

SSCE
CYMRU

SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN
IN EDUCATION WALES

CYNORTHWYO PLANT MILWYR
YN YSGOLION CYMRU

SSCE Cymru

Service Family Guide



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Service children's experiences



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Introduction

The Service children's experiences section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes an overview of the understanding of Service children's experiences in Wales. It provides Service families with a summary of the information and evidence that inform the decisions in Wales to provide support, resources and advice to help Service children in education.

Definition of a Service child

Schools and education settings should consider identifying and supporting all children that have a connection to the Armed Forces by accessing and utilising the many resources available on the [SSCE Cymru website](#) and through the [SSCE Cymru Network](#).

The Welsh Government definition of a Service child

A 'Service child' has parent(s) – or person(s) with exercising parental responsibility – who is/are Service personnel:

- In HM 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.

SSCE Cymru also encourages schools and education settings to consider identifying and supporting Service children that fall outside of this definition, including Service children of Reservists with part-time commitment or veterans/ex-Service personnel that transitioned out of the Armed Forces more than two years ago.

Being a Service child

"Article 29: Your right to become the best that you can be."

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

"The good things I like: you get around and get to see different places... the other good thing is making different friends and experiencing getting to know other people."

Shana, Service child



Service personnel from all three Services are based at different locations across Wales, and there are also Reservists and veterans/ex-Service personnel.

Service children can bring a diverse range of strengths and experiences to a school community and will have a variety of learning experiences from previous schools to share. They may have experiences of living in other countries, learning new languages and experiencing different cultures. Service children bring new dynamics to communities. They may have experienced travelling around the world as well as having talents and skills including dancing, art, sport, languages and drama.

To see videos of Service children speaking about their experiences, visit [Films on Service children's experiences](#).



Challenges/barriers for Service children

“ 3.1: When Service families were asked what they felt schools found challenging in supporting Service child(ren), 81% indicated: gaining an understanding of the Armed Forces lifestyle.”

SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey (2020) findings



“When I start a new school, I do get nervous. I give the teacher some advice: put yourself in their shoes. That is what I do to see how they feel.”

Mia, Service child

Being part of a Service family can be an extremely rewarding and beneficial experience, but aspects of the Armed Forces lifestyle can have challenges that impact on a child's education.

These challenges can include:

- Frequent school and home moves
- Separation from Service parent(s)
- Changes to family dynamics – recurring for different reasons
- Managing emotions
- Learning to deal with positive and negative emotions
- Delayed support for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) due to requirements not being identified
- Difficulties in making commitments to relationships with peers, adults and school
- Support for mental health and wellbeing
- Living a long distance from extended family/grandparents who could provide support
- Making new friends and moving on from previous ones
- Keeping in contact with family/friends from a distance
- Settling and joining in new activities
- Staff in school not understanding the needs and possible challenges that a Service child may face.

Whilst every child's individual circumstances can affect their life in and out of school in different ways, there are some common factors in the cases of Service children that can have a range of positive and negative impacts at different times in their school careers. These can be linked to deployment/separation, mobility and transition.

Impact of deployment

Definition of deployment: periods when Service personnel are sent on operational service, either overseas or within the UK. A "tour" relates to the period of duty wherever a Service person is sent. This may be a tour at a defined Armed Forces establishment (a posting), an operational tour overseas or an extended period of training at an alternative location.

Definition of separation: Service child(ren) living separately from their parent/s for a period of time, including while the Serving parent is living away from the family home on deployment, training or exercise or when "weekending".

"You can't stop yourself thinking about it. You can't just say, 'No, I'm not thinking about it,' because he is your dad. It's hard to do that. I've grown up going and coming from places and him not being at home all the time. I'm sort of used to it and I still miss him as much."

Georgia, Service child



"When my dad went away when I was young, I used to get sad and smell his clothes. When I got older, I got used to it. When he came back it was a happy time and we used to have good food."

Ashim, Service child

"During deployment, we were Skyping once and we were getting rocketed at the time and these alarms were going off and I had to pretend it was a fire alarm. It really gets into his head and he mentions it years later."

RAF Officer and parent of Service child

"3.1 85% have experienced parents being deployed and during discussions about their experiences, 62% made negative comments about their emotions (sad, angry) and 50% made negative comments about missing the deployed parent."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

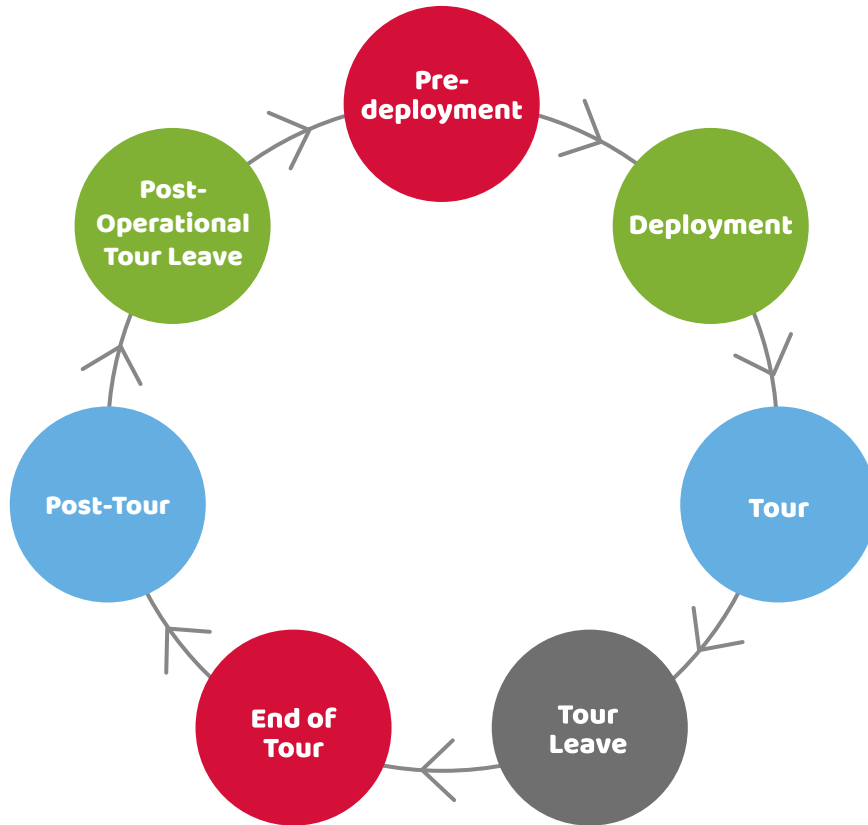
"3.1 When asked what are the three most significant challenges Service children face in education, the three top answers from primary schools were: The emotional impact of separation, The emotional impact when parent/s return from deployment/training, Emotional impact during deployment."

