OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

DRAFT

# Education, Children and Young People Committee

**Wednesday 6 November 2024**

Session 6

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Wednesday 6 November 2024

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## EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE
**28th Meeting 2024, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

*Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

*Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
*Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)
Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
*Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
*Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)

*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)
Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes (University of Cumbria)
Professor Greg Mannion (University of Stirling)
Dr Roger Scrutton (University of Edinburgh)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Pauline McIntyre

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

# Scottish Parliament

## Education, Children and Young People Committee

*Wednesday 6 November 2024*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]*

## Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

**The Convener (Douglas Ross):** Good morning and welcome to the 28th meeting in 2024 of the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

We have apologies from Stephanie Callaghan, so we welcome back Jackie Dunbar.

The first item on our agenda is an evidence session on the Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1. This is a member's bill that was introduced by Liz Smith MSP, who is in the public gallery.

I begin by welcoming our witnesses. Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes is professor in human nature relations in the institute of science and environment, centre for national parks and protected areas and outdoor studies at the University of Cumbria. Professor Greg Mannion is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Stirling and joins us remotely. Dr Roger Scrutton is an honorary research fellow in outdoor education at the University of Edinburgh. I welcome you all to the committee.

There is a lot that we want to question you on. Professor Mannion, if you could indicate that you want to come in by raising your hand, I will try to make sure that that catches my eye on the screen.

I begin with a general opening question. I should say that, as we have a lot to get through, if you hear evidence that is the same as your own, you can simply say that you agree and we can move on.

I read Professor Loynes's written submission to the committee—in particular about his research into the significant improvements in maths and literacy scores and exam results among pupils who have been on outdoor residential courses.

Could each of you outline why you think that outdoor education is an important element and why the bill should be supported? I think that all the witnesses agree that there is a need for the bill, albeit that some have caveats and conditions. However, in relation to the general principle, what are the witnesses' views on the bill and the need for outdoor residential education?

**Emeritus Professor Chris Loynes (University of Cumbria):** I very much support the bill and I support residential experiences for young people as part of their formal education. That is based on the evidence from the Learning Away project that I was involved in.

I will put a little bit of flesh on the bones of the idea that outdoor education, and residentials in particular, have an impact on engagement and attainment. They change the relationships between students, and between students and their teachers. They change their confidence, agency and willingness to engage with one another. That then changes the relationships when they are back in the classroom. When a class that has been on a residential together transfers back to the classroom, there is a difference in the social relations between the students and in their relationship with their teacher.

In addition, students learn new ways of teaching and learning that also come back to the classroom. I will give the committee an example of a low-attaining literacy group, with the same literacy score, sitting around the table in the classroom, organised by a teacher. As a result of a residential, they learned how to work together, collaborate and take initiative. They decided to set themselves writing and spelling challenges and, in a month, they upped their literacy scores from being low attaining to being in the middle of the upper-attaining group. That took place without any knowledge on the part of the teacher: she did not know how they had managed to progress their scores until we told her, based on our research evidence, about what they had been up to.

Another important element is the fact that teachers go on residentials with the young people. We call it the "I saw Miss in pyjamas" effect. It humanises the teacher. The impact, in the form of personal and social development benefits, on the teaching group is as good as the impact on the young people. It impacts on teachers' self-esteem and their ability to exercise agency and try out new things in the classroom.

The result is shifts in attainment, because of better attention and better engagement.

**Dr Roger Scrutton (University of Edinburgh):** I would echo all those points.

Chris Loynes mentioned some evidence at the beginning of his little talk. As I am in touch with the research fraternity around the world, I note that there are many examples of that sort of evidence, where we can link the activity of—or at least attendance at—an outdoor residential experience with improved academic performance.

I am thinking particularly of another example in the United Kingdom: the London challenge, which became the city challenge. It was a bit like learning away, in the sense that it was a huge project that funded thousands of pupils. Learning Away was funded by a charity; I cannot remember who funded the city challenge, but it went on for several years. It was run by University of London education people, and it came up with very similar results. The children who went on the residential programme improved both academically and personally and interpersonally in relation to their colleagues and the staff in the school. What Chris Loynes said is therefore absolutely right.

I will add one or two points of detail. There are specific areas of child development—in relation to their personal and social development and their education—where we see strong benefits. I happen to do quantitative research, with statistics and so on, but we also see it in the qualitative research.

In relation to gender, for example, there is a clear signal from the global research base that young ladies get more out of the experience than boys. There are all sorts of interpretations of that, which build on what we might think of as stereotypical reactions, in terms of the gender differences, to going away on a residential.

Females do particularly well in areas such as resilience and self-confidence. I smile sometimes when I also see reference to social efficacy, because young ladies tend to be very good at social efficacy from the start.

Typically, the males attend in an overconfident way, and the girls attend in a less confident way—this is all rather stereotypical stuff, I am afraid—but when we measure outcomes or talk it through with the pupils and the teachers at the end, we find that it is pretty much the other way around. The males sometimes may not have improved at all, in terms of the measurements that we make, but the females always improve.

There are some other details. For example, outdoor residential interventions have also been used for therapeutic purposes, particularly in the United States, but that has also been done in Scotland. Something crossed my mind when I was thinking about today's meeting. I am not talking about their effect therapeutically on mental health in terms of curing somebody, let us say; I am really thinking of the rise in neurodiversity and trauma among young people, which, if I believe what I am told by headteachers and so on, is really quite dire now.

I support the one-week experience. Although you can do outdoor learning in one or two days and get something very good out of that sort of thing—perhaps something local, or just over a weekend—the one-week experience has a unique impact on young people's wellbeing.

I would view the bill in relation to not only the achievement and attainment angle—there are a number of very good examples of where such effects have been proved—but a number of different personal and social aspects, particularly around gender and health and wellbeing.

I have done some research that shows that children from deprived communities tend to do better than other children. In fact, I think that it is the only research in Scotland that is still referenced as evidence of children from deprived neighbourhoods getting more out of a residential visit than other children do.

**The Convener:** You made a point about the length of such an experience. In your written evidence, you say that

"A long weekend (Friday to Monday) might be enough to establish the affective learning elements",

but that a longer period of five days and four nights can have the biggest impact and involve the greatest change.

**Dr Scrutton:** Yes, absolutely. Another thing that I and several others have done research on is the process of learning during the experience. It is pretty clear that the academic outcomes—the cognitive learning—come about because of the improved interaction between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves. What we call the affective dimensions of development seem to underpin cognitive development. That takes about a week. A week happens to be a useful length of time anyway, from the point of view of school management and so on, and it seems to bring that out, whereas I am not entirely sure that one or two days would enable the completion of that particular process.

