



A proposal for a Scottish Parliament Bill to ensure that young people have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education

Consultation by Liz Smith MSP, Member for Mid Scotland and Fife

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YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of our sector. We are an organisation with a sharp focus on the needs of young people. Our approach is founded upon being ethical, equitable and non-discriminatory. We are an organisation that promotes learning, innovation and progressive thinking and we are committed to the highest standards of protection and safety for young people.

Our vision is for a nation that values its young people and their contribution to society, supported through key relationships with youth workers to achieve their potential. As the collective voice of the youth work sector, we represent their interests, policy and practice needs to local and national government. We achieve this by supporting the sector to demonstrate the impact and value of their work and by promoting a positive image of young people and youth work.

The organisation campaigns for equality of access to high quality youth work for all young people, supported by a workforce that is confident, skilled, well led and effective, while playing an essential role in delivering Scotland's national outcomes. We have been calling for greater recognition of outdoor learning and youth work's integral role within the education system. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill by Liz Smith MSP.

Youth Work and the Policy Landscape

Youth work in Scotland is deeply embedded within the national policy landscape. The sector makes a significant contribution on equality and inclusion and improving outcomes for children and young people and ensures their rights are respected and enhanced. We know from research that youth work contributes to a growing body of evidence developing in Scotland making a significant contribution to young people's lives through providing opportunities to lead and help others as well support to become more active citizens, broadening their horizons and realising their potential. However, we need to see greater recognition of the benefits of youth work as a form of non-formal education. As part of this process, we need to see the role of outdoor learning and key practitioners highlighted as key and positive contributors to the educational and life chances of young people in Scotland.

Youth work and outdoor learning

There is a need to see greater recognition of the benefits of youth work as a form of non-formal education. Youth work opportunities, including outdoor learning and outdoor residential learning, should be available to all young people. YouthLink Scotland believes that outdoor education is one of the most valuable and rewarding learning experiences that any young person can have throughout their whole school career. A sustainable and resilient future for the residential outdoor education sector is possible. However, this can only happen within a coherent policy framework, built

on partnership working between youth work (as the key partner) and schools, local authorities, government and the entire residential sector.

This proposal can be the catalyst for further recognition of the youth work sector, provided there is investment in the supportive infrastructure required to realise the aims of the proposed Bill. There is a real opportunity to create outdoor learning opportunities into the curriculum beyond a one week residential. We are ready to discuss this further with Parliamentarians and key partners as the Bill progresses.

To achieve a vision for excellence and equity, all learners should be given a broader offer, based on their needs, including non-formal learning, such as youth work and youth awards and outdoor learning experiences. We believe this can be achieved through clearer guidance for all leaders regarding collaboration in curriculum design, including greater alignment between community and school planning, a rights-based curriculum offers for all learners (including access to learning through youth work) in a formal setting and in the community - ensuring every learner can access outdoor learning.

YouthLink Scotland's youth work outdoor learning network

We are grateful to YouthLink Scotland's youth work outdoor learning network¹ for their campaigning and commitment to this proposed Bill. They have all provided fantastic examples of the many benefits of outdoor learning from their on-going work alongside young people. As examples, Outward Bound Trust, Scotland, 5-day school programme² provides outdoor activities in National Parks and wild places, guided by highly-qualified instructors. Young people are supported to tackle challenging activities and learn in and around nature. The young people make friends, develop new skills, take responsibility and grow in confidence grows as a result. Residential outdoor education undertaken by Calderglen High School in East Kilbride (as part of the Learning Away initiative) "*Brilliant Residentials*", works with cluster primary schools and a nearby special school, on an agreed programme with residential centres. The focus is on the skills and abilities of the students, developing subject specific residentials, leadership opportunities and support with primary to secondary transition and the development of study skills for second year students. The programme is supported by the residential outdoor centres and partners with third year pupils being offered Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions, voyages with the Ocean Youth Trust, John Muir Awards and subject-specific revision classes. The Learning Away summary of this study quotes former **Head Teacher, Tony McDaid**, on how this project affected the pupils, staff and school as follows:

*"this programme has not only affected students and staff, it has also integrated with and impacted on the ethos of the school. Its partners and the wider community. Brilliant residentials have played a significant part in raising attainment and aspiration, encouraging cohesion within and beyond the school, and transforming teaching and learning in and outside the classroom"*³.

