

## Kirsty Williams steps in with £200,000 to support armed forces children

Up until March this year schools in Wales were able to bid for funding from the MoD's Education Support Fund (ESF) which was open to schools across the UK and provided targeted support for Service children.

As the fund has now come to an end, a new interim £200,000 Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund will be established. This will be administered by the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Project and hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

Schools are being invited to bid this term for funding ready for the new term in September.

Kirsty Williams said:

"Our national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence. For this to happen, every learner in Wales must be able to achieve their full potential.

"Service children often have to move schools at very short notice, and can also face the anxiety of having a parent away on active service. That's why we need to ensure schools are there to support them."

Alun Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government & Public Services, said:

"We have made tremendous progress in Wales in delivering services and support for our Armed Forces community and stepping up to help the children of active personnel through what can clearly be a stressful time in their life is further evidence of our commitment.

"The WLGA is particularly well suited to manage the fund with the SSCE as they already have the links with schools and the Armed Forces in Wales.

"They will be making sure that schools are fully aware of the new fund and will be inviting them to submit their bids so that the funding is in place ready for September."

Councillor Debbie Wilcox, WLGA Spokesperson for Education, said:

"The unique stresses and anxieties that Service children face can often be overwhelming especially in a learning environment. That is

why the SSCE Project continues to work positively with relevant stakeholders, raising awareness of the issues of service children in education and supporting schools working with these children and young people across Wales.”

“This interim Welsh Government fund for 2018-19, administered by SSCE and hosted by WLGA, will ensure that the children of our armed forces are given the additional support that they need to fulfil their potential at school. WLGA and Welsh Government are committed to reduce the attainment gap and to provide an education system which prepares all learners in Wales for bright futures. As we look ahead, it is imperative that long-term government funding is secured for future years to ensure that children of all backgrounds are given the best possible opportunities to thrive.”

Ant Metcalfe, Wales Area Manager for The Royal British Legion said:

“Having a parent in the Armed Forces can have a tremendous impact on the wellbeing of some service children. We welcome any additional support that benefits the children of Armed Forces personnel in Wales and helps them gain access to the help they need due to their unique circumstances.

“In October 2017 the Legion launched a guide for Service children and families in Wales to improve awareness of the support available to them and we hope the establishment of this fund will further increase the help available for service children across Wales’.