**The Convener:** Thank you. We go to Professor Mannion.

**Professor Greg Mannion (University of Stirling):** You can hear me, I take it.

**The Convener:** Yes, perfectly.

**Professor Mannion:** Thank you for the invitation and for the opportunity.

It is certainly the case that residential provision is a significant and hugely important part of outdoor learning provision in Scotland. Some excellent centres do brilliant work, and I expect that, in the main, the majority of the experiences provide young learners with the outcomes that we have heard about today.

We should be aware that research in the area can be done only on the provision that we already have. If we go back in time in the history of

"outdoor education", as a term—which is different from our Scottish policy term of "outdoor learning", which we have had since 2010—the research has focused on self-confidence, leadership, self-efficacy, resilience and other such factors.

There are two things in that. If outdoor provision had involved other things, we would be able to account for those other outcomes. We have smaller amounts of research on this area but, for example, if you input into a residential experience a concern for the environment, you are likely to get that as an outcome. Pro-environmental behaviour will arise through experience in nature over time. If you go on a conservation action week and take action for the environment, the research is very likely to show that kind of outcome as well.

If you were to go on a residential visit to the drove roads of Scotland, taking a heritage and community-led approach, and you were to understand, through the use of Gaelic, what that experience was about, there would be different kinds of outcomes, which would be connected to identity and place-based attachment. We have such evidence in the research that is available to us.

My point is that the tradition of outdoor education research, through which the previous two very erudite speakers have provided absolutely rock-solid evidence, shows the kinds of outcomes that we can be assured of. However, other kinds of research on other types of outdoor provision provide us with other kinds of outcomes.

The bill takes the view that "outdoor education" is the term that we should use, but "outdoor learning" is the policy term. The vast majority of the time that is spent outdoors is led by teachers in local places—mostly in the school grounds. With some support for teachers, the level of provision could be doubled or trebled. In that context, we wanted to make the point in our submission to the committee that a wider perspective should at least be acknowledged.

We do not want to do away with residential centres. That is not the point that I am making. Overall, residential centre provision—if that is what the bill wants to support, and if you want to support those outcomes—is available to us, in policy terms. I am not a policy maker; I am here to provide evidence. However, in the current context, when young people in Scotland were asked through the Children's Parliament what they wanted, they said that they wanted more time outside in nature and they wanted to address learning for sustainability. Neither of the previous two speakers spoke about learning for sustainability, because the research tradition in outdoor education has not looked at that.

However, in the current context of the nature emergency and at a time of climate crisis, it seems to me to be strange to go outdoors in nature if we do not acknowledge the policy context of outdoor learning, its place within learning for sustainability and our concern for environmental outcomes. The relationships that are built between pupils and teachers, and between pupils and pupils, need to be set inside another context, which is that of our human relationship with nature. I do not see that coming through in the bill. We need to consider what we want to achieve through what I expect will be an expensive provision, if the Government is to warrant that every pupil gets one of these experiences.

10:15

Another point, which I think that I made in my written submission, is that outdoor education, rather than outdoor learning, has traditionally been residential, but we know from expert schools and expert teachers that teacher-led outdoor learning provision that is residential, that lasts for one, two or three days and that is provided throughout the career of the child—it happens from the ages of five and six in some schools—has the benefit of being linked to the curriculum better, because the teachers are engaged with it more. I know that one primary school in Scotland has a 25-night provision over the career of the child. With that, children are likely to get everything that the previous two speakers spoke about, because they are not getting one week; they are getting five weeks.

That is an exceptional school, and it is privately funded, but it exemplifies the kinds of things that are involved in the intention behind the bill, which is to provide some of that kind of experience in state schools.

I will stop there.

**The Convener:** Dr Scrutton wants to come back in.

**Dr Scrutton:** Greg Mannion is right that there has been very little research on the impact on the learning for sustainability aspects of the curriculum that are now being introduced, but that is in Scotland. If you look worldwide, you will find an enormous amount of research on connection with nature.

**The Convener:** I noticed Professor Mannion nodding in agreement there—it is worth just getting that on the record as well.

If it is okay, we will move on to other questions, because we have already used up a chunk of time with those introductory comments. If there is anything that we have not covered, the witnesses can come back in at the end.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** I have a wee tale, which might or might not be interesting. When I was 10, which was about, oh, 12 years ago, I went to a school in Partick. The local authority took pupils away from three primary schools in the area, including mine, for five straight weeks to a place called Galloway house, which, obviously, is down in Galloway. Our teachers came with us—we did not have separate staff in the area or anything like that. We stayed over and we were taken out into the country, which most of us had never really been to much at all, and to the seaside and so on. We also had our straight school classes; we still had our normal education added on.

I do not know whether that is anything like what the witnesses are talking about—I know that you are talking about periods shorter than five straight weeks—but I am aware that the people who were there felt that they benefited from doing it. It was not as if a class would be taken every year—it was a one-off thing, as far as I know, anyway. Our parents had to pay two pounds 12 shillings and sixpence for the five weeks, which does not seem like very much money, and we stayed in a huge place called Galloway house, as I said. We benefited from our normal primary school education continuing, but we also had the other experiences, which we otherwise never would have had.

I do not know whether that type of thing is similar to what you are talking about—if my description is of any use at all—but I think that going away like that benefited everybody who went, boys and girls. Are there different, or differing, roles for school staff and outdoor education centre staff? Do they co-operate and work together?

**Professor Loynes:** In the projects that I was involved in, we got much better outcomes when that was the case. One of the criteria that we identified that made a bigger difference was when children and school staff were involved in designing the residential. One primary school group—taken from a cluster of eight primary schools—went away together after our year 6 in England for a transition residential, just before going to secondary school. The children were asked what they thought the challenges of going to secondary were, how they thought a residential might help them to overcome those challenges and what activities should form part of the residential. The answer to that question surprised us all: it was telling scary stories in the tent at night and still being able to go to sleep. We can translate that into the resilience that is necessary for going to the big school. The people who told the scary stories to the children were year 8s from the big school. That relationship building can happen at the residential, before the transition takes place.

We have considered embedding curriculum content in the outdoor experience, as you have described, and whether to teach it in separate blocks of time during the day or to embed it into the outdoor experiences. Either method brings the same uplift in engagement and attainment. It seems to be the process that is most important rather than the particular way in which the curriculum content is delivered.

**Professor Mannion:** Chris Loynes's research in this area is really great. Having teachers on board is a critical part of the whole business of going outside. Whether it is for a lesson or for a week-long trip, having the teacher doing things in class ahead of time and back in class after the children return is known to be a key thing that makes outdoor learning work well.

If the focus is on transition and a transition-oriented residential is held, that will bring outcomes connected to transition. It is to do with input shaping and the output that is expected. Longer durations are more likely to produce better outcomes. Those two things are true.

**Dr Scrutton:** One area of research that has been quite popular for many years is on the long-term impact on an individual. You still remember your residential now, Mr Kidd—10 years later, I think you said. It would be interesting to know how many folk who have been on residentials remember them. They are unique in the experience and in the outcomes, and they are memorable. In fact, we distinguish between outcomes and impact. Outcomes are what we get immediately afterwards. Impact is what happens weeks or months later.