¹ [YouthLink Scotland | Outdoor Learning](#)

² <https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/courses/basecamp-5-day-adventure-16-19>

³ <https://learningaway.org.uk/case-studies/how-residentials-are-changing-our-school/>.

Neil Baird, Head of Outdoors and Adventure, Scouts Scotland said of residential experiences:

"We want children and young people to love challenges, to be intrigued by mistakes, to enjoy effort and to love learning. And we believe that residential adventure provides the perfect vehicle for this".

The impact of outdoor residential experiences captured by one parent:

"Thank you so much, the child that came back was different to the child I sent. They were more independent, confident and willing to give things a go where before they were reserved and shy".

Martin Davidson, Director, Scotland and Innovation, on the potential impact of the proposed Bill:

"Residential outdoor courses are often one of the most transformational experiences children and young people have during their education. Adventure, challenge, time away from home allows young people to develop self-belief, confidence, resilience, social competence and environmental awareness that enables them to survive and thrive in the in their everyday lives. Time in the extraordinary world of the outdoor residential impacts on a young person's ordinary, day to day lives. Liz Smith's MSP proposed members bill on outdoor education will ensure there is equity in the access to quality residential outdoor education in Scotland, and that all young people benefit"

Iain Barbour, Lead Volunteer, Ocean Youth Trust Scotland on the positive impact of outdoor adventure experiences

"At the end of the voyage, we asked each young person how they felt. Steven wouldn't answer the question and stayed quiet, which we were surprised at. He later came up on deck where myself and three other staff members were standing and bravely told us he was ready to talk. He broke down and said the experience had made him realise he didn't want to return to the life he was leading and all the temptations and negative influences. He didn't like what he was becoming and had realised he was worth and able to do far more. This was a pivotal moment, an epiphany for this young man. And it was a privilege to see the transformation".

Group Leader, Action for Children on the benefits of outdoor learning activity

"John took part in his first voyage this quarter where he not only sailed and camped for the first time, but he also completed his programme logbook. As a result, John is now on course to achieve nine SQA qualifications. This is an incredible and unprecedented achievement for John and will provide a fresh start and perspective as he is diverted further still from his previous tendencies to engage in antisocial behaviour and involvement in the criminal justice system".

Pete Moir, Operations Manager, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scotland

"Young people develop confidence in their own abilities, demonstrate leadership and compassion, 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 who have 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 can be complemented by the experienced outdoor instructor. 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 could also be in a self-catering hostel or camping on a DofE expedition. The options are many”.

The positive impacts noted above are a snapshot of what can be routinely achieved when different parts of the education system work together in the interests of young people. Youth workers play a key role with young people, building partnerships in schools and across a range of local authority and voluntary service providers. As a result, youth workers and youth organisations are uniquely positioned and primed to help deliver on the ambitions of the Bill.

In support of the main aim of the proposed Bill

YouthLink Scotland supports the main aim of the proposed Bill to provide a statutory obligation, ensuring that young people in local authority-run and grant aided schools in Scotland are provided with the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education. However, we have provided some recommendations that could strengthen the proposal.

There is a significant question arising over whether the age range of 12-16 is appropriate for maximum uptake in the residential outdoor experience. We would recommend that the stated ages of those covered by the proposal could be changed to something like as follows:

- The Bill could state “*high school attendees*” (or something more expansive to consider those learners not attending school) instead of explicitly outlining the ages of 12-16. This would consider early and late birthdays and those who remain at school at 17 and 18 years of age. We believe the upper age of 18 would be more suitable, ensuring no one misses out on a residential outdoor education experience. This is also in keeping with the spirit of incorporation of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law⁴ which considers rights of children and young people up to the age of 18.
- Our member groups have discussed the crucial transition phase between primary and secondary education. There is existing infrastructure at primary school for outdoor residential experiences we can build upon and learn from. If we wish to embed outdoor residential learning experiences for young people as a crucial and integral part of their learner journey then we should consider investing in existing assets. We would therefore welcome further discussions

⁴ [UNCRC Incorporation \(parentingacrossscotland.org\)](https://parentingacrossscotland.org/)

on how we can utilise the best of the current outdoor learning offer, connecting existing primary school experiences and in consideration of the additional infrastructure that will be required to successfully implement the Bill.

