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| **Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE)**  |  |

**Position Statement – Securing the future of Local Authority Outdoor Learning**

Experiences over the past year, as part of Scottish Education’s response to the pandemic, have reinforced the many well documented benefits of learning outdoors, as well as the value we place on outdoor spaces. The increased focus on Outdoor Learning opportunities for our young people across Scotland has been welcomed, but access to these opportunities has remained fragmented and inconsistent.

**Looking to 2021 and beyond SAPOE will continue to focus on leading and supporting Local Authorities to ensure Outdoor Learning becomes fully embedded as part of a whole school approach and an integral part of Learning for Sustainability.**

Local Authorities, Establishments, and Learners who engage with learning outdoors are more likely to meet the Scottish Government's Education priorities including:

* raising attainment and achievement
* reduction of the poverty related attainment gap
* improved mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes
* better engagement with Learning for Sustainability and the natural world

Effective Outdoor Learning encompasses a progressive range of experiences, from early years play to working on curriculum topics outside, from field trips to learning new skills and applying them during residential visits, adventurous activities and outdoor journeys. Outdoor Learning experiences should be regular, frequent, and progressive throughout the 3-18 learning journey.

To achieve a consistent approach and equity of opportunity for all young people in Scotland, it will require support from Scottish Government, Education Scotland, and other relevant partners, SAPOE propose the following key developments;

1. **Every Local Authority has a dedicated Lead Officer for Outdoor Learning embedded in their education service**
2. **Development of a Scottish Outdoor Learning workforce plan, to ensure expertise and availability of educational professionals across each Local Authority**
3. **Ensure Adventure Activities are part of the outdoor learning progression, and suitable national systems are in place to manage the quality and safety of those experiences**
4. **Consideration and discussion around the residential outdoor centre estate across Scotland, to ensure equitable access for all young people**

**Proposal 1.**

**Every local authority has a dedicated Lead Officer for Outdoor Learning embedded in their education service**

Outdoor Learning lead officers embedded in a local authority education service are able to:

* lead and stimulate Outdoor Learning opportunities to reduce inequity
* identify and allocate resources, and train mainstream staff to build capacity
* collaborate with internal and external partners to establish sustainable provision
* monitor and moderate quality and safety

To fully realise the benefits of Outdoor Learning, and address the variance across Local Authorities, will require clear policy, investment and moderation. Increasingly, opportunity and access to quality Outdoor Learning experiences are being determined by establishment or teacher enthusiasm, third sector organisations or private business aim. It is also affected by locality and parents’ affordability.

These issues can be addressed by the provision of a dedicated lead officer with the skills, knowledge and experience required to oversee and lead on all aspects of outdoor learning, working from within each Local Authority education service.

Scottish Government will need to give a clear guidance to Local Authorities on the need for a Lead Officer for Outdoor Learning. SAPOE will

* help Local Authorities to understand the need for the post and provide advice on the person specification and skills they should be looking for.
* support Local Authorities in the development of Outdoor Learning as part of the Curriculum for Excellence

**Proposal 2.**

**Development of a Scottish Outdoor Learning workforce plan to ensure expertise and availability of professionals across each Local Authority**

A Scottish Outdoor Learning workforce plan will:

* ensure the availability of competent and experienced staff to lead outdoor learning
* give these staff the ability, and remit, to collaborate with partners to establish sustainable provision for each local authority
* provide a competent workforce able to ensure the delivery of the significant educational, health, climate and economic outcomes of Scottish Education’s Curriculum for Excellence outdoors

This workforce plan will take account of all those who have responsibility or opportunity to engage with young people in Outdoor Learning settings – Directors of Education, Senior Education Officers, establishment staff (Head teachers, teachers and support staff), Community Learning and Development workers, Outdoor Education Instructors and Active Schools staff. SAPOE recognises there are roles to play for all these people, and a workforce plan will ensure we are providing these professionals the opportunity to develop their own knowledge of Outdoor Learning and develop the number and frequency of opportunities for Young People to engage with Outdoor Learning.

SAPOE will

* continue to maintain and develop a suite of training courses to provide professional development for the workforce
* continue to advise Local Authorities through officer membership of the Panel

**Proposal 3.**

**Ensure Adventure Activities are part of the outdoor learning progression, and suitable national systems are in place to manage the quality and safety of those experiences**

This will ensure that:

* there is equity of opportunity across Local Authority areas
* there is a system to oversee the quality and safety of adventure activity experiences

With the significant focus on local area outdoor learning over the last year, there is a risk the adventure activity experience is limited by vision, opportunity, affordability or local availability. The availability of adventure activity experiences should be embedded within the outdoor learning progression model available to our young people, and should offer the opportunity to develop skills and build resilience.

SAPOE will

* continue to engage with the Health and Safety Executive and other partners to shape a system to provide safe, high quality experiences for our young people
* promote and develop consistent good practice across Scotland for off-site visits through the implementation of Going Out There
* support the provision of Adventure Activities and residential Outdoor Centres

**Proposal 4.**

**Consideration and discussion around the residential Outdoor Education Centre estate across Scotland to ensure equitable access for all young people**

This will ensure that:

* the progressive Outdoor Learning model includes residential Outdoor Education Centre (OEC) experiences
* there is structure and leadership to ensure equity of opportunity
* equity and standards are protected as well as business needs

It is essential to identify and protect a national OEC estate infrastructure that is owned and managed between Scottish Government, Local Authority, third and private sector (similar in many ways to early years capacity planning). We propose a model that would ensure equity of opportunity, viability, and sustainability into the future, as well as ensuring educational quality and professional standards.

SAPOE will continue to

* support the provision of Adventure Activities and residential Outdoor Centres

**SAPOE**

SAPOE is committed to working in partnership with other organisations to deliver common outcomes. Partners include Scottish Government, Education Scotland, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC), SportScotland, Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP), Scottish Adventure Activities Forum (SAAF), National Network for Outdoor Learning (NNOL) and others (other partners and associates at can be found at [www.sapoe.org.uk](http://www.sapoe.org.uk))

The purpose of SAPOE, as laid out in the constitution is to:

* Support Local Authorities in the development of Outdoor Learning as part of the Curriculum for Excellence
* Promote and develop consistent good practice across Scotland for off-site visits through the implementation of Going Out There
* Support the provision of Adventure Activities and residential Outdoor Centres

SAPOE developed and maintains a relevant suite of training courses for SAPOE members and the wider Outdoor Learning workforce including: Teaching Learning Outdoors, Supporting Learning Outdoors, Outdoor Learning Lead Teacher, Educational Visit Coordinator, Visit Leader Training, Outdoor Learning Cards and the Brilliant Residentials toolbox.

Members deliver courses in a range of settings across Scotland, to ensure we offer a variety of support ranging from school specific through to school-to-school support and challenge.

The overarching ambition of SAPOE is for **Outdoor Learning to become truly embedded and to ensure that a progressive Outdoor Learning journey from 3-18 is secured for all young people in Scotland in the years to come.**