

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 2 nd December 2021
Report Subject	Supporting Service Children in Education Update
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide Members with an overview of how the Education and Youth Portfolio is supporting schools who have pupils who are identified as Service children.

It outlines how funding for councils has been allocated across Flintshire schools. Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru worked with all 22 local authorities and independent schools in Wales to conduct a data collection activity. This provides a snapshot of the number and location of Service children in Wales as of March 2021.

The data collection identified a total of 2333 pupils across Wales as being Service children. The amount of funding allocated to each council is based on the number of service children identified. Flintshire currently has 69 pupils known to be Service children.

The amount allocated to the Council for the 2020/21 academic year was £3750 and the amount for 2021/2022 is £4750.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the progress of the work of the Education and Youth Portfolio in supporting schools with Service children In Education.
---	--

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING 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 is now funded by Welsh Government.</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> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A 'Service child' has parent(s) – or person(s) with exercising parental responsibility – who is/are Service personnel serving:<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• a child where one of their parents died whilst serving in the Armed Forces and they receive 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 69 pupils known to be Service children, of which 39 were reported as definition (1) and 30 were reported as definition (2).</p>

1.04	<p>In 2020 Welsh Government announced a £250,000 fund to support Service children in schools across Wales. £200,000 has been distributed to councils based on funding plans developed with SSCE Cymru. The funding is to help schools provide additional support to children from families of Service personnel. The challenges can include the effects of moving from one school to another due to the location of the posting. It can also include the effects of parents or guardians in the Armed Forces being deployed away from home, either on operation or a long term training exercise. The funding has supported universal support from the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru project, hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), to provide more targeted support to schools.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with SSCE Cymru to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the number and location of Service children • Consult with schools • Collate an understanding of the needs of their Service children • Investigate ways the funding made available to them could be utilised <p>Local authorities have 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. The Welsh Government's Education and Public Services Group will audit allocations to local authorities.</p> <p>Consideration has been given during this time to ensuring there is sufficient flexibility in planning to be able to respond to the impact of Covid-19.</p>
1.05	<p>This work has been supported by the Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs) for Service children. There are 4 RSLOs across Wales as part of a two year funded project. SSCE Cymru, in collaboration with 160th (Welsh) Brigade, were successful in securing £338,000 from the Armed Forces Covenant 'Removing Barriers to Family Life' programme for this work.</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.</p>
1.06	<p>Flintshire's grant funding has been allocated equally across 21 eligible schools. The criteria for expenditure of this funding focuses on enabling schools to access support and advice in developing appropriate plans for provision that meets any identified needs of their pupils.</p> <p>The first phase of the support offered is access to an online course delivered by SSCE Cymru, available in either Welsh or English. This is an important professional development opportunity for school based staff to raise awareness of the needs of Service children and to increase staff confidence with supporting pupils in school. Schools have been asked to undertake an audit of current practice in their school. The funding enables</p>

	<p>an identified member of staff in each school to then meet with the Regional School Liaison Officer (RSLO) to discuss their audits and plans.</p> <p>The second phase will be for the school to use the results of the audit to work on priority actions which they feel will have the greatest impact. In particular, schools have been asked to familiarise themselves with the SSCE Cymru School toolkit and resources.</p> <p>Any remaining funding can then be allocated for interventions or resources as identified in school action plans. These interventions might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing workshops for classes with a Service child. Schools will be encouraged to engage with support available from SSCE Cymru and work in clusters where appropriate • Staff attending training and implement various therapeutic strategies • Creating small groups or individual wellbeing sessions, including playing games, exploring emotions and discussing stories about change; developing mental health and wellbeing groups and clubs <p>Many of the strategies covered in the training and then developed in the subsequent sessions will be valuable to a range of pupils, not just those from Service families.</p>
1.07	<p>Flintshire Education and Youth Portfolio is represented on the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MOD LAP) group, which is made up of members from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) • The Welsh Local Government Association • Welsh Government • Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers • Regional School Liaison Officers for Service children • Ministry of Defence • Local authorities in Wales • Education consortia. <p>The primary purpose of the MOD LAP is to give councils an opportunity to come together, share good practice and discuss the support that can be offered to Service children in education.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>In 2020 Welsh Government announced an allocation of a £250,000 fund to support service children in schools across Wales. This is the Welsh Government – Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales Fund (2020/21 and 2021/22).</p> <p>£200,000 has been distributed to Councils based on funding plans developed with SSCE Cymru.</p>

	Flintshire has received two grants, totalling £8,500. This funding has been allocated equally to the 21 eligible schools. For phase 1, each school has received £178 and for phase 2, a further £226.
2.02	The two year project of four funded Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs) across Wales is grant funded through the 'Removing Barriers to Family Life' programme within the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. This particular programme of funding is now closed. Additional funding would need to be secured for the programme to continue after the two years.

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 works to ensure all schools are capturing data on the children of serving personnel and veterans and are applying for funding through Armed Forces Grants.</p> <p>The Forum reports to Cabinet and Public Service Board on a quarterly basis.</p>
3.02	SSCE Cymru will collate evaluations from course participation accessed through the grant funding. This will include establishing a baseline for staff confidence levels in supporting Service children in their schools. The RSLO will be able to give qualitative data on checklist activities to identify priorities across schools.

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>SSCE Cymru worked with all 22 local authorities and independent schools in Wales to conduct a data collection activity in 2021 and provide a snapshot of the number and location of Service children in Wales as of March 2021.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

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 704019 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>SSCE Cymru School toolkit: This resource was launched in March 2020. It provide 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> <p>The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust: Supports the Armed Forces Covenant by delivering funding programmes that create real change to Armed Forces’ communities across the UK.</p> <p>Removing Barriers to Family Life’ programme: This is a family focused programme for Armed Forces’ families facing challenge. In all, £7.5 million was made available to projects that reduce isolation and loneliness. The programme is now closed.</p>