

EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th May 2023
Report Subject	Supporting Service Children in Education
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide an update report of how the Education and Youth Portfolio has continued to support schools who have pupils who are identified as Service children, since the last report presented in December 2021.

It outlines how funding for councils has been allocated during the academic year 2022-2023. The amount of funding allocated to each local authority is based on the number of service children identified.

Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru works with the 22 local authorities and with the independent school sector in Wales on data collection activity. This provides an annual snapshot of the number and location of Service children in Wales.

In March 2021, data collection identified a total of 2333 pupils across Wales as Service children. In March 2023, data collection identified a total of 2127 pupils across Wales. Flintshire had 69 pupils known to be Service children in March 2021 and that figure increased to 82 pupils in March 2023.

The amount allocated to the Council for 2022/2023 was £4500. We are currently awaiting confirmation of any grant funding for 2023 to 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm they have received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools who have Service children.
---	---

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WORK OF SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN IN EDUCATION
1.01	<p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru is a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme, initially funded by the Ministry of Defence's Education Support Fund and funded by Welsh Government from 2019.</p> <p>Since the programme began in 2014, SSCE Cymru has worked with schools, children and young people, local authorities, Welsh Government, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations to gather their views and experiences, build networks across Wales and raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of children of Armed Forces personnel.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru has developed guidance and digital resources for schools and families, hosted conferences and stakeholder days and commissioned research to better understand the needs of Service children in education.</p>
1.02	<p>The Welsh Government Definition (1) of a Service child is:</p> <p>1 A 'Service child' has parent(s) – or person(s) with exercising parental responsibility – who is/are Service personnel serving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in Her Majesty's Regular Armed Forces• in full commitment as part of the full-time Reserve service• is a veteran who has been in Service within the last two years• one of their parents died whilst serving in the Armed Forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme. <p>SSCE Cymru also encourages schools and education settings to consider identifying and supporting Service children that fall outside of this definition by continuing to access and utilise the many resources available on the SSCE Cymru website and through the SSCE Cymru Network.</p> <p>The Service Children's Progression (SCIP) Alliance Hub Cymru is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children from military families. SCIP Alliance Hub Cymru also uses an additional definition (2) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A person whose parent, or carer, serves in the regular armed forces, or as a reservist, or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life - and does not meet the criteria of definition (1).
1.03	<p>Flintshire currently has 82 pupils known to be service children, of which 56 were reported as definition (1) and 26 were reported as definition (2).</p>
1.04	<p>Local authorities have again been required to develop and submit funding plans to SSCE Cymru for approval. The fund is administered and managed for the Welsh Government by the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru Programme.</p>

	<p>This work has been supported by Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLO) for Service children. There are 4 RSLOs across Wales as part of a two-year funded project.</p> <p>The post of the RSLO for North Wales is hosted by Anglesey Council but supports all six North Wales local authorities. The role of the RSLO is to work collaboratively with other organisations and offer support to schools with Service children. They raise awareness of the experiences of Service children and look to embed long-lasting solutions across the education sector. The North Wales post was vacant for several months with support being provided by another regional RSLO in the interim. The post was successfully recruited to in September 2022 and there has been very positive engagement with local authority officers and schools. The North Wales RSLO is also a member of the Council's Armed Forces Forum.</p> <p>The Primary Learning Adviser has worked closely with the RSLO to ensure professional development opportunities focused on understanding the needs of Service children and their experiences are made available to appropriate staff. To date, 28 local authority staff from different teams have accessed professional development.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru's e-learning continuing professional development (CPD) package is being launched in September 2023 which will be available to local authority and school staff.</p>
1.05	<p>The focus for this academic year's local authority plan for Flintshire schools has been to support schools to work together and provide opportunities for Service children to meet Service children from other schools.</p> <p>Two activity days were held at Ty Calon in Deeside in March 2023 for primary aged pupils from across twelve primary schools. Almost 300 learners took part over the two days, including 45 service children. Pupils benefited from team fitness challenges that incorporated problem solving tasks, health and wellbeing advice, team building and communication challenges that look to build resilience and confidence. Feedback from pupils and staff was very positive. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pupils said they wanted to do similar activities again • Nearly all pupils said they had fun. <p>A third day is due to be held in the summer term for secondary aged pupils and planning for this is currently underway.</p>
1.06	<p>April is the Month of the Military Child. In Flintshire schools, we were able to organise a drop- in session for teachers and start a pen pal project between some of the pupils that attended the activity days.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Flintshire has received total grant funding over three years of £13,000. This funding has been delegated to schools for school based professional development, resources, and engagement activities.</p> <p>The Senior Manager for School Improvement and the Primary Learning Adviser attend national and local meetings and develop and co-ordinate the work programme of the annual plan, supported by the Regional School Liaison Officer (RSLO) which is a grant funded post.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The work of the Education and Youth Portfolio in supporting schools with Service children is reported to the Flintshire County Council Armed Forces Forum Strategic Group. The Forum works to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant in Flintshire and promote commitment to the Covenant through community benefits. It seeks to improve access to services to the serving personnel, veterans, and their families. The Forum reports to Cabinet and Public Service Board on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>As part of the Council's overall commitment to the Armed Forces community, work includes achievement of the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, Gold Award for ensuring the Armed Forces Community are not unfairly disadvantaged in the workplace.</p> <p>The Armed Forces community will be considered in any future education policy decisions to ensure they are not being disadvantaged.</p>
3.02	<p>SSCE Cymru collates evaluations from course participation accessed through the grant funding. This feeds into national planning for ongoing support and access to grant funding.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>In 2015, SSCE Cymru commissioned the report "<i>Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru: A Study of Data and Support Provision in Wales (2015)</i>". Conducted by the Data Unit Wales, this report involved interviews with schools from across Wales. It found that there was very little data available, indicating a need for more information and guidance to enable schools to collect data and access support.</p> <p>The Education and Youth portfolio carried out consultation meetings with schools who have Service children on roll – either face to face or via a short survey. All schools were subsequently able to target resources from their allocation of the grant but expressed interest in using the identified funding for 2022-23 to develop collaborative activities.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Fund to support service children in schools across Wales: https://gov.wales/250000-fund-support-service-children-schools-across-wales</p> <p>SSCE Cymru website: https://www.sscecymru.co.uk</p> <p>(SCIP) Alliance Hub Cymru: https://www.scipalliance.org/hubs/hub-cymru</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru; a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme, initially funded by the MOD's Education Support Fund and funded by Welsh Government from 2019.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru School toolkit; this resource was launched in March 2020. It provides schools, councils, and education professionals with information on the experiences of Service children and helps them to understand the support that is available to assist them with supporting Service children. Each section of the SSCE Cymru School Toolkit provides information on various support organisations and relevant links to resources, along with a list of suggested actions and activities for the school.</p> <p>The Armed Forces Covenant: The Armed Forces Covenant is designed to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government, and the Armed Forces. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.</p>