

Statement in support of The Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

YouthLink Scotland Youth Work and Outdoor Learning Network Statement
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(Scotland) Bill.

About

The Outdoor Learning Network is a YouthLink Scotland network of third-sector charities and social enterprises. It works with thousands of young people annually by providing outdoor learning opportunities to inspire and empower people to develop the qualities, skills, and attributes they will need in their futures.

Aims

The group aims to ensure that all children and young people can benefit from outdoor and residential experiences in the future. It has long campaigned for more young people to experience outdoor residential learning. The members are pleased to have contributed to the early proposals through their organisation's skill, reach, and determination.

We support the main policy aims of The Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill. We will continue to work alongside outdoor learning partners and youth work providers to build cross-party and civic society support for the Bill.

We believe the Financial Memorandum needs closer scrutiny and encourage members of the Committee to consider how recognising and growing the youth work sector can help financially in meeting the stated policy aims.

In Support of the Vision

We believe residential outdoor education should be a mandatory part of the curriculum for all learners in Scotland.

The consultation on the Proposed Members' Bill reflected the recognition of outdoor education's benefits, including personal development, educational attainment, skills-building, teamwork, and an enhanced connection to nature. We believe that a rights-based approach to learning should include young people experiencing outdoor residential education as standard.

The Crucial Role of Youth Work

While it is great to see progress on the Bill, we wish to re-state the role of youth work if we want to deliver on its intention successfully. Youth work significantly and positively contributes to several public policy areas, particularly its integral role in learning for young people. Youth work supports formal learning; youth workers meet young people where they are to develop practical life skills while complementing formal learning.

Critical outcomes of outdoor education are personal growth and helping young people develop confidence, leadership, and problem-solving skills. By explicitly integrating youth work, the Bill can address the physical and mental considerations and emotional and social dimensions of learning. This is built into the youth work approach and the [National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework](#), providing a structure for reflective learning conversations with young people on their youth work journey.

A youth worker can provide this relationship-based support in an ongoing way before, during, and after residential outdoor education experiences. This

continuity helps young people process their experiences, apply new skills and maintain the momentum of personal and learning development. This is the case, particularly for those who may be vulnerable or marginalised, including those from SIMD groups 1 and 2, who we know benefit massively from the outdoor education experience. Youth work can sustain the community support and connection required to get the most out of these experiences.

Youth work's emphasis on being a rights-respecting and rights-promoting practice with inclusivity built into its ethos means youth workers can help ensure that the bill's implementation reaches the most minoritised learners and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Youth work organisations can facilitate youth group participation, ensuring that outdoor education's benefits are distributed equitably and tailored. In these adaptations' youth work can meet the diverse needs of learners, ensuring accessibility and relevance to those taking part.

Youth work is at the heart of local authorities and the third sector, with youth workers often collaborating with school leaders and supporting integrating residential outdoor education into the broader curriculum. By involving local communities, youth workers can help build supportive networks that enhance the delivery and sustainability of outdoor education programmes. We believe the asset of youth work in delivering upon the aims of this bill should be explicitly considered in the policy and the financial memorandum following the consultation at Stage 1. By protecting and growing the youth work sector, we can bring the expertise in meaningful youth participation and community development to the forefront of programme delivery.

Through their ongoing relationships with young people, youth workers can provide crucial insights into the long-term impact on their development. Beyond the residential experience, youth workers can help sustain the impact by engaging students in follow-up activities, reinforcing and building upon the skills and lessons learned, and growing the outdoor learning community.

Next Steps

Youth work can significantly enhance the potential success of delivering the Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill by providing holistic support, ensuring inclusivity, and sustaining and creating new partnerships between schools, communities, and young people.

The explicit integration of youth work into this Bill can help ensure that the ambition of residential outdoor education is realised for young learners across Scotland.

We look forward to engaging members of the Education, Children, and Young People Committee as the Bill progresses and campaigning to ensure that this Bill and its core purpose of delivering quality outdoor residential experiences are a right for young learners in Scotland.

Contact

For more information about this Bill, please contact YouthLink Scotland's Policy & Research Manager Kevin Kane on kkane@youthlink.scot.