I have been involved in a couple of projects in which we look back with people at their experiences. They are universally positive. The experience will often have affected the individual's career path and will have cemented their love of the outdoors. It will have helped them to improve their career success and so on. It is not just a short-term thing.

I agree totally about embedding such experiences in the curriculum. It is essential that children are prepared, and there should be follow-up in the classroom. Bill Kidd mentioned going away for five weeks. There is some research to show that benefit grows for interventions up to about three weeks long; it plateaus out after that. There is not much more benefit in going away for five weeks, for instance. That research was not in Scotland; it was mainly done in the United States and other parts of the world. Our research into that area is rather poor in Scotland, quite frankly.

However, there is a long-term impact, which goes on for many decades afterwards.

**Professor Mannion:** In the surveys on our provision that we carried out in 2008, 2014 and 2022, we asked hundreds of teachers whether they felt that the equivalent indoor lesson on a similar topic would have been, or had ever been, as effective or as engaging as the outdoor event, whether that was a short event of 20 minutes or an hour, or a residential trip, and around 70 to 80 per cent of the teachers said that the outdoor provision was more engaging for learners. I would trust teachers on that. They know when their learners are engaged. It is a construct in our field, but teachers' understanding of engagement is quite nuanced.

Regardless of whether we are talking about residential provision, we need to understand that the breadth of outdoor provision is very engaging. We know from the nature connection data that 10 minutes spent outdoors attending to nature in a focused way has the impact of connecting with nature.

Regardless of how long the residential experiences are, there are benefits. Obviously, the longer they are, the more likely it is that there will be benefits. Roger Scrutton is the man to document that for us. I am really fascinated by what he said about the benefits plateauing after three weeks. That is a good point to make. I have not really got my teeth into that issue.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** Like Bill Kidd, I remember my experience of residential outdoor education, although I do not think that it was as long ago as his. My children have benefited greatly from their residential experiences. How many pupils in Scotland get to experience a residential trip of that nature?

**Dr Scrutton:** Are you asking what the uptake is by schools at the moment?

**Evelyn Tweed:** Yes.

**Dr Scrutton:** That is a good question. I do not know. I think that Mike Harvey has been doing some research on numbers, and he might know what the uptake is presently. From the research that has been done by Mike and others, I understand that there is just enough bed capacity in existing residential centres to accommodate what is proposed. If Liz Smith's proposal were to go through and every child had the opportunity to go away on a residential trip at some point between primary 6 and secondary 4, the existing centres would be absolutely packed and there would be no chance to do maintenance and so on.

I think that the residential centres can cope with the current uptake, although some of them have been closing, because they have not had the business, so they have not had the money to support maintenance and so on. On the other hand, Aberdeenshire Council has just opened a new residential centre, which I think has 40 places, and it has immediately been filled for about a year. City of Edinburgh Council's two remote outdoor centres, Lagganlia and Benmore, are booked for three years in advance.

There is huge demand, but I am afraid that I cannot give a number. I simply do not know whether the uptake is 50 per cent, 40 per cent or whatever.

**Evelyn Tweed:** That is fine. Are there socioeconomic or geographical factors that affect which pupils can participate?

**Professor Loynes:** I can answer that for England. Recent work by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom demonstrated that, during a child's primary and secondary education, they would, on average, have two residential experiences, but the geographical distribution of that is very unequal. Young people from urban areas and from low socioeconomic backgrounds receive none or very few residential experiences compared with those in other contexts. Therefore, such opportunities are very unevenly distributed.

**Dr Scrutton:** That said, there is research evidence that young people from more deprived backgrounds gain more—it is a bit like the situation with females gaining more than males. My paper, which I published in 2012, is still the only paper that is referenced regarding the situation in Scotland. I divided up the pupils from City of Edinburgh Council primary schools who went to Benmore and Lagganlia according to whether they received free school meals. The Scottish index of multiple deprivation is used now. There was a clear signal that kids from deprived areas not only benefited more, but they retained the benefit more after about six months. That is another part of the demographic that stands to benefit probably slightly more than average.

10:30

**Professor Mannion:** The work in England is replicated in terms of the general thrust in Scotland. Young people from more deprived postcodes in the Scottish index of multiple deprivation receive less outdoor learning overall. That includes teacher-led outdoor learning in school grounds and beyond in their local areas, day trips to national parks and so on. Those things involve costs, and the schools in those areas are struggling and need support.

I am not here to advise policy makers, but if you are concerned about whether young people in deprived areas are not getting residential trips and whether they are less likely to get those trips, the

answer is that that is the case. Should you be targeting them? That is your policy choice. Similarly, teachers are not providing as much outdoor learning as they could be across the piece. If you were to fund teacher professional learning, you would vastly increase the duration of the time that young people get outdoors.

In 2014, in primary schools, on average, in an eight-week period in May and June—we will not talk about 2022 because it was still affected by Covid—per pupil, per week, young people were getting about half an hour outdoors. That is half an hour in the week separate from physical education. Of that 30 minutes, six minutes was residential time, so one fifth of the outdoor provision time was residential and the other four fifths were non-residential. That was an average. Some schools were hardly going out at all and some schools were going out enormously more commonly than that, because they had teachers who knew what they were doing.

Therefore, in policy terms, if you want to promote outdoor learning and increase the duration of that time, with all the benefits that we have heard about, you should certainly support residential centres, but you should also consider professional learning. Our 2022 research, which is summarised in the review, showed that nearly 60 per cent of teachers feel vaguely confident about outdoor learning and learning for sustainability. That is an average figure—I am giving you a broad-brush picture. We have large numbers of staff who simply need support to address learning for sustainability, which is in the curriculum—it is their obligation to deliver it. Professional learning is needed for that. Teachers who have had professional learning deliver more outdoor provision, so the connection is clear.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** Good morning, and thank you for the information that you sent the committee ahead of today's meeting. In the spirit of sharing, I will say that I also remember my school residential trip. As a disabled person, my experience was quite different. My school had to create a very different trip. You got to choose whether you would go to an outdoor centre and which of the activities you got involved in, none of which were really suitable for me as a wheelchair user. Therefore, the school created a separate option, and all the pupils from the mainstream school were also able to choose that option, which focused on drama and included an element of outdoor learning.

How well does residential learning, including outdoor learning, meet the needs of all pupils, including those with additional support needs? You have all said that the benefits are most keenly felt by more deprived socioeconomic groups, which is really useful information. How well could residential outdoor education meet the needs of all pupils?

**Professor Loynes:** We certainly know how to provide residential experiences for people with different disabilities and mental challenges, including people with multiple disabilities. There are some good case studies here in Scotland. There is a centre just outside Edinburgh that specialises in adapted outdoor provision. The school that I studied—Calderglen high school in East Kilbride—is partnered with a special educational needs school and they make very good use of that centre. They are absolutely convinced of the benefit of taking their young people to residential centres, and also of the benefit of the integration of the special educational needs school with the main school, which is how they operate.