YouthLink Scotland hopes the proposed Bill gains the required support in the Scottish Parliament. We are interested to work alongside those leading on the Bill to discuss the detail of these points so we get the best return in practice for progress made in legislation. We want to make sure as many young people benefit from the proposal and ensure that this change can breathe further life into the outdoor learning provision in Scotland.

Conditions for successfully Implementing the Bill

Following consultation with our member groups, we believe the following further conditions would be required for this Bill to have a successful impact on young people, organisations, schools and communities:

- Understanding and recognition of the impact that can be made through the various elements of youth work practice at a local and national level.
- Collaboration between youth work stakeholders, outdoor learning organisations, national bodies, local authorities and Scottish Government.
- Understanding and recognition of the professional journey undertaken by youth workers and other practitioners who comprise the outdoor learning sector.
- Necessity for youth work to have parity with other parts of the education system.
- A skilled understanding of the intrinsic journey of young people at various stages of development.
- A solution focussed approach to overcoming barriers facing young people taking up their right to an outdoor residential experience. Taking account of the spiralling cost of the school day, transport alienation, cost of living crisis and the wider support networks required for the most marginalised young people to access their right to outdoor residential experiences.
- Clarity on what constitutes residential outdoor education, as some concerns have been raised that a well-intentioned Bill could lead to a National Citizen Service (NCS) equivalent.
- Opportunities must be residential and encouraged year-round and focus should be on the skills for learning, life and work that are gained on residential as well as benefits to the pupils' teachers and enhancing school life.
- Funding should not be at the detriment of other youth work provision and attempts should be made to limit the steps between funding, schools and providers.
- Programmes should be part of the continuum of outdoor learning from early years to lifelong participation as adults.
- Recommendation to use year groups rather than age to ensure maximum uptake of residential experiences.
- Provision should be within a price envelope and steps should be taken to avoid red tape and convoluted procurement processes from schools and local authorities.

- Suggested minimum of 3 days/2 nights, preferably 5 days/4 nights away from home.
- Must be outcome led, not activity led. There needs to be a quality framework developed to ensure that it is a 'learning' experience for children and young people linked to CfE capacities.
- The proposal should include the widest range of outdoor residential options for young people and consider the thousands of youth workers and volunteers who currently facilitate excellent residential / adventurous activities.

The Bill's role in Education Reform and Scotland's renewal from COVID19

In 2021, the OECD⁵ recommended that Scotland considers how the curriculum provides opportunities to develop a broader range of skills. It acknowledged that youth workers design and deliver learning experiences for young people across communities, schools and colleges, helping to maximise opportunities for learners to develop a broad range of skills, allowing them to achieve and succeed.

We know that youth work played a crucial role in the delivery of emergency hubs and supporting the engagement and continued progression of young people throughout the coronavirus pandemic⁶. We are also aware that the closure of spaces for youth work had a negative impact on many young people⁷⁸. This is why the investment to support and safeguard outdoor learning during COVID19 was so welcome. The Outdoor Education Centres fund and the Outdoor Learning Recovery Fund helped to provide high quality outdoor educational experiences to support young people's recovery. However, ongoing investment and focus will be required to embed the role of outdoor learning within a future-proofed curriculum.

There remains a need to work across the system to understand how best to strengthen support for outdoor learning. We believe there is an opportunity through the Bill to help realise some of the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and other key national priorities, including most notably, the positive role of the outdoor learning sector at delivering upon key OECD recommendations⁹. There is an opportunity from this Bill to secure the future of community facilities so youth work can take place and benefit more young people. This is even more pertinent when considering that youth work can reach some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised young people (a focus in the proposed Bill). The incredible results that youth work can achieve is only attainable when there is proper investment in staff, volunteers, and services at local level.

⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence-bf624417-en.htm>

⁶ [a-vision-for-young-people-thriving-through-residential-outdoor-education.pdf \(soec.org.uk\)](#)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/6363/youth-work-during-the-pandemic-final.pdf>

⁹ [Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government response to OECD Review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Poverty related attainment gap

It is welcome that in the supporting narrative for the Bill there is a focus on those young people facing poverty and the notable difference outdoor residential experiences can make to support their education. The youth work sector is committed to working closely with Scottish Government and Education Scotland to enhance and improve collaborative approaches to tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. We require recognition of the role of youth work, in communities and in partnership with schools and outdoor learning organisations to achieving equity. This will help all local authorities to accelerate progress in tackling the poverty related attainment gap and assist Scottish Government in achieving key targets on poverty. Additionally, continued professional development of practitioners is vital and so we are keen that that any opportunities afforded by the legislation is supported by youth work professionals.

