

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’.

£1.4m EU boost to increase skills in the advanced manufacturing sector

The Materials and Manufacturing Education Training and Learning (METaL) scheme, led by Swansea University’s College of Engineering, is helping to raise skills, boost performance and productivity to drive this growing industrial sector.

The additional funding of £1.4m will enable the scheme to help more than 400 people gain technical skills in new and emerging sectors, such as energy and power, smart manufacturing, materials engineering, circular economy as well as corrosion and coatings technology. It will also support an extra 60 companies in North, West Wales and the South Wales Valleys.

Professor Drakeford said,

“The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring the Welsh workforce is equipped with the skills needed to drive growth and productivity. This is another example of the importance of replacement funding for Wales following Brexit so that future investments can continue to support our ambitions for a sustainable and prosperous Welsh economy.”

Dr Khalil Khan of Swansea University, METaL Project manager, said:

“Securing this EU funding ensures the continuation of a fantastic vehicle for Swansea University to share its knowledge and experience to support Welsh businesses.”

“The funding complements the investment of Welsh Government in supporting Welsh businesses, and will benefit industry by ensuring that its workforce have the correct technical knowledge to enable Welsh businesses to compete in a global marketplace.”

One of the companies that has benefited from the METaL scheme is TATA Steel in Port Talbot. Andrew Townsend, a Fire and Environment Manager at the site talks about his experience of the scheme.

“The METaL courses have helped colleagues gain a better understanding of technical aspects associated with their operations. In particular, the environmental issues course has helped people understand environmental legislation and global, local, and market-sector based environmental issues.”

“The benefit for our employees is that they now have a better understanding of the environmental aspects of our business. For the company it is an advantage to have a workforce which is more environmentally aware which helps improve Tata Steel’s environmental performance.”

The scheme aims to support more than 800 people by the time it is completed in 2022.

[Average Speed Cameras to improve safety on A55 Rhuallt Hill](#)

The system is being installed after data collected between 8 March and 27 March found thousands of people breaking the legal limit whilst travelling

down the Rhualt Hill.

The radar system collected speed information from 394,326 vehicles and found that 217,642 had been travelling at speeds of more than 70mph on the westbound carriageway. The data was collated from three locations to better demonstrate the speed profile in the Rhualt Hill area.

The introduction of average speed cameras is part of the quick win interventions identified in the A55 resilience study which was carried out last year on how best to improve the travel experience and minimise the frequency and impact of incidents and breakdowns.

The study had already highlighted existing issues with traffic speeds on the Rhualt Hill westbound before the recent data was gathered and now, as a result and with the latest speed information, average speed enforcement is being trialled in the area.

Cameras will be installed at J28 and J30 with one in between at J29 and will go live once the system has been fully tested, which is anticipated to be mid-May. Signs will be in place in the area on the A55 to signal when the cameras are not in use as testing is carried out, once these signs are removed they will be live.

Information about when the system will be in operation will also be made available on the Traffic Wales website and the North & Mid Wales Traffic page (@TrafficWalesN).

Work to install the cameras will take place at night and reaffirms the Cabinet Secretary's commitment for no daytime lane closures involving roadworks on the A55 until September.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Safety on our roads is an absolute priority and this latest data of vehicle speeds is clear proof why we are taking action on the A55 at Rhualt Hill westbound.

"The number of vehicles found to be travelling beyond the speed threshold on this part of the carriageway is of great concern and the measures we will now put in place will improve the safety of the travelling public, help cut the amount of collisions in the area and strengthen the resilience of the A55.

"We must remember that road safety is a matter where we all have a part to play. Collisions on the road can happen for a number of reasons, and excess speed is one of the most common causes.

"The trial of average speed cameras in the area of the Rhualt Hill is one of a number of interventions we are making following the A55 resilience study I commissioned last year and will help traffic flow in a safer environment."

[£230,000 for projects to improve the lives of people in Africa](#)

The Welsh Government's Wales for Africa programme encourages civil society, businesses and public bodies in Wales to take action on poverty in Africa by taking part in projects which support the exchanges of skills, learning, joint working and tackling climate change.

The £230,000 grant scheme will be launched on 4th May 2018 and organisations will have 8 weeks to submit a funding bid ahead of the closing date on 29th June 2018. Grants of between £500 and £15,000 are available, with one larger project of national significance also being funded each year.

Announcing the funding, First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“Small grants from our Wales for Africa programme have transformed the lives of thousands of people in Africa whilst benefiting people here – from reducing infant mortality rates in Uganda to increasing the number of children who stay in school.

“I encourage community groups and organisations to bid for a share of this funding and work with us so we can continue to improve the lives of people in Africa.”

Ruth Marks, WCVA's Chief Executive, said:

‘WCVA is very pleased to have the opportunity to work with Welsh Government to deliver this important scheme. We recognise the importance of this fund in supporting mutually beneficial projects between Wales and Africa and the wide reaching and sustainable benefits they bring.’

More information on the Welsh Government Wales for Africa grant scheme is available on the [WCVA website](#).

[Children invited to draw the NHS of](#)

the future

The competition is open to children in two age categories; children aged 7-9 and aged 10-11 in Wales. They are encouraged to think about how the NHS will look in the future, what medical innovations there may be and what they think will be important in healthcare.

The theme of the competition is: "What do you think the NHS in Wales will look like on its 100th birthday in 2048?" closing on 31 May 2018. A winner from each age group will be chosen to represent their local health board.

The 14 winners will be invited to a service of thanksgiving to celebrate NHS70 at Llandaff Cathedral on 4 July 2018.

To celebrate the anniversary, The Royal Mint will present the winners with an 'N – NHS' coin from The Great British Coin Hunt A to Z Collection. Two overall winners, chosen by the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething will also be invited to visit The Royal Mint Experience and have the opportunity to strike their own coins.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I'm pleased to announce that this competition is now open. It's a fantastic way of making sure people of all ages can get involved in celebrating our fantastic NHS.

"I look forward to seeing all the entries, which I'm sure, will be a demonstration of how creative and talented the children of Wales are. We could even come across future inventors and designers!"

Further details of the competition, including and terms and conditions can be found on the [NHS Health in Wales website](#) (external link)