Specialist centres exist throughout the UK that use differently trained staff and different equipment and offer appropriate levels of adventure experiences and environmental experiences. It is a question of building on that capacity so that all young people with those circumstances can benefit, and of seeking ways to enable that in an integrated form.

**Dr Scrutton:** I do not see any reason why there should not be a very similar experience for everyone. As Chris Loynes said, there are specialist centres. I am thinking of the Brathay Trust, which works in the Lake District, and the centre at Lochwinnoch in Scotland. Both of those specialise in sail training for folk with disabilities. Those young people can get on to the boats and function just like anybody else on them.

The offering in outdoor residentials is changing slightly. There used to be a character-building approach. You had to hang off ropes, be scared stiff, face drowning in the loch and run a mile before breakfast—that sort of thing. That used to be the emphasis, but the focus is now on a much wider range of skills. Some of the activities involve, essentially, academic work. There might be a bit of conservation work or project work of one sort or another at the outdoor residential centre. There are lots of opportunities that we could work on to provide experiences that are available to everyone.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** Does anything in the bill need to be changed to address the concerns that we have heard about in evidence? The Child Poverty Action Group and the NASUWT have raised concerns about the starting points of pupils and of schools. Having the residential centres is crucial. I have been to some of them and they are really good. However, do we need to change anything in the bill to support young people with additional support needs to get over the line to go

in the first place or to help schools to have the confidence to support them to do it?

**Dr Scrutton:** I will mention an experience that I had with a school. The teacher of a specific class did not incorporate the outdoor experience into the curriculum in any way—by way of preparation or particularly in follow-up. I asked her why she did not do that and she said, "Ah, it's because I have a disabled child in the class." That child could not go away to the outdoor centre for various practical reasons, and the teacher did not like to do follow-up work unless the whole class had had the experience.

We need to find ways to incorporate everybody in the experience. We should be able to overcome challenges with travelling to and from a residential centre. For example, personal assistants could be provided—either someone the child knows, or maybe a specialist in the outdoor centre. There are definitely ways around that.

**Professor Mannion:** The watchword here has to be "flexibility"; indeed, I have flagged up a couple of areas in the bill where there is potentially a lack of flexibility. For example, there might be a concern that we are being too restrictive with regard to the age at which young people might want to go on a residential. With the caveats around duration—my view is that the longer people spend outdoors, the better—I think that we do not need to be so fixated on the idea that it needs to be a week, and we perhaps do not need to be so presumptive with regard to its being an outdoor education residential centre that young people go to.

Moreover, for some young people, we might want to think about earlier provision—in, say, the primary years—that builds towards residential provision, as that will build expectations, instead of having some one-off one-week thing, if that is the only thing that the Government helps schools to fund.

We need teachers who are well trained and are able to bring young people to all kinds of outdoor experiences. The bill should not contain anything that stops pupils from a school going away for a residential day—or for a night, or even two nights—to study history, drama, music or physical education, as you have described. Flexibility in curriculum making and the interdisciplinary nature of learning for sustainability should be built into the bill, so that teachers can be the driving force in decision making and meeting the needs of every young person, and we do not end up with the situation that Roger Scrutton described.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** Can I ask a supplementary, convener?

**The Convener:** I will bring in George Adam first with a supplementary.

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** I have a quick supplementary on the back of Pam Duncan-Glancy's question. In such discussions, we inevitably talk about personal experience, but I want to take it to the next level, because I have a granddaughter who is neurodivergent. She is nine years old, and she struggles at school. What if you end up with a whole stack of young children who are neurodivergent?

As a family, we find it difficult to ensure that she is even wearing clothes when she goes out, because she does not like the feel of them, and she can make family get-togethers and excursions quite difficult. How do you deal with that in a residential setting, when you might have four or five children who are like that? How do you deal with that challenge and ensure that they get such opportunities? After all, if there are any children who need these kinds of opportunities, it is this group of young people.

**Professor Loynes:** I can respond to that. In general, students with neurodiverse backgrounds actually flourish in the outdoors more than they do in classrooms. It is a much more supportive learning environment for them, and they often surprise their teachers and their peers in the way that they engage.

In my professional practice as a centre manager with the Brathay Trust that Roger Scrutton mentioned earlier, we worked with day care centres that provided respite care for people who were caring for young people with diverse and multiple disabilities. The young people would come on a residential for two nights over a weekend, and we were able to deal with every situation that we were presented with. The respite care centre did not leave anybody behind; it carefully selected groups to which it thought that we would be able to offer something that they could do together. Different age groups had different needs, for example, and different challenges.

One of my most profound professional experiences was floating down a river with a 13-year-old girl, who had no movement or speech, and nobody knew whether she had any cognition. Oh, she had cognition all right; the look in her eyes when she saw what she was about to do told me everything that I needed to know about whether we should or should not do that activity. It was about having the experiences for the staff and having the support with us—in our case, it was the respite care team, its nurses and so on—so that we could care for those young people's needs minute by minute while providing them with the appropriate outdoor experiences.

**Dr Scrutton:** Perhaps I can tell you about another experience. I run a charity called the Friends of Benmore Outdoor Centre, which

supports the work of the Benmore outdoor centre in Argyll. Every year, it hosts the sort of course that Chris Loynes has just been talking about for maybe five or 10 young people in the Dunoon neighbourhood.

There is an organisation called CLASP—Cowal Local Action for Special Projects—which specialises in supporting young people who need special attention. Rather than coming with their individual schools, the young people come as a group and the necessary support facilities are provided at Benmore for them, along with adjustments of the activities.

10:45

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** I want to follow up on Professor Mannion's point. My colleague George Adam said that we are sharing some personal experience; we are, and that is important.

In your submission, you lift the issue to the systemic. You say that

"systemic support for the schools, staff, communities and partner organisations that provide for outdoor learning"

would be needed. In the context of this part of the discussion, could you tell us a bit more about what that support might look like?

**Professor Mannion:** That is a great question. I would want to spend longer on it than I have today to explain that. Our predominant concern and the biggest missing piece of the jigsaw is teacher professional learning. When teachers get an opportunity to learn more about provision, they are better placed to engage with outdoor learning on an everyday basis, locally and in local nature, and the way in which it is connected to the curriculum becomes more assured. Teachers' and pupils' relationships improve, and so on.

However, the amount of professional learning that we know teachers need is not an afternoon. It is approximately six to 10 half-day sessions. We know that because, once they get to 10 half-day or five day sessions, which might be spread over a nine-month period—the teaching in nature research was modelled in that way and we know that it worked—teachers are ready to engage in outdoor learning.

