



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Convener  
Education, Children and Young People  
Committee  
c/o Clerk to the Committee

Liz Smith MSP

9 October 2024

Dear Convener

**Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill**

I understand that the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill, for which I am the Member in charge, has been referred to your committee for Stage 1 scrutiny.

The Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU) has provided support to me in the preparation and drafting of the Bill. As part of that role, NGBU has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Bill in order to ensure that best practice has been followed and that the Bill's impact has been appropriately identified and considered.

The EQIA is attached at the Annex for the Committee's information.

Yours sincerely

**Liz Smith MSP**

## ANNEX

### Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill</b>	
<b>(1) Aims of the Policy</b>	
What is the purpose of the proposed policy?	<p>The Bill's policy objective is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>offer all pupils attending local authority-run or grant aided schools the opportunity of experiencing one week's (five days and four nights) of residential outdoor education during their school career.</b></li></ul>
What are the anticipated outcomes of the policy?	<p>The Member in charge of this Bill (Liz Smith MSP) believes that attending such courses can have positive outcomes for young people, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• helping them develop a lifelong connection and concern for the natural environment;</li><li>• increasing their confidence</li><li>• raising their self-esteem;</li><li>• building their self-reliance and resilience;</li><li>• giving them an understanding of how to deal with new challenges and manage risk; and</li><li>• helping them to know what it means to be part of a team, to learn leadership skills and the importance of valuing friendship.</li></ul> <p>The Member has stated that:</p> <p>“Outdoor education is one of the most valuable and rewarding learning experiences that any young person can have throughout their whole school career. In particular, residential outdoor education, when young people can be away for a week in an environment very far removed from their own, can be life-changing”.<sup>1</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup> [liz-smith-consultation-document-final.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

The Member notes, however, the decline in the number of outdoor centres across Scotland, particularly since local authority reorganisation in 1996, and is concerned that council budget reductions in recent years has led to a so-called “postcode lottery” as to whether a young person has the chance to attend a residential course.

The Member believes that making it a statutory obligation for all local authorities to provide this opportunity will rectify this.

The Member recognises that there is no single generic definition of “outdoor education”, but believes that, as this Bill relates to school pupils, that used by Learning and Teaching Scotland (later Education Scotland) in its 2010 report, *Curriculum for Excellence for outdoor learners*, encapsulates her view:

“residential experiences refer to educational visits where outdoor learning is the main focus of the experience and which include one or more overnight stays. Residential experiences include using outdoor centres or youth hostels, camping, bivouacking, snow-holing or sailing boats.”<sup>2</sup>

This report also highlighted some of the benefits of attending a residential course, stating that:

“Spending time away from the home environment gives children and young people opportunities to develop:

- confidence, by living more independently and making their own decisions,
- resilience, by having individual and group ownership for learning, community living and sharing free time,
- a sense of adventure, by exploring new places and new environments,
- an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity,

---

<sup>2</sup> [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

- a chance to reflect on experiences and learning.”<sup>3</sup>

The Member received several responses to her consultation on the Bill from expert organisations and individuals, which also highlighted beneficial outcomes.

Universities Scotland, which represents all 19 of the country’s universities, said that it had:

“helpful evidence of the educational and wider benefits that outdoor education offers young people across Scotland. We see this enhancing the learner experience whilst at school and we also see strong complementarity between the benefits that accrue to pupils whilst at school and how this would assist them as school-leavers to move onto university, as one possible positive destination.”<sup>4</sup>

Comunn na Gàidhlig, which delivers extra-curricular opportunities for pupils pursuing Gaelic medium education, also drew attention to the wider benefits of outdoor education:

“We wholeheartedly agree with the benefits of outdoor education as outlined in the Bill consultation paper - the contribution it can make to young people's confidence, their ability to work with others, their appreciation of the outdoor environment, the health benefits and so on. An introduction to this at a young age can have life-long benefits for young people. The decline in these opportunities should be a matter of national concern.”<sup>5</sup>

Ms Kathy Murgatroyd, who is a retired outdoor education teacher, commented:

“Outdoor education changes the lives of the children who are lucky enough to partake. For some, it is the only time they will get to have a week away from their family and area. They will be introduced to a whole new world,

<sup>3</sup> [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

<sup>4</sup> [Response Data \(squarespace.com\)](https://www.squarespace.com)

<sup>5</sup> [Response\\_190333385 \(squarespace.com\)](https://www.squarespace.com)

make new friends and try activities that could stay with them for life. A quote from one of my pupils, 'Miss, this is like a calendar, but we're in it'.<sup>6</sup>

The social enterprise, Inspiralba, which provides employability and pre-employability support for young people facing barriers to work, remarked:

