perspectives?

LoTC quality badge

•Some responses to Sam Rowlands' consultations raised concerns that the Bill would lead to a significant increase of funding to the sector which could result in new organisations forming to offer off the shelf courses so duties under the Bill can be met. What needs to be done, and by who, to ensure that high quality provision is provided?

LoTC quality badge. AALS also exists (but not legally required to report on quality)