If teachers engage in outdoor learning through the curriculum on an everyday basis, they are also better placed to work with partners in a teacher-connected, curriculum-linked way with their residential experience. At the system level, if you engage in that way, you will be more likely to ensure inclusion and to get every member of your class group on board. The teacher will be best placed to discern whether a one-night outdoor camping event for nine-year-olds in the local park is what is needed on a given weekend and to make that decision. Will they have access to the correct partners, such as NatureScot, the ranger services and other professionals who are on hand to help? They will know who those partners are if we fund across the piece and encourage networking across those providers.

The policy question that the committee faces today is whether to honeypot the money in the residential context and move in that direction, which we all support because we know that it will work, but, at the system level, it is a different question. That was my critique of the bill.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** Following on from Pam Duncan-Glancy's questions, are there any other barriers that prevent our young folk from experiencing the residential outdoor experience?

**Dr Scrutton:** At the moment, of course, cost is definitely a barrier. Some of the successful parental fundraising activities at certain schools to help with the cost are really impressive and they allow the children to go. However, I would not mind betting that there are some examples of schools that simply do not take their children for the residential experience because of the cost.

We have just been talking about the relative experiences and abilities of the teachers to organise those activities. In that context, I am thinking about the ability to manage staff within the school so that a teacher who has some outdoor learning experience can go away. Their absence might affect more than one class, particularly at secondary level. That would not be a problem at primary level, but it might be at secondary level. If it was a maths teacher, for example, someone would have to stand in for them in the maths classes in the school. There are practicalities that have to be got around.

**Jackie Dunbar:** If I am correct, at present, most of the teachers who go away do so on a voluntary basis. Do you think that the local authorities should have a duty to provide the outdoor education, so that it is not fully voluntary?

**Dr Scrutton:** Do you mean through specialist teachers, for example?

**Jackie Dunbar:** It would not need to be done through specialist teachers. Do you think that local authorities should provide outdoor residential education for all their children? It would be up to them to decide how.

**Dr Scrutton:** One of the practical ways of doing that, if there is not the expertise or the leadership among the school staff, would be through the instructor at the outdoor centre, who is the other person who is important. Nowadays, an instructor has to be pretty good and has to have a much wider range of skills than they used to have. It

used to be the case that someone was a sailing instructor or a kayaker or canoe expert, but now they also have to understand the links to the curriculum. There are issues around the instructors at the centre, as well as the teachers in the schools.

Just as we have specialist music teachers and PE teachers who are peripatetic, we could have teachers who are trained as specialists in outdoor learning. They could go away with one school at one time and another school at another time. Certainly, the personnel who would be involved in this is an issue that will have to be sorted out.

**Professor Loynes:** One model that I have seen that worked very well was from a London local authority, where the centre staff were based in London even though the centre was in North Wales. The centre staff would work in the schools and then go away with the teachers and the children to the centre. In that way, much more continuity was built in.

Other barriers that are worth identifying include the need for senior leadership buy-in from the school. When it is just an enthusiastic teacher, as it was when I was a teacher, my head was very clear that when I went, the next person who came in might be a chess champion; they might not necessarily be an outdoor person. Senior leadership buy-in is essential.

The problems increase as you go higher up the age groups into S3 and above, partly because in secondary schools you have very large cohorts. Having centres that can take, let us say, half a year group or a whole year group becomes important in terms of how you manage that displacement in the school of a big group of students and teachers.

There are also the priorities when you get to the point at which people are focused on studying for their examinations. There is a lot of evidence to say that residentials really support young people who are studying for examinations, but there is often not the confidence in the teaching staff to take what they perceive as the risk of taking time out of the classroom to take young people away, except where that is mandated, as is the case with, for example, geography or biology field trips.

**Professor Mannion:** The question of entitlement is a great one. In Scotland, it seems to me that we are already very far along the journey of making it an entitlement that young people have the opportunity to learn about sustainability. Learning for sustainability is three things: it is education for global citizenship, education for sustainable development and outdoor learning. Those three entitlements are already there.

If the bill does not refer to those policy moves that are already in place, that seems a bit remiss, to my mind. Connecting the bill to those existing entitlements, and adding in the view that outdoor learning is an entitlement, within which outdoor residential provision of education in an outdoor setting would be important and learning for sustainability would be a requirement while on residential setting visits, would seem to be an obvious next step for the bill, either in the guidance for it or, preferably, in its main statement.

**Jackie Dunbar:** What steps should the Scottish Government take to address all those barriers?

**Professor Loynes:** I refer you to a model that was used in another country. Ten years ago, Singapore decided to introduce a progressive series of residentials—three in every child's education, as well as outdoor learning within the schools. That applied to all young people in all schools in Singapore, which is one of the most urban pieces of landscape that you can imagine. The third level of residentials has just been rolled out.

The Singapore Ministry of Education provided the necessary infrastructure for the different types of residentials for different age groups and delivered staff development so that staff could provide the in-school provision as well as the residential provision. It also created a career path for people who work in outdoor centres so that it would be seen as an acceptable and serious career choice, rather than something that people do for five years before they get a proper job.

There is a lot more behind that model, and I would recommend it to you. You can easily access information about how Singapore went about that.

**Dr Scrutton:** There will be several similar models around the world. A lot of countries have been successful with regard to taking children on outdoor residentials. Scandinavian countries are very good at it, as are Canada, Australia and New Zealand. They all have models for how to handle the resource issues.

**Professor Mannion:** To summarise some of the points that I have already made, Government needs to take account of young people's views, given that we have incorporated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into law. The bill needs to be reflective of what the Children's Parliament has done in this area.

It is also important to ensure that the bill is flexible in terms of inclusion, so that it has a broad reach. Further, taking a systemic and broader scope would ideally position the residential experience within a wider framing around outdoor learning and, within that context, learning for sustainability in the context of the nature emergency.

Looking back to the tradition of Kurt Hahn and the long-standing research that tells us about self-confidence and leadership, we can see that, to an extent, those models of residential outdoor provision drew on an idea that the more privileged young people in society—those at Gordonstoun and other such schools—needed a certain kind of leadership experience. There was also a time when we needed young men to enter the battlefield, and outdoor provision in scouting movements, for example, was part of the solution in that regard. Looking back to those past approaches is narrow in scope, and we need to look forward to what we might want young people to learn about in the context of the nature emergency.

**George Adam:** Everyone has spoken about their individual experiences. I remember going to scout camps in, I think, Ardentinny—it was almost a rite of passage when I was at school. I do not remember any life-changing experiences, but I was a pretty stroppy and cynical teen—thank goodness I have grown up and matured a bit since then. [*Laughter*.] I knew that I would get that response; that is why I said it.

Professor Mannion, could you expand on what you said about the position of residential outdoor education in relation to approaches to outdoor learning? How does that include learning for sustainability? You have already outlined some of that, but I would be interested in hearing a bit more detail.