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

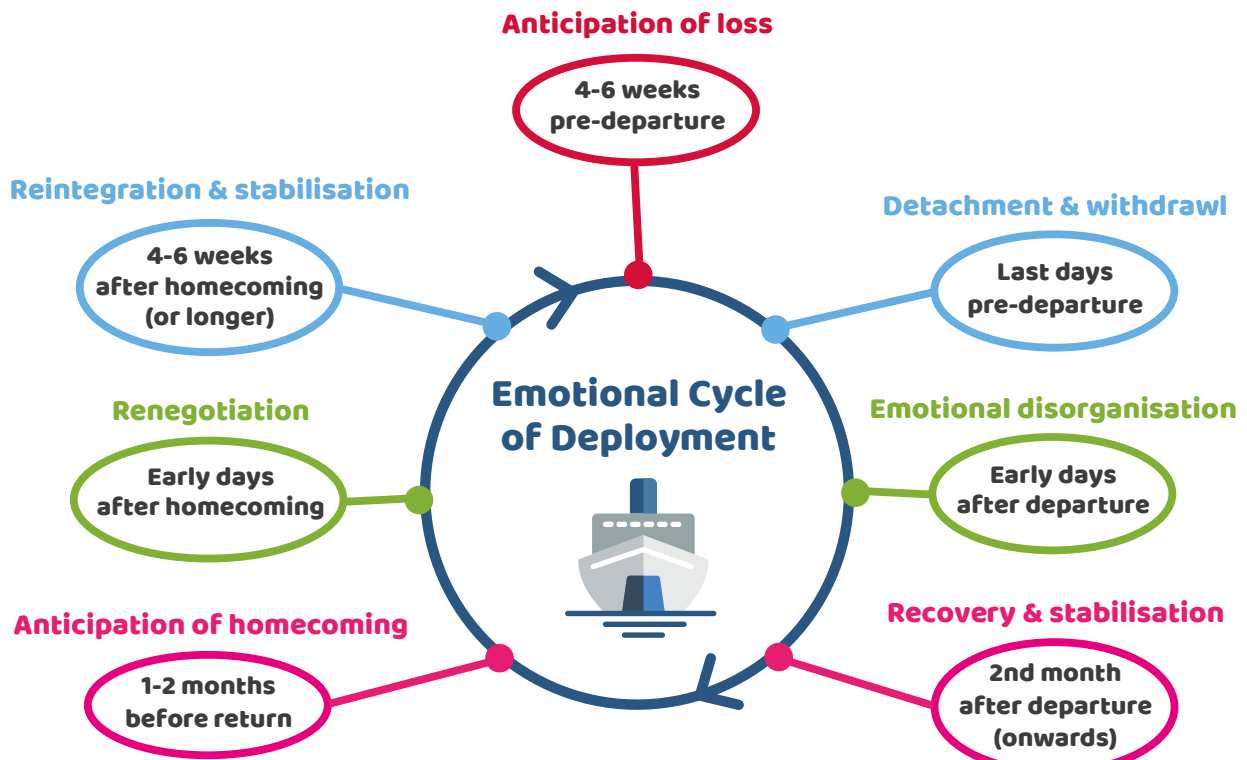
"3.2 When asked what helped them to deal with their emotions/feelings while their parent/s was/were deployed, 42% talked about support from friends or buddies, 39% talked about communicating with deployed parent."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

Deployment cycle



The emotional cycle of deployment



For more information, visit:

- [Royal Navy and Royal Marines Parental Absence Resource](#)
- [Making sense of the emotional cycle of deployment](#)

Weekending

“Weekending” is the norm for a lot of our families who have their main home in Wales. This is where the Service person will travel to their assigned base/unit/station each week rather than being accompanied by their family. “Weekending” provides stability for a Service family as a result of them being less mobile, but can create additional challenges for families living separately for regular periods. This will impact all three Services, with increasing numbers of families likely to be living in this way in the future. It is important that schools and local statutory services have an understanding of the challenges resulting from being part of an Armed Forces family in order to provide appropriate support.

“
*I worry what
might happen to my
Dad, is he in danger
of being killed?*”



Impact of mobility

Definition of mobility: moving/relocating based on operational needs.

"I was born in Germany August 2010, 2011 Dad went to Canada, 2012 he went to Afghanistan, 2014 Falklands, 2016 back to Canada, 2016 August then we moved to Bulford, 2017 we moved to Brecon."

Lydia, Service child



"I was in Episkopi School in Cyprus. It was very enjoyable! When my dad told me three or four weeks before we had to leave, it was very disappointing because I had the best time of my life there, I knew there was nothing I could do so I just got on with it."

Ryan, Service child

"I've been to seven different schools. I've not stayed put in one school long enough. I think it is a big impact because you've just got to find time to make friends and settle in. It's pretty hard but because you've done it lots you get used to it."

Shana, Service child



"As soon as we get used to a house, you get moved. I've been to four schools and moved six times."

Aiden, Service child

"2.1 When Service families were asked about their experiences, 76% had experienced moving home and 49% had experienced moving between countries within the UK."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

"2.1 77% have moved to a new house and during discussions about their experiences, 51% made negative comments about leaving friends/family, while 31% made positive comments about meeting new people/making friends."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

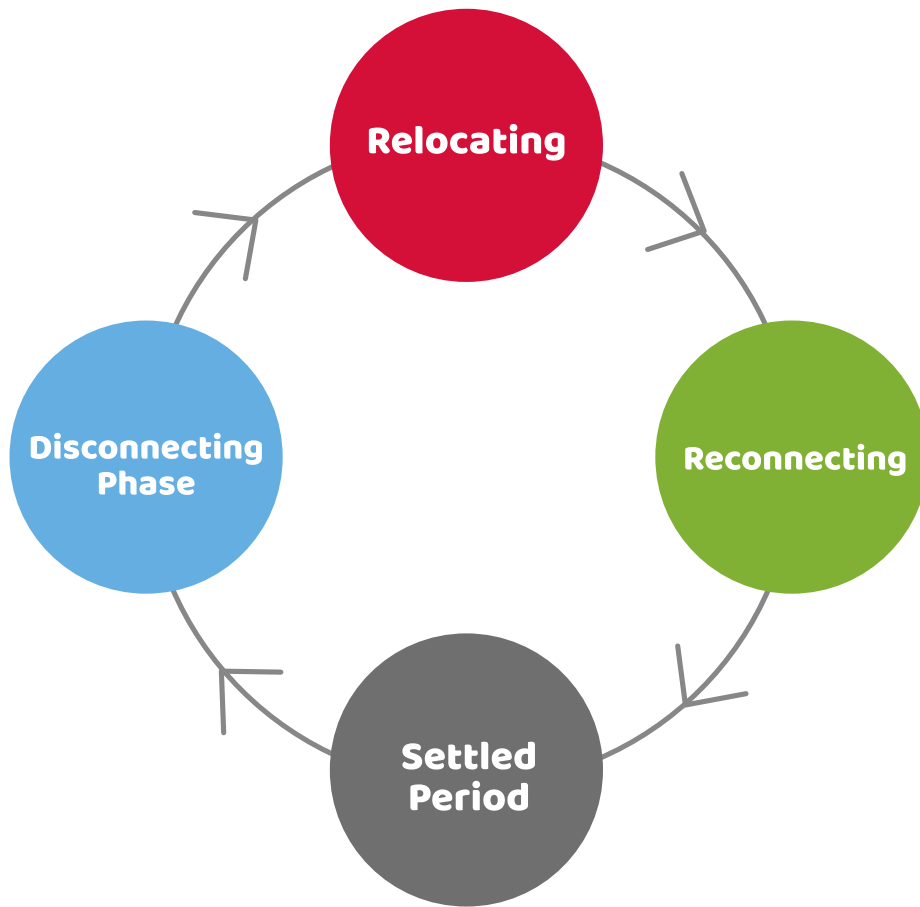
"2.2 37% have lived abroad and during discussions about their experiences, 28% made positive comments and 7% made negative comments about the physical environment (weather, animals etc)."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

"2.4 When asked what activities helped them when moving school, 41% talked about buddy/peer support and 30% talked about visiting the new school and meeting new teachers."

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

Mobility experiences



Families can use [Moving Schools: A Parents' Guide](#) from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to support a smooth transition for Service children.



Service children's experiences

Impact of transition

Definition of transition: period of time at which a move is made from civilian life to Armed Forces life and vice versa.

"He signed off last week, so he will be done by the end of this year. He's done 24 years. I find that better because he will be around a lot. He likes watching us playing rugby, so he will get to see us more."

Lewis, Service child



"The idea of completely stopping being in the Army terrifies me. I cannot imagine how much it would affect my Dad, because it's been his entire life for so long."

Ieuan, Service child

Transition experiences

Service personnel will all inevitably return to civilian life, whether at the end of their formal engagement or prematurely due to family obligations, health reasons or unforeseen circumstances. Leaving the Service and returning to civilian society can be stressful. Cultural differences may require some personal adjustment.

Many families are choosing to settle in Wales. This could be due to their family/friends and support networks being available to them, or a result of a positive experience/time living in Wales during a posting.



Challenges/barriers that schools face in supporting Service children

“3.2 When asked what are the three most significant challenges they face in supporting their Service children, over 31% of schools indicated: Gaining an understanding of the Armed Forces lifestyle.”

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

“2.3 When Service families were asked what aspects of their experiences may have negatively impacted their child(ren), 50% indicated settling into a new school, 42% indicated moving away and missing friends and family from previous school/home and 41% indicated settling into a new area and learning about new surroundings.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

“4.1 When asked what are the three most beneficial types of support the school offer to their Service children, the top answers from primary and secondary schools included: Tailored pastoral support, Dedicated member of staff to support Service children, Peer to peer support/mentoring.”