Learning for Sustainability and Youth Work

We note the modified version of the commonly used model of outdoor education and its focus on learning for sustainability, developed by Professor Pete Higgins at the University of Edinburgh¹⁰. This new model captures well the current residential outdoor education sector in Scotland, where the focus is mainly school groups and includes elements of the CfE and LfS. The model includes transitions and progressive experiences, relevant and planned learning, involving the whole school community and led in a safe and professional manner.

Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. As an umbrella term LfS weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences that support young people's development and understanding of the world around them. LfS is an entitlement for all learners within the CfE¹¹ and the UN Sustainable Development Goals¹² and UNCRC¹³ are central to Scotland's national vision¹⁴. Youth Work activity that works towards a sustainable future can be broad ranging and easily linked/interwoven with other themes/issues including:

¹⁰ Higgins, P (1995), Outdoor education provision at Moray House Institute of Education, Scottish Journal of Physical Education, 23(3), 4–11.

¹¹ <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/>

¹² <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/>

¹³ <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

¹⁴ Christie, B & Higgins P. (2020). Educational outcomes of Learning for Sustainability: A Brief Review of Literature. Scottish Government

- sessions, workshops, project visits, group discussions or other educational activities with a sustainability focus, designed to influence young people's attitudes to sustainability;
- projects addressing sustainability issues, initiated by a group of young people and supported by youth workers;
- opportunities for young people to become involved in sustainability campaigns at a local level, perhaps with other members of the local community;
- improving the sustainability of the youth centre, e.g. by addressing waste or energy use, setting up a repair café, or using land around the centre to grow vegetables;
- international non-formal exchanges or learning projects in which one or a group of young people take part and learn about sustainability issues (e.g. local or international volunteering projects, youth gatherings, international youth exchanges);
- encouraging young people to challenge assumptions and actions that are detrimental to an inclusive and equal society, e.g. through local research, conducting interviews, or lobbying or campaigning against unsustainable practices either locally or at national or international level;
- altering personal habits to become more sustainable or working as a group to increase the sustainability of the youth centre¹⁵.

Youth work and partnerships with the environmental sector

Strengthening relationships between the youth work and environmental sectors can lead to an increase environmental awareness¹⁶. Achieving sustainable development goals requires a combined, cross-sector approach from all of society, including youth work. As a sector we are well positioned to support young people to have a voice across all other sectors of society including the Business and Environmental sectors. The legacy building potential of the youth work industry to promote understanding, deliver key messaging, and encourage youth action towards Scotland becoming a net zero nation is unparalleled. The response to the environmental challenges of the climate emergency and the transition to a Net Zero economy, means that new skills will be required in addition to the creation of new jobs. There is an integral relationship between youth work and employability through the role youth work plays in supporting young people in schools, community and post-school contexts. This relationship should be developed further as we continue to adjust to the consequences of lockdowns and its impact on the labour market, which is being acutely felt by young people in Scotland in relation to their future employment prospects. In doing so we can harness the potential of the sector as the gateway to broader learning on green and blue issues.

¹⁵ Adapted from T-Kit 13

¹⁶ Kuo M., Barnes M. & Jordan C. (2019). Do experiences with nature promote learning? Converging evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship. *Frontiers in Psychology*

Naomi Dixon, Development Officer for Learning for Sustainability and Our Bright Future Project Lead at YouthLink Scotland said,

“We are proud to be bringing together young people, environmental and youth work sectors to empower young people to lead future environmental change through participation in more outdoor learning. The aims of Our Bright Future¹⁷ and three key asks, including more time spent learning in and about nature, can help maximise the effectiveness and inclusivity of climate engagement with and for young people. Outdoor education is a fantastic space for youth work to partner with schools to help deliver on and embed learning for sustainability. This supports young people to connect more deeply to the natural world, develop a sense of place and belonging and understand how they can make a positive difference to their environment. The proposed Bill can be the catalyst for more meaningful work in that direction”.