**Professor Mannion:** Some residential centres are doing more in that area than others. The online sell is perhaps not reflective of some of the practice, but if you look at the websites for those centres, you will see that they are taking definitions of outdoor education as their main definition, rather than outdoor learning. They are not necessarily offering provision that reflects the broad curriculum areas of maths, music, drama and history, because they take the traditional residential centre view that their activity should be more about, for example, kayaking and other skills in outdoor pursuits. The result of that is that the outcomes that the centres offer accrue around self-confidence and leadership.

If the bill was to ask for those centres—or all residential learning settings—to address conservation activity, pro-environmental behaviour or learning about sustainability, that would be achieved quite easily. We have the staff, we have people who know what that means and we know how that would work. There are many ways of engaging young people in conservation actions around, for example, taking away invasive species, rewilding and understanding the context and impacts of the potential reintroduction of beavers and so on. All those issues are about our relationship with the environment.

11:00

Scotland's urban centres are heavily populated. Many young people live in areas of deprivation and have never been to a national park or into one of Scotland's areas of natural beauty, so bringing them into those contexts is an excellent thing to do, and bringing them there to help them to understand their national identity at a time of climate and environmental change seems to be an absolutely brilliant thing to do. Doing that in the context of supporting teachers to offer a wider array of outdoor learning would also be absolutely brilliant.

I hope that that gives you a sense of what might be possible. If the bill continues to use the term "outdoor education" but does not raise the issue of environmental concerns, we will end up with more of the same. That is my gut feeling.

**George Adam:** Young people's engagement is also important. We know that young people are extremely interested in many of the issues that you have mentioned, so if we want them to engage with education, we should include the issues that they want to work on. We have moved on from the time of sliding down a zip wire or going canoeing.

**Professor Mannion:** That is right. The Children's Parliament is absolutely brilliant in that area and has used creative methods to consult and engage with very young children. Children from primary school right through to secondary school want more outdoor learning in all shapes and forms, including in residential settings. We have heard young people's voices from across the United Kingdom and in other research involving young activists, and we know that they want outdoor learning to address questions of sustainability. They understand that they are living with a contract with another, older generation, which is not addressing environmental concerns, and they want to better understand the issues so that they can get green skills.

Skilling people up for the green economy and the shift towards zero carbon is a whole other area that we have not spoken about. Those are core goals for every Government in the world. It would be a missed opportunity to take young people outdoors, into natural settings, but not see the possible links with green skills and learning for sustainability.

**Dr Scrutton:** Recently, the idea of interdisciplinary learning has been raised in the context of residential education. Some of you might know my colleague Pete Higgins. Partly in the context of learning for sustainability, but also

more broadly, he advocates the potential for residential study to introduce interdisciplinary learning. That involves and links up not only different disciplines but what we call pedagogies, which are the ways in which teachers teach and students learn. There are opportunities to pursue those in residential settings.

I go back to the big issue of instructors. We are still teaching instructors about the more physical skills, such as paddling down rivers and climbing crags. Chris Loynes spoke about instructors who are on site or who come into schools. To a certain extent, they should be trained teachers so that curricular learning can come from residentials. In relation to what residentials cover, there is a drift away from what we call hard skills towards softer or learning skills.

**Professor Loynes:** I will go back to the point about sustainability, which involves social as well as environmental equity. There is some value in our history of broadening horizons in the way that Roger Scrutton and Greg Mannion have spoken about. Taking a young person out of the often small geographical area that they live in and usually experience and showing them something else is an extraordinary thing to do for their development.

For example, Covid brought huge numbers of people to the Lake District national park who had previously never visited. One indicator of that is that the ethnic diversity of visitors to the national park went from 3 per cent before Covid to 23 per cent after Covid. It is about exposure, familiarity and the excitement of thinking, “This is part of the place that I live in and the country that I belong to.” That broadening horizons agenda is really important.

I am in the middle of a study that involves comparing Singapore, Finland, Australia, Canada and, as it happens, Scotland in relation to the question, “What does outdoor education do for society?” I point out to Greg Mannion that I am using the term “outdoor education” in a broader sense that encompasses outdoor learning. Three trends are coming through in relation to aspiration and, increasingly, the evidence of what is actually happening in those communities. The first is broadening horizons, which I mentioned. The second is social integration, which is going rapidly up the agenda at the moment in the UK. I imagine that all parts of the UK are concerned about that issue, and residential settings give an opportunity to bring everybody together around one big shared experience.

The third trend is adaptation. Greg Mannion mentioned the need for us to address sustainability. One issue that we face, and that our young people in particular face, is change in all ways. Whether it is artificial intelligence, climate change, biodiversity loss or economic shifts to green economies, all those things involve significant changes, and outdoor residentials, with the traditional outputs of resilience, adaptability, creativity and collaboration—those are the skills that residentials deliver—are a fantastic tool to help people to adapt to what is coming next.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** Good morning. Thank you for joining us.

What Professor Loynes has just said leads on well to what I want to ask about, which relates to measuring the outcomes. The committee is acutely aware of the poor levels of mental health that are being reported among young people of all backgrounds. The building of resilience in our young people is a key outcome that we would like to see from residential outdoor education. From your experience, what would you like to be measured as part of the outcomes?

Dr Scrutton, you touched on your 2012 research paper on the benefits of outdoor education to pupils from lower socioeconomic groups. In that context, how could we measure the outcomes to demonstrate the value that can be added?

**Professor Loynes:** I am a qualitative researcher, so I will broaden the idea of measurement and then turn to my colleagues on quantitative measures, as they have more experience of those. Resilience is researchable in both ways.

As a qualitative researcher, I have experience of following the stories of, for example, family interventions. One of the biggest impacts in the Learning Away project was when we worked with families rather than classes. Those were families in which the young people were beginning to truant and drop out of school, were not paying attention in school or were misbehaving and bullying—there were those indicators of things not going well. A short series of residentials with the family to look at how the family was parenting, how the children were experiencing life at home and the relationship of the home to the school was transformative. The parents were so impressed with it that they recruited other families to come on the programme on our behalf. In those more extreme circumstances, targeting works very well, so you might want to consider the potential for specialist provision when targeting people with such needs.

In general, wellbeing involves a broad spectrum and is an issue that we can and do address. I am not sure of the long-term impacts, but I know that there are short-term benefits. Perhaps my colleagues can add to that.

**Dr Scrutton:** Are you interested in the methodologies that we use?

**Miles Briggs:** Yes.

**Dr Scrutton:** As Chris Loynes has said, he specialises in qualitative methodologies, which involve talking to people, interviewing, observing and perhaps getting written reports. With qualitative data, we try to do something called triangulation. If you get three sources of information, you can triangulate them. Some information might come from the teacher, some from the pupils and some from your observations and, through triangulation, you arrive at an outcome, which might be a personal development or a development at the cognitive end of the learning scale.

