



YouthLink Scotland Response to The Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill

YouthLink Scotland has cooperated with our youth work Outdoor Learning Network to support The Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill.

About

YouthLink Scotland's network of third-sector charities and social enterprises 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

We want to ensure that all children and young people can benefit from outdoor and residential experiences. Our member networks have long campaigned for more young people to experience outdoor residential learning.

Policy Memorandum

YouthLink Scotland broadly supports the Bill's main policy aims, as contained in the policy memorandum. Since the pre-bill consultation, positive adjustments have been made, including lowering the age to include primary school children, allowing flexibility in the upper age range, and acknowledging the commitment to dedicated Gaelic outdoor residential provision. We note that there is renewed clarity on the number of nights (4) and days (5) to constitute uptake of the proposal and welcome the flexibility in how that can be taken up to the total amount. It is welcome that Scottish Ministers must provide guidance to Education Authorities on provision and funding and that this will be written into the amended Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as the Bill proceeds through the Scottish Parliament. The policy memorandum shows marked steps for the policy's inclusivity and workability and is progress from the original proposals.

Financial Memorandum

YouthLink Scotland believes the Financial Memorandum needs closer scrutiny. As such, we encourage members of the Committee to consider how recognising and growing the youth work sector can help financially in meeting the stated policy aims.

We will continue to work alongside outdoor learning partners and youth work providers to build cross-party and civic society support for these aims and investment in supportive youth work infrastructure.

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.

Pete Moir, Operations Manager, The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scotland and Chairperson of the YouthLink Scotland Outdoor Learning Network, on the role of youth work:

“Young people develop confidence in their abilities, demonstrate leadership and compassion, and work as a team. They will learn skills which are transferable back to their communities. It will develop skills and confidence to replicate such journeys in later life and be affordable. Thousands of such journeys (DofE expeditions) are facilitated each year by youth workers with a basic outdoor qualification, such as a Lowland Leader Award, to over 20% of 14-year-olds in Scotland. Many of these leaders will continue to journey with the young people through their lives”.

Pete went on,

“We need to upskill our youth work sector to develop basic outdoor skills which the experienced outdoor instructor can complement. We want to promote choice for young people and those who work with them to find the most appropriate residential activity. It may be a 5-day residential at an outdoor centre, but it could also be in a self-catering hostel or camping on a DofE expedition. The options are many”.

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.

Summary

Youth work must gain parity with other parts of the education system. [Professor Hayward's recommendations](#) highlighted how youth work is integral to the learning system. As such, 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.

This builds on our [Education Reform Bill Stage 1 calls](#) for youth work as an interconnected partner in the education and skills landscape. This includes sustained and equitable investment and more vital coordination to ensure young people can access the support they need, where and

when it's required, addressing the purposes described in Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Youth work can significantly enhance the potential success of delivering on the proposals of the Bill by providing holistic support, ensuring inclusivity, and sustaining and creating new partnerships between schools, communities, and young people.

YouthLink Scotland looks 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 an absolute right for young learners in Scotland.

ENDS

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EDITOR'S NOTES