Renewal from the impacts of COVID19

Youth work can help deliver some of the immediate policy implications and challenges arising from the coronavirus outbreak and support the future of Scotland beyond the immediate crisis¹⁸. We believe the innovative work of the sector can be scaled up and can bring about a social return for the spend on youth work provision. The funding landscape for Scotland’s local authority and voluntary sector could be improved as a way to mitigate the devastation we have seen in young people’s education and lives during the most restrictive phases of the coronavirus pandemic.

As we heard from the **COVID19 Education Recovery Group**:

“All were keen to turn the narrative from the negative ‘lost learning’ towards positivity and aspiration. This includes not necessarily talking about ‘catching up’ or focusing on classroom-based learning, but focusing more on what young people feel they need to support their well-being and reconnect with peers and with education in general”¹⁹.

Maximising the positive impact of public spending within education should take cognisance of the vital role youth work can play in a whole education system approach to support our most vulnerable learners. This can be done within schools and provides a bridging link to outdoor learning providers and other services in the community²⁰.

Financial implications of the Bill and developing sector capacity

YouthLink Scotland acknowledges the pressure placed on local and national Governments. However, in a time of financial challenges, it is crucial to draw attention to the value of youth work and evidence that investing in our young people provides

¹⁷ [Learning for Sustainability | Our Bright Future \(youthlinkscotland.org\)](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org) YouthLink Scotland is the policy and advocacy lead in Scotland to help engage young people and youth workers to support UK Wildlife Trusts Our Bright Future Projects to create change for young people, the environment, and their communities.

¹⁸ <https://www.rsecovidcommission.org.uk/coming-out-of-covid-19-reimagining-scotland/>

¹⁹ Scottish Government. (2021). COVID-19 Education Recovery Group minutes: 18 March

²⁰ [https://www.gov.scot/news/closing-the-attainment-gap-4/-](https://www.gov.scot/news/closing-the-attainment-gap-4/)

considerable long-term benefits. As we consider how to renew from the coronavirus pandemic, we ask that local politicians and political parties stand with us by recognising the positive changes youth work brings to the lives of young people and the value of investing in the youth work workforce. Many providers from the outdoor learning sector are confident that sufficient capacity exists to meet any demand arising from the proposed Bill. However, we know there is a social return for a spend on youth work²¹. Therefore, any further resource required should be allocated to develop capacity within the youth work sector as the most cost-effective way to support the aims of the Bill.

The value of youth work lies in the difference it makes directly to the lives of the young people who engage with services and extends further to the many benefits it provides to wider society by tackling inequalities and promoting positive outcomes for individuals. The “*common weal*” benefits from having young people who are engaged in positive activities means they make valuable contributions to their communities. This is why we must enhance the youth work workforce in Scotland.

The success and sustainability of the youth work workforce relies on identity and recognition, learning and development pathways, workforce data and planning and alignment with the Fair Work Framework²². This includes ensuring opportunity, security and respect for those with protected characteristics and seldom heard voices to join and thrive in the sector. Investing time and resource in the workforce will enable young people to thrive through their engagement with excellent youth work practice – including in an outdoor setting.

Equality

As Scotland incorporates the UNCRC into Scots Law and with a Scottish Human Rights Bill on the horizon, we have an opportunity to realise children and young people’s right to different forms of education. Providing a system of education that supports “*the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential*”²³. A rights-based approach is the only way to achieve excellence and equity through Scottish education and to get it right for every child and young person.

Indeed, the national youth work strategy (2014-19) Progress Report²⁴ showed many achievements over the five-year life of the strategy. The report highlighted that the year of the young people, raised the expectations of young people and acknowledged the critical role of youth work moving forward with Scotland’s ambitions to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots Law. In recognition of the rights of young people, Scottish Government has acknowledged there is a significant challenge facing young people with rising social, economic and health inequalities, exacerbated due to the COVID19 pandemic. A new youth work strategy (2022-2027)²⁵ is expected to promote the rights of young people and provide a safe environment for young people to develop and

²¹ [Understanding the Value of Universal Youth Work | The University of Edinburgh](#)

²² <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework/>

²³ [The Right to Education - UNICEF UK](#)

²⁴ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4561/youth-work-strategy-progress-report-final.pdf>

²⁵ [National Youth Work Strategy | YouthLink Scotland](#)

thrive. It has been agreed that this should include on-going access to outdoor learning opportunities. The strategy comes as youth workers stand ready to make a lasting positive impact on children's rights in Scotland.