In quantitative research, which is my specialty, we use, by and large, pretty standard psychological methodologies for assessing the value of a psychological intervention. It is really experimental and quasi-experimental. I do not know whether you know what that means specifically, but, basically, we measure pupils in whatever skill, ability or attribute we are interested in before they go away—usually quite a bit before they go away, so that they are not emotionally tied up with the actual event—and we then measure them again when they get back. There are hundreds of instruments to do that in relation to different aspects of psychological and academic impact. In addition, we do the same with a control group, which is what we normally do with a psychological or medical intervention. Subsequently, we measure the impact, which is the outcome. We measure the impact, say, six months later.

Sometimes, the studies are on-going, so we repeat the measurements several times. We might follow the same cohort of pupils over years 1, 2 and 3 to see how they have changed. It is important that we always ask them the same questions. Chris Loynes knows that I was a bit critical of the Learning Away quantitative work, because the researchers did not ask the same questions before and after the interventions, and that distorts the answers. We must ask the same questions before and after, and it is the same in psychology and education.

While I am babbling on, I will quickly mention that, a few years ago, I pulled together all the benefits of using a measure called effect size. We can use effect size to normalise measures from all sorts of sources. I did that not just for residential outdoor education but for all education and all psychology. When you do that, you find that the quantitatively measured benefit of outdoor education is more or less the same, if not slightly greater, than the measure that you get from hundreds of psychological and educational interventions. In a nutshell, that is how we go about it.

**Professor Mannion:** One of the points that was made was that young people face mental health challenges, and their wellbeing is connected to their mental wellbeing. These days, that is also connected to what is termed in the literature as eco-anxiety, which is concern for the environment.

We know that one of the solutions to broad—mental and general—wellbeing is contact with nature, which is important. Not every residential setting offers that, although most probably do, but that is a key aspect of the wellbeing agenda, and wellbeing is one of the cornerstones of curriculum for excellence.

Another thing that works in addressing wellbeing issues is giving people an opportunity to talk. Therefore, if people could talk about personal and eco-anxiety issues in residential settings, that would also improve wellbeing.

Another solution is taking action. Pro-agency approaches, in which young people are involved in doing something for the environment, are known to ameliorate their eco-anxiety.

Another aspect is connection to place. If young people visit the same place more than once over time, possibly a local area with their teacher, and then think about local issues in a broader context in a residential setting, that is a great way to address, in a place-responsive way, their eco-anxieties and broader wellbeing—not only their mental wellbeing but their physical wellbeing.

Studies of physical wellbeing show that physical activity levels, of course, go up when people leave buildings and stop sitting down. That is a no-brainer in many ways. We should recognise that regularly doing more outdoor learning of any kind—not just within the parameters of physical education—would be an ideal way to begin to address the obesity crisis that the Government is facing.

11:15

**The Convener:** We are running a bit short of time, so, if Miles Briggs has finished his questions, we will move on to questions from Ross Greer.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Good morning, all. I want to return to and focus on an issue that has been touched on a couple of times. Professor Mannion mentioned evidence that shows that about 80 per cent of the outdoor education that young people in Scotland currently get is not residential—I think that he said that it averages out at about half an hour a week in total. I am interested in your thoughts on the value of outdoor residential education specifically, as opposed to outdoor education more generally.

Suggestions have been made, when the bill was proposed and in the consultation process, that a

wider entitlement to outdoor education would be more appropriate than a specific entitlement to residential education. Obviously, the bill proposes residential education specifically, and I do not think that anyone round this table would dispute the value of that—you have all given a compelling case for it. However, I am interested in your thoughts on the argument about whether we should create that specific entitlement or take the wider approach of entitling young people to outdoor education in the round.

**Professor Mannion:** I would use the words "outdoor learning". Rather than considering everything under the umbrella term "outdoor education", which is a specific term, the policy movement in Scotland has used for decades now the words "outdoor learning", some of which can involve residential provision. Alternatively, we could use the term "education in the outdoors", which would be a shift in the terminology.

My answer to your question is that I would do both. It is a simple win. We should make it an entitlement in the curriculum that everybody gets education in outdoor settings, and within that we should make it a further entitlement that people get a residential experience. It is not a big ask. If you proposed taking physical education away from the curriculum, I do not think that anybody would vote for that, whereas if you wanted to increase physical education time, everybody would warrant that that was a great idea. Why not do it at the same time and increase physical activity levels by encouraging outdoor learning? We have the context and the services for it—we have the countryside and the landscape—and we need to do it for environmental reasons.

It seems a great idea to change the nomenclature around outdoor learning and make that learning and the residential setting an entitlement. We should continue with the bill and, because the residential setting is important and worthy, make it fundable, because it needs funding. If I was a policy maker, I would go in that direction, if possible. However, I am not in the hot seat like you; I am just here to do the easy thing, which is to tell you what we know from the research.

**Ross Greer:** I think that it was you, Professor Mannion, who acknowledged that outdoor learning is expensive. The benefit to the children and young people involved is indisputable, but it is resource intensive. Is there a particular value for money argument for residential learning opportunities, as opposed to the wider approach of an entitlement to outdoor learning? I am specifically looking for the argument for residential learning being particularly valuable.

**Professor Mannion:** The literature is clear about what residentials offer. You have heard about that today. It is about inputs and outputs. If you continue down the path of offering the same old residential experiences, you will get the same guaranteed outcomes around resilience, self-confidence, leadership and so on. If you want it to be more curriculum linked, you will need professional learning for teachers, as well as better instructor education.

You might want a better systemic offer all round. We know that outdoor learning is effective on a half-hour basis when children of any age are taken into their school grounds or local areas, and we also know that people learn to take a place-responsive approach if they make regular visits to a local area. That is impossible if you offer only a one-week, five-day experience. You should remember that, even in the good schools that offer residential learning, that is only a fifth of the provision, and we know that the other four fifths could double.

If you continue to offer residential experiences but also promote professional learning, you could double outdoor learning provision, which would give a different bang for your buck, to use that awful phrase. However, on your question about the money, I note again that I am not in the hot seat that you are in.

**Dr Scrutton:** When I ask myself the question that Ross Greer posed, I think about all those people who say, "It was one of the best experiences of my life" when they are 50, 60 or 70 years old. I remember going to Plas y Brenin in north Wales before residential outdoor education was really off the ground. It is a unique experience that lasts people a lifetime. That is how I answer the question for myself. It influences careers, personal beliefs, connectedness to nature and so on. If you were to ask someone, "Do you remember going out into the school playground and using a hand lens to look at a bit of grass?"—which can be a valuable form of outdoor learning—they would not be able to remember that. I often ask myself the question that was posed. The difference is the long-term impact of the residential stuff.

**Ross Greer:** As somebody who vividly remembers my residential experience, I completely appreciate that, although this morning's meeting has brought me to the distressing conclusion that that was almost 20 years ago. [*Laughter*.]