“A residential outdoor experience can be the spark that ignited a lifelong interest in the outdoors. It can also be the place where a young person who struggles with the daily challenges of academic work in school can shine or where a young person to step beyond their comfort zone and feel proud for their efforts, learning lifelong lessons in resilience. These kinds of experiences are so important for our young people at a time where mental health challenges are increasing and confidence levels diminishing - the outdoors is a gateway to mental, physical and emotional health benefits which are often on our doorstep but unknown to many young people and adults due to lack of exposure and support to enjoy the incredible natural assets that Scotland has.”<sup>7</sup>

and the Field Studies Council, which is an outdoor learning charity that offers residential and day courses across Great Britain, commented:

“High quality outdoor learning has multiple benefits for both academic development and personal growth. Connecting to nature has health and wellbeing benefits, giving learners a chance to develop their confidence outdoors which can develop into a beneficial lifetime habit.”<sup>8</sup>

The Member believes that, particularly in the post-COVID-19 period, allowing all young people in local authority-run and grant aided schools to participate in residential outdoor education could have long-term positive effects.

---

<sup>6</sup> [Response\\_192393995 \(squarespace.com\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Response\\_192914305 \(squarespace.com\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Response Data \(squarespace.com\)](#)

	<p>In relation to the pandemic, in March 2021, Professors John J Reilly of the University of Strathclyde and Mark S Tremblay of the University of Ottawa noted that:</p> <p>“Our latest research suggests that during lockdown most children spent less time outdoors, became less physically active and spent more time in front of screens. As a result, this may now be the least fit generation of children in history... Our behaviours are formed and reinforced by habit. Some children may have lost the habit of playing outside over the past year, replacing it with sedentary screen time, while others might not have had the opportunity to develop the habit at all.”<sup>9</sup></p> <p>The Member considers that allowing young people to experience the benefits of living an active, healthy lifestyle, and giving them a greater appreciation of nature and the outdoors, will have multiple long-term benefits for individuals, for example in respect of improved resilience and physical and mental health. It will also teach young people leadership skills which will be invaluable in the long term. Appreciation for nature and the outdoors may also result in a greater number of young people being interested in the outdoors and the natural environment as they grow up.</p>
<p>Who will be affected by the policy?</p>	<p>The proposal will affect all pupils attending local authority-run or grant aided schools. However, attending courses will not be compulsory for pupils.</p> <p>The Member noted however that, currently, such experiences are only offered to a limited number of pupils, and that this can be highly dependent on the local authority area where they live. Therefore, it is the Member’s view that it is necessary for there to be a statutory requirement to offer residential outdoor education to all school pupils.</p>
<p><b>(2) What is known about the diverse needs of those who will be affected by the policy</b></p>	

<sup>9</sup> [Rewild your kids: why playing outside should be a post-pandemic priority \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/rewild-your-kids-why-playing-outside-should-be-a-post-pandemic-priority-151111)

Gender* reassignment	The minimum age for gender reassignment treatment in Scotland is 18, so this Bill has no impact on this area.
Religion or Belief	The Bill has no direct impact on this area. However, when organising these experiences, local authorities, school leaders and providers of residential outdoor education, will have to ensure that religious festivals, opportunities to worship, dietary requirements or other matters associated with the faith of pupils and teachers are taken consideration of, and that no indirect discrimination on grounds of religion and belief occurs in order to comply with the provisions of this Bill.
Age*	<p>Although the Bill does not explicitly specify the school years in which the residential outdoor education should take place, the Member is of the view that this affords sufficient flexibility to allow local authorities and school leaders to decide when pupils and classes go on residential outdoor education.</p> <p>The Member considers that, in practical terms, it would be most appropriate for this to take place between P6 and S4, as children below P6 are likely to be too young to participate in all outdoor activities, while young people above S5 will either be sitting exams or will have left school.</p> <p>When planning residential outdoor experiences, care should be taken to ensure that opportunities offered are appropriate to each pupil's age group and emotional and physical maturity.</p> <p>For many pupils, particularly those from primary schools, the residential visit might be the first time that they have been away from the family home, so appropriate pastoral care should be available.</p>
Disability*	<p>The residential outdoor experience will be offered to all disabled pupils and pupils with additional support requirements.</p> <p>Of Scotland's eight grant aided schools, seven are designated for disabled pupils with specific requirements. It can be reasonably assumed that the schools will be in a position to make an appropriate decision in respect of each pupil's requirements.</p>