The new strategy aims to improve outcomes for young people in Scotland through recognised, structured provision of youth work services. Youth work in Scotland is an essential part of a young person's education and social experience which can impact on their life in a variety of ways. The strategy aims to improve access to high quality youth work for young people through universal and targeted approaches leading to improved outcomes for young people's attainment, achievement, health, well-being and social, emotional and cognitive growth. A report by Microsoft Education, which is based on the first cycle of an OECD study on Social and Emotional Skills (2018-20)²⁶, talks about a new approach to learning which cultivates deep learning and the impact this has on equity stating that this approach is "*especially effective for engaging previously disconnected children and youth*"²⁷. For the implementation of the strategy to be effective and the aims of OECD to be upheld there must be a commitment to investing in the outdoor learning sector. We believe this proposal can benefit to those with protected characteristics and experiencing multi forms of inequality, provided equality remains a key consideration throughout the passage of the Bill. To that effect, we believe there should be separate Scottish Parliament Committee sessions and engagement with impacted groups to ascertain and overcome any barriers associated with the proposal.

Education Scotland highlighted *the 'golden threads' that support inclusive learning provision*" and the importance of educators working together and the positive impacts made as a result of youth work practitioners and wider supporting infrastructure of Community Learning and Development (CLD) during the coronavirus pandemic²⁸. Outdoor learning organisations provided opportunities for young people in Scotland's communities through structured programmes and emotional, social and cognitive support when they needed it most. By connecting the impacts of youth work to the wider outdoor learning offer, we can meet the needs of young people, families and communities in Scotland. The youth work strategy will work towards these aims using a professional, accessible, person centred approach. We believe the Bill will help young people to make positive and informed decisions that affect their lives through purposeful interaction that provides development for their future.

Further, youth work is offered to girls and young women to have fun, learn new skills, and to grow in confidence. These youth work spaces have provided an outlet for girls and young women to explore their interests and to enhance their skills and employability²⁹. Moreover, studies have offered insight into the experiences of some BAME young people in Scotland's schools highlighting where improvements can be made through education of cultural differences³⁰. An early report on the impacts of

²⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/social-emotional-skills-study/about/>

²⁷ <https://edudownloads.azureedge.net/msdownloads/Microsoft-EducationReimagined-Paper.pdf>

²⁸ <https://education.gov.scot/media/wadsqlvg/getting-it-right-for-all-learners-during-covid-19.pdf>

²⁹

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b9aaa1c0bdba3921bdda433/t/5dc2cdb26ad765150b8959c1/1573047736181/IYS_EDI_Report_Artwork_1_1.pdf

³⁰ Ibid

COVID19 carried out by Girlguiding Scotland highlighted that “*Young women aged 15 to 18 particularly report feeling worried, stressed and overwhelmed. The factors most affecting them are uncertainty about school and education (76%), feelings of loneliness and isolation (51%), and a lack of freedom and independence (44%)*”.

An Inclusion Scotland COVID19 Evidence Survey indicated that the COVID19 crisis has had a significant impact on the mental health of disabled people and their carers. The consultation on incorporation of the UNCRC indicated that children with disabilities experience barriers to the realisation of their rights often as a result of the environment in which they live rather than as a result of their impairment. Inclusivity must therefore be considered in the renewed outdoor learning residential offer. We believe additional provision for outdoor residential experiences can have a positive impact on this grouping and across all the protected characteristics.

YouthLink Scotland would be happy work alongside our youth work and equality network and wider network groups to help marginalised voices own the discussion. This could help inform any Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) accompanying the proposed Bill.

Summary

When young people are away for a week in a new and inspiring environment it can be life-changing. We agree with Liz Smith MSP that the public discourse on education is often made up of debating in terms of numbers of teachers, the number of SQA passes and the percentage increase in literacy and numeracy skills and class sizes. This comes at a time when we should be turning our attention to the qualitative aspects of education, which are intrinsic to what can be defined as good quality education and when high quality youth work is so crucial to the prospects of young people in Scotland.

YouthLink Scotland supports the proposed Member’s Bill. We look forward to working alongside key partners to bring the legislation to fruition for the benefit of the outdoor learning sector and those 1000s of young people it supports.

ENDS

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EDITOR’S NOTES

YouthLink Scotland outdoor learning network.

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