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

Based on consultation with schools in Wales, SSCE Cymru has identified that schools find the following areas of supporting Service children in education challenging:

Family

- Understanding the experiences of Service families
- Parent engagement – particularly when moving-on date is known
- Additional administration time to support transfer of information on Service child between schools
- Additional support time to support family/child during school move (in or out)
- Language and culture
- Sharing of previous family history and information – being aware they are a Service family
- Loss of social networks – building new ones
- Integration into new school environment and community
- Supporting emotional wellbeing needs of a Service child and Service family
- Supporting Service child during possible family break-up (divorce/separation) – possible financial implications and/or further school moves.

“ I like hearing his stories about his journeys. ”

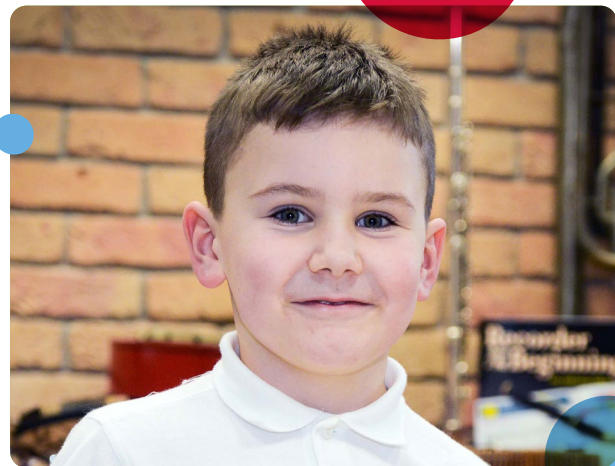


Readiness to learn

- Induction support and programme
- Mental health and wellbeing support where needed
- Overcome emotional needs/difficulties to enable them to be ready to learn
- Difficulty in identifying ALN – due to mobility and potential short period that the Service child is at a school
- Reacting swiftly to support new arrivals
- Ensuring staff are aware of Service child's possible needs and support required
- Term-time absence – being flexible with leave due to deployment and other circumstances
- Transition of previous documents and education history.

“
I worry about bullies.”

“
I miss my friends.”



Progress and attainment

- Awareness of previous curriculum(s) – in order to support potential gaps in learning or repeating curriculum content
- Identifying gaps in learning/curriculum needs/extension in learning
- Supporting impact of behavioral challenges
- Transition of previous documents and education history – particularly when moving between countries
- Ensuring staff embrace the skills and talents of Service children and the experiences they bring with them to the school
- Supporting Service children learning Welsh for the first time.

Transition

- Limited understanding of the process of transitioning out of the Armed Forces for Service personnel
- Supporting Service children with their emotional needs in response to a change in family dynamics
- Understanding how to support parents of Service children during their transition into civilian life or from civilian into Service life, which could be in relation to the immediate or long-term impact.

Support and resources

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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Armed Forces in Wales



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Introduction

The Armed Forces in Wales section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes a brief overview of the three Services in Wales. It provides Service families with information on the support available to them and activities in Wales related to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Armed Forces in Wales

"Being part of the Army is like being part of a family, an enormous family that spans the length of the UK, parts of Germany and Afghanistan."

Ieuan, Service child

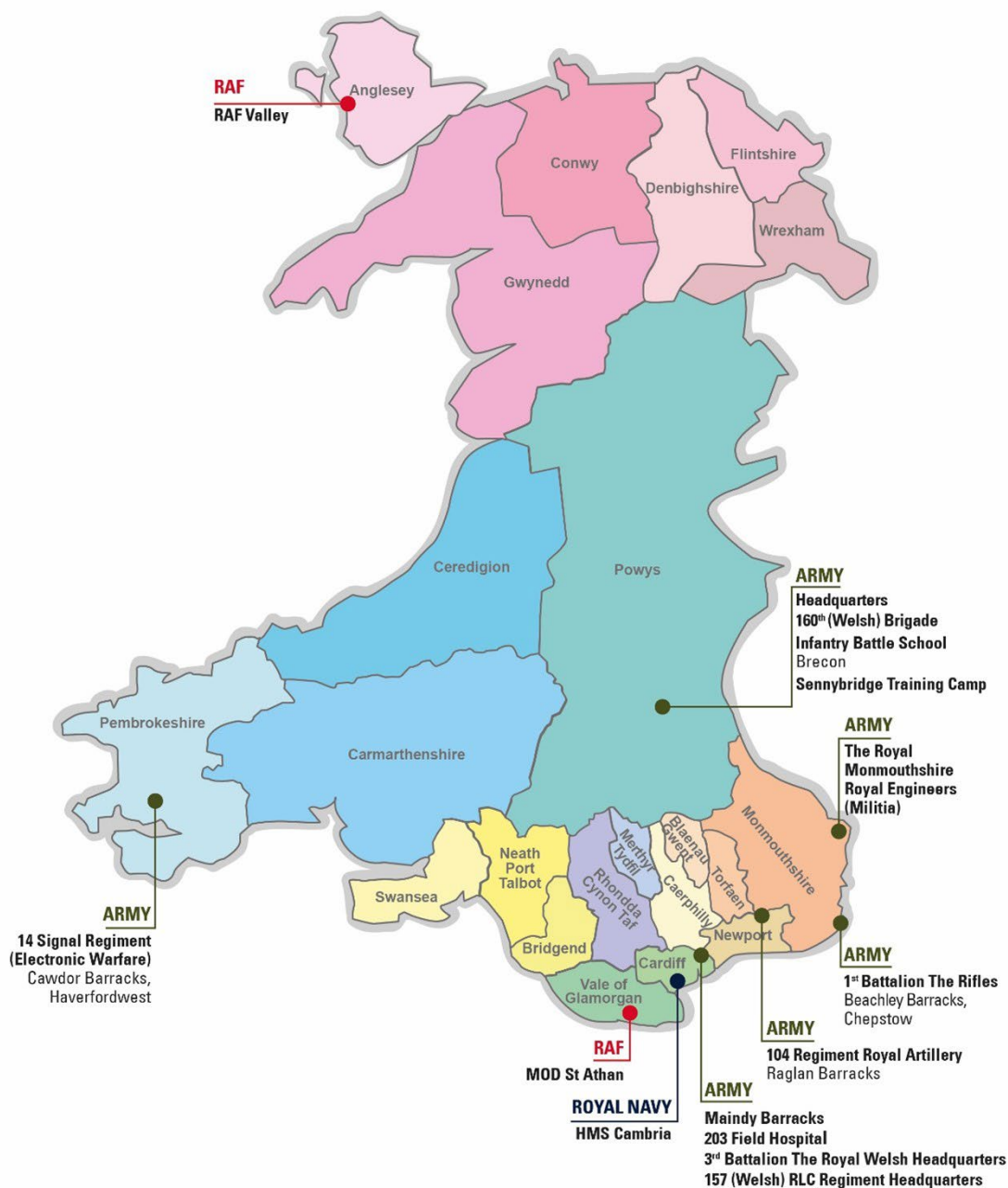


"2.2 When Service families were asked about their experiences that have positively impacted their child(ren)'s wellbeing and educational experience, 55% indicated job security for the serving parent and 39% indicated being part of the Armed Forces community."

SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey (2020) findings



Armed Forces bases in Wales



Tri-Service community

Although defence is not devolved to Wales and remains part of UK Government policy, there are arrangements in place to ensure that the Welsh Government and local authorities are able to work collaboratively together with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and members of the Armed Forces at all levels in Wales.

The Armed Forces in Wales are made up of serving personnel from all three Services: the Royal Navy/Royal Marines, British Army and the Royal Air Force (RAF). The predominant Services in Wales are the Army and the RAF owing to the number of bases located here in Wales. There are also a number of Reservist and Cadet locations across Wales.



Veterans/ex-Service personnel

Many ex-Service personnel chose to settle in Wales after leaving the Armed Forces. Just because a veteran/ex-Service person is no longer serving in the Armed Forces, this does not mean that they and their family are no longer impacted by the experiences of their serving career. For this reason, SSCE Cymru encourages schools to identify and support the children of veterans/ex-Service personnel, along with children of current Service personnel.

Royal Navy/Royal Marines

HMS Cambria is the Royal Naval Reserve Unit, based in Cardiff. Tawe Division is a satellite unit of HMS Cambria based in Swansea. There will also be some Naval personnel stationed with other Armed Forces, and many Naval Service families living in Wales.

