



Response to  
Education Authority Review of Residential  
and Outdoor Education

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Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) are the regional umbrella body for the children's sector in Northern Ireland.

CiNI represents the interests of its 160 member organisations providing policy, information, training and participation support services to members in their direct work with and for children and young people. CiNI membership also includes colleagues in the children's statutory sector recognising that the best outcomes for children and young people are increasingly achieved working in partnership with all those who are committed to improving the lives of children and young people in NI.

CiNI welcomes this opportunity to provide some feedback on the **Review of Residential and Outdoor Education**. We trust that our comments will be positively used to inform the next step in the process.

### **General Comments**

Residential and outdoor education is a recognised and powerful learning and developmental experience. Children in Northern Ireland believe that there should be formal entitlement for all young people and there should be ring-fenced funding.

With this in mind, we recommend there is a halt placed on the closures of any Residential and Outdoor Education Centres immediately.

It is our view that outdoor education opportunities benefit child development and learning. Surely the Education Authority knows the evidence in support of learning outside the classroom in that it raises educational standards in schools, often leading to a dramatic change in self-confidence not to mention the powerful learning opportunities in both

the activities and the societal improvements across education, health, behaviour, and community cohesion.

Outdoor learning helps young people to achieve far more than they ever thought possible and more effectively than they could in a school context. They have a sense of self-worth and personal identity, they can relate well to others and form good relationships, they are self-aware and can deal with their emotions, they become increasingly independent, are able to take the initiative and organise themselves, they are able to make healthy lifestyle choices and they are physically competent and confident.

We feel the Education Authority needs to redress the unfairness of the decision to remove these experiences from young people. We would remind the Education Authority of their obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), we do not believe there has been proper application of the Act. Children in Northern Ireland firmly believe that the legislating of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 allows for the promotion of equality of opportunity for all children and young people. We are therefore extremely concerned for the need for equality – should closures take place this could lead to an unfair and unequal disparity of access to facilities.

We very much welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation, we look forward to receiving information as to how you have addressed the concerns we have noted above.