	<p>Disabled pupils and those with additional support requirements in mainstream local authority schools would have to be offered residential outdoor activities and facilities suitable for their requirements, accompanied, if required, by a classroom assistant or parent. It would be for local authorities and/or relevant school leaders to ensure that this takes place.</p>
Race	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Sex	<p>The residential outdoor education will be offered to all pupils.</p> <p>Although it will not be compulsory, schools and local authorities should make a particular effort to ensure that girls are encouraged to take the offer up, in light of concerns that they are traditionally less active in terms of sport.</p> <p>The reasons for this are complex, however in 2023, the Youth Sport Trust noted:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“By age 7, girls are already less active than boys and this disparity widens as they move from childhood into adolescence. Adolescent girls are more likely to experience barriers to participation than boys with the biggest drop-off occurring during the transition from primary to secondary school.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">At this time there are multiple factors that affect girls’ participation including disruption to friendship groups, the onset of puberty and declining body confidence and the increasing need to ‘fit in’ and be accepted amongst their peers.”<sup>10</sup></p> <p>It will be for local authorities and school leaders to ensure that activities offered, and the facilities made available, do not inadvertently exclude girls from participating.</p>
Maternity and Pregnancy	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Sexual Orientation	The Bill has no direct impact on this area. However, schools will have to ensure than young LGBT people

<sup>10</sup> <https://rb.gy/tm6bs1>



	are not at risk of being subject to bullying or stigmatisation during a residential stay.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
<b>(3) Is there enough information to help understand the needs and/or experiences of those affected by the policy</b>	
Gender* reassignment	n/a
Religion or Belief	Yes, although the Scottish Government might decide to consult faith groups when developing guidance to consider where there any specific requirements that might need to be met.
Age*	Yes.
Disability*	Yes. However, the accessibility of the outdoor centres and the nature of the activities involved should be appropriate to accommodate all disabled pupils. Therefore, the Scottish Government might decide to incorporate the accessibility of centres into guidance it issues under the Bill. Inserted section 6B(4) of the Bill already requires such guidance to include provision about how education authorities and the managers of grand-aided schools should assess whether residential outdoor education is suitable to a pupil's age, ability, aptitude and any additional support requirements.
Race	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Sexual Orientation	Yes.
Sex	Yes.
Maternity and Pregnancy	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
If not, what other information is required	
<b>(4) What does the information given say about how the policy might impact positively and negatively on different groups</b>	

Gender* reassignment	The minimum age for gender reassignment treatment in Scotland is 18, so this Bill has no impact on this area.
Religion or Belief	There are no expected positive or negative impacts. However as noted at part (2) of this paper, local authorities, school leaders and providers of residential outdoor education, will have to ensure that religious festivals, opportunities to worship, dietary requirements or other matters associated with the faith of pupils and teachers are taken consideration of, and that no indirect discrimination on grounds of religion and belief occurs in order to comply with the provisions of this Bill.
Age*	It is hoped that the Bill will have a positive impact across all of the age groups of the pupils involved.
Disability*	<p>It is hoped that the Bill would have a positive impact on young disabled people.</p> <p>Research in 2014<sup>11</sup> by the Calvert Trust, which is a provider of outdoor education for disabled people, found that accessing these experiences had led to the key outcomes of an increase in users' confidence, independence and realisation of personal ability resulting from challenge, teamwork and achievement.</p> <p>in 2022, the Bendrigg Trust<sup>12</sup>, which also specialises in outdoor residential programmes for disabled people recorded increases in self-confidence, greater independence, improved physical and mental wellbeing, increased feelings of inclusion, and improved social skills for over 90% of its visitors.</p> <p>The Early Years Alliance has noted that for children with additional support needs:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Exploring the world outdoors can help [them] to overcome challenges and learn new skills, building their resilience, and boosting their self-confidence. And this in turn has a hugely positive impact on their mental health. Having</p>

<sup>11</sup> [Crosbie, J. \(2014\) Value of outdoor education for people with disabilities: an in-depth case study of the Calvert Trust. PhD thesis. University of Edinburgh. \(PhD Thesis\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Freedom - Bendrigg Trust Impact Report 2021 \(simplebooklet.com\)](#)

	<p>the chance to shine, to experience personal satisfaction, enjoyment and achievement is good for anyone. It increases motivation and general happiness in life. All children deserve to experience this.”<sup>13</sup></p> <p>The Member therefore considers that the provisions of the Bill will have a positive impact on the lives of disabled young people.</p>
Race	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Sex	<p>It is hoped that the Bill will have a positive impact on all young people attending residential courses, regardless of gender.</p> <p>In particular, the provisions of the Bill might result in more girls participating in residential outdoor education.</p>
Maternity and Pregnancy	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
Sexual Orientation	The Bill has no direct impact on this area, however schools must ensure that pupils who identify as LGBT will be confident to attend and will not feel to be at risk of bullying or exclusion.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	The Bill has no direct impact on this area.
<b>Completed by the Non-Government Bills Unit: 9 October 2024</b>	

\*Although not a protected characteristic, carers should be given specific consideration in this category (e.g. the potential impact on those who care for older people).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/how-outdoor-play-can-be-beneficial-children-special-educational-needs>

**Member's Comment on NGBU's Equalities Impact Assessment**

Evidence gaps identified

**None**

**Member's comment:**

Adverse impacts identified

**None**

**Member's comment:**

**Completed by Liz Smith MSP: 9 October 2024**