A significant number of Royal Navy and Royal Marines families choose to keep their permanent home in Wales but travel to work in other parts of the UK and overseas and are deployed in ships and submarines.

For further information on the Royal Navy, visit www.royalnavy.mod.uk



British Army

Headquarters 160th (Welsh) Brigade, based in Brecon, takes the lead for tri-Service engagement across the whole of Wales. It is the Army's connection to the government and society of Wales, supporting the Union, shaping the recruiting environment and delivering firm base support, and is the tactical HQ for the delivery of UK operations within Wales.

For further information on the Army in Wales, visit www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/formations-divisions-brigades/regional-command/hq-160th-welsh-brigade/



Royal Air Force (RAF)

There are two stations based in Wales: RAF Valley and MOD St Athan. RAF Valley on Anglesey is home to No. 4 Flying Training School, responsible for training the UK's next generation of world-class fighter pilots. Aircrew are also trained at RAF Valley for mountain and maritime operations throughout the world. RAF Valley is also home to the Mountain Rescue Service, the Armed Forces' only high-readiness, all-weather search-and-rescue, aircraft post-crash management asset.

MOD St Athan is a large MOD site in Wales, based in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is where the RAF's non-aircraft, ground engineering technicians are trained. It is home to No. 4 School of Technical Training, which provides continued training to personnel from all three Services and MOD civilian staff. St Athan is also home to the University of Wales Air Squadron.

For further information on the RAF activities in Wales, visit: www.raf.mod.uk/ or www.raf.mod.uk/rafvalley/



Welfare services

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) definition of welfare is:

The provision of a widely recognised and accessible personal and community support structure that secures and improves the wellbeing of serving personnel and the Service community, is capable of adapting to societal, legislative and operational change and, in so doing, optimises the military capability and motivation of all Service men and women.

“ I get to play where my friends live. ”

Welfare officers

Welfare officers are stationed at all major Army bases in Wales and have responsibility for supporting the wellbeing of Service personnel and their families where necessary. Welfare services may become involved with Service families to support them on a range of wider issues, such as housing and health, which may also have knock-on implications for a Service child and their education. Welfare officers should also be able to provide local information regarding scheduled deployments and large scheduled moves.

Community support

“We have always known we are a school near the base St Athan, and the links have been non-existent, and we have made a real effort over the past years to enhance provision and see how we can develop those community links.”

Deputy Headteacher, Llantwit Major High School

The purpose of the RAF Community Support team is to support resilience within the community by creating a range of fun, positive and safe experiences for children, young people, families and Service personnel.

Doing things together and for each other is important for the community. This provision is likely to include community centres, youth centres and community projects as well as activities for children and young people during some school holidays. Community Support also connects with a number of agencies and organisations within the local area to access services and provide a better understanding of the Armed Forces.



HIVES

HIVE information services are available to all members of the Service community, providing information support to members of the Regular forces, Reservists and their families and dependents. An extensive range of information is available, focusing on relocation information, local area information, education, accommodation, employment and training opportunities, childcare and travel.

The HIVEs are a good way of disseminating information to the Service community locally, through their blogs, email lists and social media.

Personnel Support

Personnel Support staff provide accessible, independent, confidential and professional specialist welfare services to Service personnel and their families with any personal or family difficulty, thereby strengthening and enhancing the resilience and resourcefulness in the Armed Forces community.

Support may be provided in such areas as tackling domestic abuse, child and adult safeguarding, bereavement, relationship difficulties, stress and anxiety management, emotional wellbeing and signposting.



Armed Forces Covenant

"It's not a bad life. Other people say you move around every few years, you never have fixed friends. In my eyes you have hundreds of friends in different places, you get to go overseas. I'm moving to Cyprus. It's gorgeous there, I get to meet different people and do different things."

Chloe, Service child



The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

The covenant focuses on helping members of the Armed Forces community experience neither advantage nor disadvantage due to their service and therefore have the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen.

For further information on the Armed Forces Covenant, visit [Support and advice - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Annually, the Welsh Government produces an [Armed Forces Covenant report](#), highlighting the fantastic work in Wales as part of commitments to the Covenant.

Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers

There is a network of Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers (AFLOs) across Wales whose role is to enable consistent delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant across Wales, these are currently funded by the Welsh Government. Their role includes strengthening communication to and from those who have served in our Armed Forces and their families, across Wales and implementing training for front-line local authority staff so they can support the needs of the local Service personnel, veterans/ex-Service personnel and their families.

The AFLOs' priorities are to:

- Raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the issues affecting the Armed Forces community in Wales

- Improve the availability of information about the Armed Forces Covenant for the Armed Forces community in Wales
- Improve communications relating to the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales made by/ between local authorities
- Promote and share best practice.

For contact details for the AFLOs see the [SSCE Cymru directory of support](#).

Local authorities

Local authorities in Wales are committed to addressing and responding to the needs of the Armed Forces community. All 22 local authorities in Wales have pledged their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Each community's covenant is designed to meet the needs of the Armed Forces community within that particular local authority. Fulfilling the covenant's commitments will involve working in partnership with key stakeholders, including the Welsh Government, local health boards, housing associations, schools and further and higher education establishments.

Each authority has an Armed Forces Champion, which is a role undertaken by an elected member. The purpose of this role is to promote and champion the interests of the Armed Forces community within the local authority; to act as a single point of contact; and to engage with the Armed Forces community locally to identify key issues of concern.

Service families can access information and contact details through the AFLOs.

Support and resources

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Introduction

The Living in Wales section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes information that may be useful for families moving to Wales for the first time. It contains exciting information about Welsh culture, cuisine and the Welsh language, and the community support available to children and young people.

About Wales

"When I was in my old house, I was very nervous about coming to Wales because I have moved all around England, but I've never really come to anywhere outside of England, so I wasn't quite sure on coming here."

Chloe, Service child



Wales is a proud nation. It is both part of the United Kingdom and a country in its own right, with a devolved government and a Welsh Parliament (the Senedd) that passes its own laws. Around 3.2 million people live in Wales, in a land of amazing geographical diversity. Around a quarter of Wales, from the mountains to the sea, is designated as a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Facts

- **Population:** 4.8% of the UK population
- **Size:** Wales is roughly 20,800 sq km in area
- **Time Zone:** GMT
- **Currency:** Pound sterling
- **National Day:** St David's Day, 1st March
- **National symbols:** The dragon, daffodil and leek are three of a number of national symbols
- **National Anthem:** Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau (Land of my Fathers)
- **Government:** Devolved government with a First Minister, Cabinet and elected Parliament who meet in the Senedd building at Cardiff Bay
- **Language:** Welsh and English – Wales is a bilingual country
- **Cities:** There are currently six cities in Wales. Cardiff (Caerdydd in Welsh), the capital city of Wales, has a population of around 363,000 and is located on the South East coast. To the east lies Newport (Casnewydd), and to the west is Swansea (Abertawe). Bangor (Mangor), on the Menai Strait, overlooks the island of Anglesey, in North West Wales. St Davids (Dewi Sant) in Pembrokeshire has a population of under 2,000 and is the smallest city in the UK. Finally, St Asaph in North East Wales was awarded city status in 2012 as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.



“*There is more countryside in Wales.*”

Geography and landmarks

“4.1 When Service families were asked about their positive experiences of living in Wales, 90% indicated physical environment (countryside, waterfalls, mountains, cities).”

SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey (2020) findings

Wales is the first country to have a coastal path right around its borders.

- **Highest mountain:** Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa), Snowdonia National Park, at 1,085 m (3,560 ft)
- **Biggest natural lake:** Llyn Tegid, 6 km in length
- **Longest placename:** Llanfairpwllgwyngyll gogerychwyrndrobwl-llantysiliogogoch, which is located in North Wales and means “The Church of St Mary in the hollow of the white hazel near the rapid whirlpool and the church of St Tysilio near a red cave”. This is often shortened to Llanfairpwll or Llanfair PG
- **National parks:** Wales has three National Parks which cover 20% of the country's land mass:
 - o [Pembrokeshire Coast National Park](#)
 - o [Snowdonia National Park](#)
 - o [Brecon Beacons National Park](#)
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:** Wales has five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which are designated for conservation purposes and in recognition of their national importance:

- o Anglesey
- o Gower
- o Wye Valley
- o Llŷn Peninsula
- o The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley.