**Professor Loynes:** I cannot remember the authors or the organisations that were involved, but a British quango was set up to look at which interventions, under a cost benefit analysis, make the biggest difference to attainment in a school, and outdoor learning in general and outdoor residentials in particular were among the top five

interventions. That was based on international data, including UK data.

With our data from Learning Away, we asked what the difference is between staying away overnight and just going away for a day. We found that the unstructured time that is inevitably built into being away overnight—time that is spent round the campfire, cooking or eating a meal together and playing games after that meal, and time in the tent or the dormitory together, without adults present—is when the learning gets deepened. The stories are told, people behave less formally and teachers call each other by their first names. Things such as that become significant given the changes in relationships that take place.

Neuroscience increasingly supports the claim that there is something about what happens in the brain in the diurnal cycle. You wake up in the morning, you are still there and you have another day to follow on from what you did the day before. There is an iterative process of thinking, "Here we go again, but I've got more confidence today and I'm going to try some new things. I've made a new friend and I can build on that." That process is of particular value.

When it comes to the cost benefit analysis, a lot of Learning Away schools that had struggled with the finances—particularly the primary schools—went to a low-cost camping model. However, that was not just a financial choice; it was also better pedagogically because the teachers felt in control and because the things that are involved in camping—preparing a meal, putting up the tents and working out how to live together—are the curriculum. Not much of the day is left after you have done all those things. That was a very effective and integrated approach.

**Ross Greer:** Thank you for your answers. That is all really useful.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind):** I will continue on that theme. You have convinced me that residential education is a good idea, but can you convince me that it has to be residential outdoor education? That is a specific question. If we have time, I would also like to ask about the ages at which kids do things.

As an example, it has been suggested that it is valuable for young people to go to Kew gardens, but that might not count as residential outdoor education. Ms Smith and I have a friend who takes groups to the first world war battlefields. At the end of my first year—that is, S1—we went on a tour of the Highlands. I do not remember what we did, but I remember being at different places. I have a number of friends in Glasgow who have never been to Inverness, let alone a park. If we have £30 million a year to play with, should we not widen things out a bit, or does it have to be spent on residential outdoor education?

**Professor Mannion:** I will keep my response short. Flexibility is key. The indoor-outdoor bit is important, and we need to think flexibly about what outdoor and indoor experiences are. Some experiences in nature and at high-quality sites of special scientific interest are going to be very special occasions for young people, but so will a visit to a war site or a battleground. In my literature and the literature that I read on outdoor education, which is called outdoor learning in our country and many other countries, the shift towards such learning is seen in an interdisciplinary context. It could be about music or drama or it could be just a walk along the local drove road.

As for using the funding to offer provision in a flexible way, if the question is whether it should support residential outdoor education or whether it should be for broader systemic support, my answer is that, if I was the Government, I would be doing both. The money could viably be spent on supporting the professional learning of educators and the development of residential centre provision to ensure that it is connected to learning for sustainability. In a way, that would allow for inclusive provision. You might have teachers wanting to bring tents to the local park to give, say, nine-year-olds an overnight stay. If you do not flexibly offer such pathways to teachers and education centres at the same time, you will miss out on the benefits that it is possible to get for the money that you are talking about spending.

**John Mason:** As you mentioned the age issue, will you tell us whether you are convinced about the P6 to S4 focus? Would you want flexibility on that, too?

**Professor Mannion:** Absolutely. As I described in my opening remarks, I know of schools that begin their residential experiences with five and six-year-olds or those in early years settings—that is, those who are even younger—going with their parents. When they are five or six, they go away for a night, and by the time they have moved through their primary career and are 13, they will have done 25 or 28 nights in total.

Schools are clear about what is possible if they have the funding and if their teachers and their leadership have the courage and commitment to say, "This is a good thing". We should be learning from them. It does not have to be only about the transitional period, and it does not have to be the case that a young person must be 12 years old before they go on a residential. I was a boy scout and I started going away at the age of eight.

**John Mason:** Professor Loynes, is the bill too specific or are you happy with it?

**Professor Loynes:** I will add an example to what Greg Mannion said. I work with schools in the small isles and nearby and, given that there are often only eight or 10 pupils in such schools, they need to be able to go away together. We are talking about the full age range from P1 to P6 so, for them, that means taking younger people as well as older people.

**John Mason:** Would they not benefit from coming to Glasgow instead of going to an outdoor centre?

**Professor Loynes:** Absolutely. There were three things that those young people wanted to do. The first was to go to a fèis so that they could play their instruments in an orchestra; the second was to have a game of football with the right number of people in the team; and the third was to come to Glasgow. Going away does not have to involve a classical outdoor experience; it could mean going to an urban centre. We had a lovely model of school exchanges between a Cornish school on a surf beach and a school in very urban Birmingham. Their young people swapped places and camped in each other's school grounds or used home stays. The kids from Cornwall went to a mosque and a football match while the kids from Birmingham went to the beach, rode ponies and did other things of that kind. It was extremely effective.

There are lots of different models, and flexibility is important. We had year 2 students camping in cardboard boxes in the school grounds, and their parents would come and collect them at 10 o'clock at night after they had gone to sleep in their boxes. They talked for ever about their night of two sleeps. It is, therefore, quite possible to start this sort of thing young. In that case, the parents were the ones who needed reassurance about the experience, rather than the young people.

**John Mason:** I am sure that they would need reassurance about the cardboard boxes. Dr Scrutton, do you want to comment?

**Dr Scrutton:** I will comment briefly. The residential bit is crucial as it has a knock-on effect on attitudes towards learning, getting on with other people and having confidence in yourself. I found Chris Loynes's comments interesting, because I recently spoke to someone from the outer isles who said that they desperately want to go to Glasgow. They have had plenty of the outdoor stuff in the outer isles and they want something different.

The residential element is the crucial thing, because that is what changes people's feelings, characteristics, personalities and so on. There are then all the knock-on effects on academic learning, attainment and so on.

**John Mason:** Thank you.

**The Convener:** John, did you want to ask about the ages?

**John Mason:** I did not really pursue that point, as Professor Mannion gave me an answer on it. Dr Scrutton, do you agree that we should be more flexible on the ages?

**Dr Scrutton:** That would help, because schools could then be creative in meeting what they perceive to be their opportunities and needs. If you have limited resources, P6 and upwards will be a good target, because the transition from primary to secondary is crucial and it is a great place to offer support through the residential process. If schools have opportunities to be creative with the budget that they receive, they will be able to provide progressive experiences over a number of years, which will be very constructive.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much. You have been our first panel of witnesses for our stage 1 deliberations on the bill, so your evidence has been very helpful in kicking off our consideration of it. I am grateful to you for your time, your submissions to the committee and the answers that you have given. You have given us a lot to think about and to take forward.

At this point, we will move into private session.

11:31

*Meeting continued in private until 11:58.*

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