



# Young People's Rights Review

## Logan Fraser MSYP - Outdoor Learning

My name is Logan Fraser - I represent Scouts Scotland in the Scottish Youth Parliament.

I consulted with the National Advisory Group of Scouts Scotland, which collectively represents the views of 40,000 Scouts across the country and also met with local groups face to face.

In this speech, I will argue for outdoor learning to be an integral part of the Rights National Action Plan. Article 31 of the UNCRC protects the right to engage in recreational activities and obliges State parties to encourage the provision of appropriate recreational and leisure activity and spaces for these. This right is interdependent with our rights to education, health and our right to have our voices heard in decisions affecting us.

The outdoors allows young people to explore, learn about the world and - most importantly - learn about themselves.

From my consultation, members said the outdoors builds confidence and friendships, encourages them to take risks and improves their resilience. Skills for life.

Research shows that the outdoors develops critical thinking, improves wellbeing and leads to more sustainable lifestyle choices. Activities in the outdoors have even been shown to improve attainment and attendance at school.

The quality and quantity of outdoor learning is very limited especially in disadvantaged areas where the attainment gap is the greatest.

One of the main obstacles is schools having the attitude that exams come first and at all costs - neglecting the benefits that outdoors has on learning within the classroom and the benefits it could provide our most deprived students. Essentially, working against closing the attainment gap which we strive to diminish.

Despite this challenge, there have been improvements. Outdoor experience is now a part of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence.

In February 2018, the children's minister, Maree Todd MSP, announced funding of more than £850,000 to explore how to embed outdoor learning in the expansion of free childcare, pledging to make it "a defining feature of childhood in Scotland".

But this needs to reach out further than just the early years.

I welcome The Scottish Government's commitment to closing the attainment gap, to promote play and to implement the Mental Health Strategy. **However, I recommend that the plan also include an action to promote outdoor learning specifically.**

My recommendation is backed up internationally, as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommended to devolved administrations in the UK in 2016 (in paragraph 75 of its review) that **you strengthen your efforts to guarantee our rights to leisure, play and recreational activities through adequate and sustainable funding, and to involve us in the planning, design and monitoring of these.**

**Within this recommendation, I suggest the Government undertakes a Scotland specific study as to the benefits of outdoor learning on attainment, skills for life and mental health.**

If outdoor learning really is “a defining feature of childhood in Scotland” - then let us include bold actions on this in the Children and Young People's Rights National Action Plan.