Wales is perhaps best known for its castles, which number more than 600. Some, like Criccieth and Carreg Cennen, were built by native Welsh princes; others, such as Edward I's mighty “iron ring” of Beaumaris, Harlech, Caernarfon and Conwy, were established by occupying forces.

“*I live near the secret RAF beaches.*”

Welsh cuisine

Wales has a strong tradition of living off the land, stretching back as far as the ancient Celts. One of the most recognisable songs sung at Wales rugby matches features the rousing refrain “Feed me ‘til I want no more”. Wales has a wealth of organic farmers’ markets, artisan producers, food festivals and award-winning restaurants. Some staple ingredients and dishes in Wales include:

- Welsh lamb
- Award-winning cheeses (Caerphilly, Tintern, Y Fenni)
- Leek
- Welsh breakfast (bacon, eggs, laver bread and cockles)
- Welsh rarebit
- Welsh cakes
- Cawl.

“*I like Welsh cakes.*”

For information about living in and moving to Wales, see the Welsh Government’s [Welcome to Wales: Supporting and investing in our Armed Forces Community in Wales](#) document.

Welsh culture

“Article 29: Your right to become the best that you can be.”

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

“4.1 When Service families were asked about their positive experiences of living in Wales, 26% indicated sport and 22% indicated learning about Welsh culture.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

St David’s Day

Traditions and festivities tie the modern nation of Wales to its past. On 1st March, the country comes together to celebrate St David’s Day, with children dressing in national costume or pulling on the red jersey of the Welsh sports teams.

Eisteddfod

Part celebration of Welsh-language culture and part competition, the Eisteddfod (pronounced eye-steath-vod; the plural is Eisteddfodau, pronounced eye-steath-vod-eye) is an institution unique to Wales.

The biggest is the National Eisteddfod, held in the northern or southern half of the country in alternate years. It is the largest music and poetry festival in Europe and dates back to 1176. More than 6,000 competitors take part, and the standard of performance is extremely high. Some schools in Wales create their own Eisteddfod as part of St David’s Day celebrations. This can include making arts and crafts, and writing or reciting songs and poems. These events and activities can take place in English and in Welsh. For further information about Wales, see the [Visit Wales](#) website.

Welsh Language

“2.2 31% of Service families indicated that learning Welsh positively impacted their child(ren).”

SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey (2020) findings

The Welsh language is part of everyday life. It is spoken by more than half a million people, taught in schools and celebrated at festivals such as the Eisteddfodau, which are the highlight of Wales’ cultural calendar. Welsh can be seen in place names and on street signs and can be heard on television channels and radio stations. The country has a thriving Welsh music scene, with Welsh-language films and TV programmes making a mark far beyond the Welsh borders.

The Welsh language is particularly prominent in North Wales, with the vast majority of schools being Welsh-medium. For RAF Service families posted to RAF Valley in the Isle of Anglesey, families can access English-medium schools through the Ministry of Defence’s Day School Allowance funding. For further information and school language options, good-practice examples and support with learning Welsh, see the [Education in Wales](#) section of this guide.

Provision for children and young people

“Article 15: Your right to meet with friends and join groups and clubs.”

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

“Article 31: Your right to relax and play.”

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Many “social competencies” are learnt by seeing and doing, by experiencing and failing as well as succeeding – gaining the ability to cope with failure, to bounce back and learn from the experience. Extra-curricular provision, as a complementary educational provision, helps children and young people to build, reflect on and evaluate their lives. It also allows them to develop their personal and social wellbeing and improve their employability and life chances. It gives children and young people access to a supportive environment, trusting relationships with reliable adults, a positive peer group and the chance to learn from a range of new learning opportunities.



Extra-curricular activities

“3.2.1 When Service families were asked what support they felt had benefited their Service child(ren), 21% indicated extra-curricular activities.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

These activities could include:

- Accreditation
- After-school clubs
- Alternative curriculum
- Arts and drama
- Cadets
- Duke of Edinburgh’s Award
- European and international
- Gender-specific
- Health and wellbeing
- Holiday schemes
- Information and marketing events
- Information technology
- Minority groups
- Participation/forum/councils
- Residential
- Scouts/guides
- Sports and physical activity
- Provision which supports and enables Welsh language/culture
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru.

“In the world of a Service young person where multiple schools and regular change of location is the norm, having access to good-quality youth support services is key to ensuring that Service young people have ‘the best start in life’ regardless of the unique life they may lead.”

Community Development Officer, RAF Valley

“Service children demonstrate a wealth of positive qualities, so it is imperative that they have the opportunity to make the most of these through their education. The distinctive features of Servicelife, including mobility and the emotional demands of service, mean that it is important for the education community to understand and engage with the lived experience of Service children in developing their practice.”

Dr Michael Hall, [SCiP Alliance](#)

“Youth work offers an opportunity to access education through a different approach, which is less formal than school or further education and is often [young-person-led]. It is based on a voluntary engagement with young people aged 11–25 and offers an access point to other services which may be identified during the relationship with a young person – youth workers know their communities well and are skilled brokers off/into other services via a less stigmatised approach.”

Lifelong Learning Policy Officer (Youth),
[Welsh Local Government Association](#)



Support and resources

Family Federations

Service families in Wales benefit from the support of the three Family Federations, who are advocates for Service families, proving support, advice and information. The Family Federations work closely with SSCE Cymru and are members of the Welsh Government's Armed Forces expert group.

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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[@SSCECymru](#)



Education in Wales



Service children's
experiences

Armed Forces
in Wales

Living in
Wales

Education
in Wales

School admissions
and term-time
absence

Health,
wellbeing and
ALN

School
support

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Introduction

The Education in Wales section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes information that may be useful for families moving to Wales for the first time. It contains information about the curriculum, examinations/assessments and the Welsh language in schools in Wales. It also provides an overview of education settings outside of compulsory school age and other education provision. Understanding that many Service families have or may move between different countries and education systems, the guide also provides Service families with comparisons between the nations in the UK, including curriculum, school year groups and term times.

Education

"4.2.2 When Service families were asked what support they felt would have helped their Service child(ren) to settle into a new community and school, 69% indicated information about education in Wales and the curriculum and 54% indicated information on learning Welsh."

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings School](#)

"I've been to seven different schools. I've not stayed put in one school long enough. I think it is a big impact because you've just got to find time to make friends and settle in. It's pretty hard but because you've done it lots you get used to it."

Shana, Service child



“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.”

Kirsty Williams MS, former Welsh Government Minister for Education

“There are vastly differing needs ... it might be that an MOD student is a more able pupil and because they have moved many times, they might not have been stretched. Similarly they may have had Special Educational Needs difficulties and these needs may have been missed because they have moved schools.”

Deputy Headteacher, Llantwit Major High School

Education in Wales is devolved. This means that the Welsh Government can make laws and decisions regarding education in Wales that are made separately from the UK Government. Service families moving into Wales will experience a different curriculum and, therefore, some differences in education and assessments. There are also many similarities between the Welsh system of education and the other devolved systems used in the rest of the UK.

Compulsory education in Wales is for pupils between 5 and 16 years of age. Schools are divided into:

- Local authority-maintained (community/comprehensive) – owned and run by the local authority, which sets the admissions criteria
- Voluntary – run by a voluntary organisation (in Wales this is typically the Roman Catholic Church or the Church in Wales) but closely monitored by the local authority
- Foundation schools – owned either by the governing body or a charitable foundation

- Independent schools – fee-paying private education.

The Welsh ministers regulate almost all areas of education in Wales. Amongst other things, they regulate the education workforce, the National Curriculum, the apprenticeship framework, the system of qualifications and school examinations across most educational institutions.

Local authorities also have a range of responsibilities in relation to education, under the guidance and regulation of the Welsh ministers. For example, their duties include making sure that there are sufficient schools in their area and ensuring that pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) are properly provided for.

The curriculum for Wales is designed to encourage children to enjoy learning and develop skills, knowledge and emotional resilience. By the age of 16, they should be confident, ethical individuals who play an active part in their community and society. They should be prepared to thrive in the new world of work.



All schools play a key role in promoting a commitment to an education for all, and this can be achieved through a whole-school approach that includes:

- Recognition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- High-quality learning and teaching experiences
- A clear ethos and vision for all learners
- Embedding this ethos across the school community
- Ensuring everyone is aware of their role and responsibilities
- Working in partnership with external agencies and organisations
- School planning and decision-making
- Commitment through policies and practice
- Respectful relationships between teachers and learners
- Reflection and self-evaluation arrangements
- A professional learning offer and a commitment to staff wellbeing
- Pupil voice and school council opportunities
- School environment practices.

School policies that may support this practice could include:

- Curriculum
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment
- Behaviour and anti-bullying
- Safeguarding and child protection.

All children, including Service children, may experience difficulties at some point in their life. Service children have challenges that a Service lifestyle brings, including their mobility and the effects of parent deployment and separation. Every child is an individual and manages situations in different ways.



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

“Article 28: Your right to learn and go to school. Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children’s dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.”

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

“Article 29: Your right to become the best that you can be. Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.”

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Education settings in Wales work hard to enable children to realise their rights, and schools should make the link between their work and the rights of the child explicit when they are establishing a clear framework and rationale for their work. The UNCRC provides a strong foundation of values for a school community, which are recognised in international law. Policy and legislation on children in Wales is underpinned by the UNCRC. A “Children’s Rights Approach” is consistent with these duties and will help educational settings meet their statutory duties.

The principles of a Children’s Rights Approach are:

- Embedding children’s rights
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Empowering children
- Participation
- Accountability.

For further information, visit www.childcomwales.org.uk/uncrc-childrens-rights/uncrc/

Education and training inspectorate for Wales – Estyn

The purpose of [Estyn](#) is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales.

“Children of Service families” are included under section 1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups in the [Guidance handbook for the inspection of local government education services](#). This helps to raise awareness of Service children in schools and local authorities; and encourages schools to monitor their progress and outcomes of this particular group of learners.

Estyn defines vulnerable pupils as “those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers to learning”.

Estyn recommends that schools consider [best practice case studies](#) and follow guidance to support Service children.

Estyn promotes the work undertaken by SSCE Cymru and emphasises findings showing that “tailored pastoral support, followed by having a dedicated member of staff” is the most beneficial support that schools can offer to Service children.

For further information and guidance from Estyn, please read its full report [here](#).

New curriculum for Wales (2022)

"2.3 When Service families were asked what aspects of their experiences may have negatively impacted their Service child(ren), 34% indicated adapting to different curriculums in different administrations/a new way of learning."

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

The curriculum in Wales is currently defined by Part 7 of the Education Act 2002. The phased introduction of the new curriculum will take place over the next few years, with all schools following the new curriculum by 2022. It will apply to all learners from 3 to 16 years old.

Four purposes

The curriculum is planned in pursuit of the four purposes of the curriculum, which are to develop children and young people as:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Curriculum for Wales 2022 is designed to help all learners realise these four purposes. Each purpose is more than a headline; it is also described in terms of key characteristics. In their entirety they should underpin all teaching and learning in Wales.

For further information, visit www.gov.wales/curriculum-wales-2022



Areas of learning and experience

The new curriculum for Wales will be organised into six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs). These will replace the current National Curriculum subjects for all learners from ages 3–16. All AoLEs should be planned to support the development of the four purposes.

The six AoLEs are outlined below:

- **Expressive Arts:** dance, drama, film and digital media, music and visual arts
- **Health and Well-being:** physical health and development, mental health, and emotional and social wellbeing
- **Humanities:** history, geography, religious education, business studies and social studies
- **Languages, Literacy and Communication:** Welsh, English, international languages and literature (international languages may include modern languages, classical languages, community languages such as Polish or Punjabi, and British Sign Language)
- **Mathematics and Numeracy:** conceptual understanding, communication using symbols, fluency, logical reasoning and strategic competence
- **Science and Technology:** design and technology, engineering, computer science, biology, chemistry and physics.



The AoLEs will help schools to identify the key knowledge, skills and experiences that young people should have across the continuum.

In each AoLE, there are several “Statements of What Matters”, which act as guidelines to ensure a level of consistency in curriculum design across all schools and settings. Learners must develop an understanding of all statements across the six AoLEs. By exploring and revisiting these statements, learners will develop deeper knowledge over the learning continuum and will gain a more sophisticated understanding of the key knowledge, ideas and principles in each AoLE.

As well as engaging with the six AoLEs, all pupils will be required to study the following mandatory curriculum elements:

- Religion, values and ethics
- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE)
- Welsh
- English.

Pupils will also be required to develop mandatory cross-curricular skills in:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Digital competence.

Descriptions of Learning and progression steps

In the new curriculum for Wales, Descriptions of Learning provide guidance on how learners should progress within each Statement of What Matters.

The Descriptions of Learning will:

- Enable progression and support learners in achieving the “What Matters” and the relevant four purposes
- Be deemed as essential to the “What Matters”, reflecting relevant subjects, disciplines or domains within the scope of the AoLEs, and/or to preparing learners for their future roles in education, work and society
- Be broad enough to be meaningful across the continuum of learning (and not tied to specific Progression Steps).

The Descriptions of Learning are arranged in five Progression Steps which act as reference points for the pace of progression.

Progression Steps will be used instead of Key Stages. These Progression Steps broadly relate to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16. The Progression Steps have been introduced to ensure a continuum of learning, in place of the rigidity of previous Key Stages. This is in recognition of the fact that learners will progress at different rates. Achievement outcomes will not be used directly for assessment. Instead, they will be used to inform curriculum design, development and planning and to support the progression of learning. Assessment should be an ongoing, embedded process and schools should not undertake specific assessment activities at each Progression Step to make a judgement about a learner’s progression at a set age or point in time. However, pupils will still undergo formal assessment and examination at the age of 16.

Differences in the curriculum (primary/secondary/other settings)

- **Primary school:** for learners aged 3–11; pupils can be expected to reach Progression Step 3 at the age of 11
- **Secondary school:** for learners aged 11–16; pupils can be expected to reach Progression Step 5 at the age of 16, and will sit formal examinations (GCSEs) at this age.

Funded, non-maintained settings, pupil referral units (PRUs) and those responsible for the provision of education other than at school (EOTAS) will not be required to design a curriculum in the same way as a maintained school or maintained special school.

“We have not moved from here for a bit as I have my GCSEs, so he [Dad] went to Bristol, we went and visited him occasionally and he came back at the weekends, even though it was four hours away. People think they are divorced but they aren’t.”

Harry, Service child



Examinations and assessments

National Literacy and Numeracy tests

All pupils in Years 2 to 9 are required to take annual Literacy and Numeracy tests to assess progress and identify where individual children may need more help to improve their skills. These assessments are completed online.

The Literacy (reading) test is made up of short questions based on two or more texts. Some of the questions check how well the text has been understood; others aim to find out if children are able to make judgements about what they are reading.

There are two Numeracy tests: procedural and reasoning. The procedural test measures skills in numbers, measuring and data. The reasoning test measures how well children can use what they know to solve everyday problems.

GCSEs

GCSEs are the main general educational qualification in Wales. Pupils usually sit their GCSEs in Year 11. GCSEs come in two levels: Level 2 (grades A*–C) and Level 1 (grades D–G). This is different to the GCSE system in England and Northern Ireland, where grades between 1 and 9 are awarded. Entrance into either Level 1 or Level 2 will determine what range of grades a pupil can achieve. Pupils in Wales are required to take GCSEs in some core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, Welsh). Pupils are able to choose a range of other subjects to study at this level.

The additional subjects and qualifications offered will vary between schools. Therefore, it is important to speak to the schools regarding their syllabuses so that you and your children are able to make the most informed decisions.

AS and A levels

AS and A levels are the main general qualifications at Level 3 and are usually taken at age 16 to 19. They are available in a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. Students will usually study between two and five AS/A levels over a period of two years.

Vocational qualifications

Many schools offer vocational qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. These can be studied alongside GCSEs and A levels. Vocational qualifications may include:

- BTEC qualifications – designed for learners interested in a particular industry or area of work
- Essential Skills Wales qualifications – aimed at 14- to 19-year-olds, these include: application of number skills, communication skills, digital literacy skills and employability skills
- QCF/NVQs – career-based qualifications delivered in the workplace or somewhere set up to be like a workplace.

Additional subjects and qualifications offered will vary between schools. Again, it is important to speak to the schools regarding their syllabuses so that you and your children are able to make the most informed decisions.

Welsh Baccalaureate (WBQ)

This is an officially accredited and established qualification offered by all schools in Wales and colleges and training providers. It combines personal development skills with existing qualifications, like A levels, GCSEs and NVQs, to make one wider award that is valued by employers and universities. Students gain experience of the world through a variety of work-related activities. They also learn how to apply skills in practical situations.

The WBQ is currently available at Foundation, National and Advanced levels. Pupils can undertake the Foundation course (Level 1) or National course (Level 2) at age 16, and the Advanced course (Level 3) at post-16.

For further information visit: www.qualificationswales.org/english/qualifications/welsh-baccalaureate



Welsh language



“When I first came here, I was nervous about Welsh and I didn’t know what to say.”

Prasna, Service child

“We look at their gaps and provide bespoke interventions.”

MOD Keyworker, Prendergast Community School

“4.1 During discussions about their experiences of living in Wales, 16% made negative comments and 8% made positive comments about learning Welsh. The Service children at the Welsh-medium school that took part in the discussion groups didn’t make positive or negative comments about learning Welsh.”

[Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#)

“The Welsh language is one of the treasures of Wales. It is part of what defines us as people and as a nation. Our ambition as Welsh Government is to see the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using Welsh reach a million by 2050. This is certainly a challenging ambition, but a challenge we believe is worthwhile and necessary if we are to secure the vitality of the language for future generations.”

[Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister, and Alun Davies AM, former Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language](#)

“Learners for whom English or Welsh is an additional language (EAL/WAL) have different challenges in relation to language and literacy acquisition. EAL/WAL learners may be accessing English/Welsh for the first time and will, therefore, require additional focused support to help them acquire appropriate literacy skills. Material should be provided that is appropriate to their ability, previous education and experience, and which extends their language development. The year-by-year nature of the expectation statements allows schools and settings to ensure that they are incorporating the appropriate skills into their curriculum delivery.”

SSCE Cymru Programme Manager

“3.2 When asked what are the three most significant challenges they face in supporting their Service children, over 25% of secondary schools indicated: Supporting Service children learning Welsh for the first time.”

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

“3.1 When Service families were asked what they felt schools find challenging in supporting their Service child(ren) 44% indicated supporting Service children learning Welsh for the first time.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

The Welsh Government is committed to meeting the educational needs of all children and young people in Wales so they can reach their full potential. The study of Welsh or Welsh Second Language is a statutory element of the National Curriculum for Wales, for all learners to the age of 16.

Research shows that speaking more than one language can boost a child in many ways.

Being bilingual could:

- Make it easier to learn other languages, and introduce children to different cultures and traditions
- Have a positive effect on the brain
- Be a distinct advantage when looking for work, integrating into the local community and supporting the local economy.

Disapplying Service children for Welsh exams

“Article 3: Everyone who works with children should always do what is best for each child.”

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

Although the study of Welsh is compulsory, there is no requirement on schools to enter a learner for a particular qualification. That is for individual schools to decide, taking into account the best interests of learners. Irrespective of whether or not an examination is undertaken, schools must ensure that learners have access to the whole curriculum programme of study for whichever course is being followed. This is a mandatory requirement.

Only in very rare circumstances might there be a need for temporary disapplication of learners from any part of the National Curriculum. The decision to disapply a pupil from part of the National Curriculum can only be made by a headteacher, reviewing the need to disapply on an individual basis and taking all factors into consideration.

For learners working significantly below the expected levels, schools should use the needs of the learner as a starting point and adapt the programmes of study accordingly. Sufficient flexibility exists within the curriculum to meet the needs of learners without the need for disapplication. In exceptional cases, individual learners may be disapplied, usually on a temporary basis, but group or large-scale disapplication should not be used.



School language types

	Primary schools	Secondary schools
English-medium	Pupils are mainly taught through the medium of English, but some Welsh is also used as a language of communication with the pupils, with the aim of improving their capacity to use everyday Welsh.	
Welsh-medium	At least 70% of the teaching is through the medium of Welsh. Welsh is the language used in day-to-day business of the school, communication with the pupils and the school's administration.	All subjects apart from English are taught through the medium of Welsh. Welsh is the day-to-day language of the school and is used as the language of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.
Dual stream	Welsh and English exist side by side. Both Welsh and English are used in the day-to-day business of the school and to communicate with pupils.	
Bilingual	This category has four sub-divisions according to the percentage of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh, and whether there is parallel provision in English.	
English-medium with significant use of Welsh	Pupils are taught in both languages, with greater emphasis on English. Welsh is used to teach between 20% and 50% of the overall curriculum. The day-to-day language of the school is determined by the school's linguistic context – both languages are used as languages of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.	Both languages are used for teaching. The majority of subjects would normally be taught in English, with between 20% and 50% of subjects taught in Welsh. Both languages are used for communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.
Welsh-medium with significant use of English	Pupils are taught in both languages, with greater emphasis on Welsh (50% to 70% of the curriculum). Welsh is the language used in day-to-day business of the school and a high priority is given to creating a Welsh ethos.	

North Wales Day School Allowance

The North Wales Day School Allowance may be available to eligible Service personnel who are serving in an established post in an eligible unit. Service families must be resident within the specified counties of North Wales and meet all the criteria as stipulated within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) policy (Service personnel should refer to their Unit HR or Service equivalent for information). The allowance is specifically designed to allow children who move to North Wales, following a posting, to attend an [independent day school](#) as an alternative to a maintained day school (community/foundation/voluntary) which is operating the Welsh-medium teaching policy; i.e. where all subjects apart from English are taught through the medium of Welsh. Further information on education considerations is available via the MOD's [Children's Education Advisory Service \(CEAS\)](#).



Education comparison

"3.1 When Service families were asked what they felt schools find challenging in supporting Service child(ren), 44% indicated gaining an understanding of the different education systems throughout the UK."

SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey (2020) findings

MOD schools

MOD Schools are part of the [Defence Children's Services \(DCS\)](#). They provide education to the dependent children of Service personnel and MOD entitled civilians, entitled contractors and fee payers. MOD Schools are predominantly overseas, with one school in Scotland that follows the Scottish curriculum and qualification framework. The diverse locations of MOD Schools and the dedication of their staff ensure pupils engage in a rich and fulfilling curriculum whilst overseas. MOD Schools mirror the English education system, including Ofsted inspections, assessments and examinations. Some of these locations are Brunei and Cyprus.

All children 0-18 require educational clearance prior to overseas postings. This includes postings to MOD Schools and Non-MOD School areas. Schools will be asked by DCS to complete an Education Overseas Supportability (EOS) Form for any Service children that are due to move abroad as part of the posting of their parent(s). Without an EOS the posting will not be able to proceed and may result in the family being separated from the serving person for a period of time.

Curriculum

New curriculum for Wales (2022)

Differences in curricular

	Wales	England	Scotland
Foundation phase	<p>Moving to new statutory curriculum by 2022</p> <p>Follow this link for more information: hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/a-guide-to-curriculum-for-wales-2022/</p>	<p>There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in Early Years settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and language • Physical development • Personal, social and emotional development • Providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. <p>The specific areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Mathematics • Understanding the world • Expressive arts and design. <p>www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf</p> <p>NOTE: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework changes from September 2021, which will result in changes in statutory assessment expectations and in the details of the curriculum.</p>	<p>There are eight curriculum areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressive arts • Health and wellbeing • Languages (including English, Gaidhlig, Gaelic learners and modern languages) • Mathematics • Religious and moral education • Sciences • Social studies • Technologies. <p>Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are recognised as being particularly important.</p> <p>Follow this link for more information: www.gov.scot/publications/early-years-framework/pages/1/</p>

Foundation Phase (Wales)/Key Stage 1	As above	<p>Core subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Maths • Science. <p>Foundation subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Technology • History • Geography • Art and Design • Music • Physical Education (PE), including swimming • Computing. <p>Schools must provide Religious Education (RE) but parents can ask for their children to be taken out of the whole lesson or part of it. It is a statutory expectation for schools to provide some Relationships and Health Education (RHE) for all pupils.</p> <p>Schools often also teach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) • Citizenship • Modern foreign languages. <p>Follow this link for more information: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335186/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_English_220714.pdf</p>	As above. Follow this link for more information: www.education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-in-scotland/curriculum-areas
Key Stage 2	As above	Same as Key Stage 1	As above
Key Stage 3 and 4	<p>Curriculum for Wales 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 7 statutory from 2022 • Phasing in across over year groups from 2023. <p>Follow this link for more information: hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction</p>	<p>Core subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Mathematics • Science. <p>Foundation subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and Design • Citizenship • Computing • Design and Technology • Languages • Geography • History • Music • PE. <p>All schools are also required to teach RE at all Key Stages. It is a statutory expectation for schools to provide some Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) for all pupils.</p> <p>Follow this link for more information: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381754/SECONDARY_national_curriculum.pdf</p>	Up to age 14 – as above. The Senior Phase curriculum, from S4 to S6 (from around ages 15 to 18), follows a young person's broad general education , building firmly on the experiences and outcomes they will have experienced and achieved to the end of S3. It enables them to extend and deepen their learning and continue to develop skills for learning, life and work, through qualifications and through a range of opportunities for personal development (for example, work experience or volunteering).

Differences in school year groups

Age in school year	Wales	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland
	Curriculum for Wales 2022	National Curriculum	Northern Ireland Curriculum	Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)
4-5	Reception	Reception Foundation Stage	P1	Nursery/Early Level
5-6	Year 1	Year 1 Key Stage 1	P2	P1 (Early Level)
6-7	Year 2	Year 2 Key Stage 1	P3	P2 (First Level)
7-8	Year 3	Year 3 Key Stage 2	P4	P3 (First Level)
8-9	Year 4	Year 4 Key Stage 2	P5	P4 (First Level)
9-10	Year 5	Year 5 Key Stage 2	P6	P5 (Second Level)
10-11	Year 6	Year 6 Key Stage 2	P7	P6 (Second Level)
				P7 (Second Level)
Secondary +				
11-12	Year 7	Year 7 Key Stage 3	P8	S1 (Third/Fourth Level)
12-13	Year 8	Year 8 Key Stage 3	P9	S2 (Third/Fourth Level)
13-14	Year 9	Year 9 Key Stage 3	P10	S3 (Third/Fourth Level)
14-15	Year 10	Year 10 Key Stage 4	P11	S4 (Senior Phase) Pupils are able to leave in this year, from the age of 15 and a half
15-16	Year 11	Year 11 Key Stage 4	P12	
A Levels and SCE Highers – not compulsory				
16-17	Year 12	Year 12	P13	S5 (Senior Phase)
17-18	Year 13	Year 13	P14	S6 (Senior Phase)
				Undergraduate degrees in Scotland are four years in length. Some young people are 17 when they start.

Term-time schedule

Term-time dates are set by individual local authorities in Wales following guidance stipulated by the Welsh Government. All local authorities publish a copy of their term-time schedule on their website annually.

Differences in term-time schedule

The following dates are an example, based on term-time dates set for the 2021/22 academic year.

	Wales	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Start of Autumn term	2nd September	1st September	2nd September	11th August
Autumn half-term	25th–29th October	25th–29th October	25th–29th October	12th–17th October
End of Autumn term	17th December	17th December	17th December	18th December
Start of Spring term	4th January	4th January	4th January	5th January
Spring half-term	21st–25th February	14th–18th February	21st–25th February	12th–14th February
End of Spring term	8th April	1st April	8th April	1st April
Start of Summer term	25th April	19th April	25th April	19th April
Summer half-term	30th May to 3rd June	30th May to 3rd June	30th May to 3rd June	30th May to 3rd June
End of Summer term	22nd July	25th July	22nd July	23rd June



Other education provision

The [new curriculum for Wales \(2022\)](#) may not be relevant to some of the settings detailed below.

Special schools

Special schools are there to provide an education to some children with complex ALN and/or disabilities. They are there to make sure the needs of their pupils are met when mainstream education is not best suited to the child. In Wales there are 41 special schools.

Pupil referral units

A Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is a type of school established and maintained by a local authority to provide alternative education for children and young people who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, might not receive mainstream education. The “teacher in charge” of the PRU is the person responsible for the day-to-day running of the unit. PRUs are also governed by management committees, similar to school governing bodies.

Independent schools

An independent school is a school that is independent in its finances and governance; it is not dependent upon national or local government for financing its operations, nor reliant on taxpayer contributions. It is instead funded by a combination of tuition charges, gifts and in some cases the investment yield of an endowment. Independent schools are governed by a board of directors that is elected by an independent method and a system of governance that ensures their independent operation.

“I might be going to boarding school so that I don't change schools every few years. I'll definitely miss my parents, but I'll just get on with it. For my education it would be better, I would be using the same methods instead of learning new ones every year because it's not good for my education.”

Ryan, Service child



Continuity of Education Allowance

Service families may be eligible for the MOD's Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA), which will provide a portion of the fees for Service children to attend boarding school. The aim of this fund is to provide continuity of education for Service children who would normally experience regular school moves as a result of their serving parent's commitments to the Armed Forces.

For further information on applying for the CEA and finding boarding schools identified by the MOD's Defence Children's Services (DCS), visit: www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas

Early years/childcare

Early years is defined in Wales as the period of life from pre-birth to the end of Foundation Phase, or 0 to 7 years of age. The Foundation Phase is a holistic curriculum for 3 to 7 year-olds based on the needs of the individual child to meet their stage of development.

The childcare offer for Wales

The education system in Wales provides working parents with a mixture of childcare and early education for children aged 3 or 4. Early education is also known as "Foundation Phase nursery". It is mainly provided by schools where children learn through play.

Childcare includes:

- Nurseries
- Child minders
- Playgroups
- Crèche
- Out-of-school childcare
- Nannies.

For further information, visit: gov.wales/childcare-3-and-4-year-olds

Tax-free childcare

Families can get up to £500 every three months (up to £2,000 a year) for each child to help with the costs of childcare.

Tax-free childcare support can be accessed in addition to the childcare offer for Wales.

For further information, visit: www.gov.uk/get-tax-free-childcare



Post-16 education

Further education

As with other areas of education, responsibility for the planning and delivery of further education in Wales is now largely devolved.

Further education is generally provided in colleges to students over the age of 16. Post-16 or further education encompasses various kinds of education and training suitable for people who are over compulsory school age, including A levels, vocational education and training. The primary focus is on those aged 16–18, but anyone over compulsory school age may participate in further education. Typically, courses are free for 16- to 18-year-olds, with an enrolment fee.

Higher education

Higher education is third-level education after you leave school or college at age 16-plus. It takes place at universities and further education colleges and normally includes undergraduate and postgraduate study.

There are eight universities in Wales. The Open University in Wales also offer a range of learning opportunities, largely on a part-time basis. Around 25,000 international students from over 145 countries worldwide are in higher education in Wales – making up 19% of the student population. Wales' universities offer a wide range of funding options to support students. Tuition fees vary between courses and providers, and [Student Finance Wales](#) can provide funding to support students, depending on their individual circumstances.



Education in Wales

HEFCW

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is a Welsh Government-sponsored body which regulates and funds universities and some colleges in Wales. HEFCW's Corporate Strategy sets out its vision, mission and objectives to fund and regulate higher education providers, as well as influence higher education in Wales with evidence-based advice and strong partnership working, including working in partnership with students.

HEFCW is the regulator for fee and access plans (similar to Access and Participation Plans in England). Fee and access plans set out higher education providers' commitments to support equality of opportunity and the promotion of higher education. Both of these priorities support widening access and under-representation in higher education. Whilst HEFCW provides some steers on groups that are considered under-represented, including the children of Armed Forces personnel, it is for institutions to prioritise the groups they consider under-represented in higher education.

“Widening access to and through higher education” is the term used in Wales to define strategic intentions and frame objectives in this policy area. Across the UK other definitions, targets and measures are used.

Two of the eight universities in Wales make specific reference to the Armed Forces in the information they provide on their websites to applicants on accessing higher education, along with information about the Armed Forces Covenant for communities.

For further information, visit: www.hefcw.ac.uk

Support and resources

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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School admissions and term-time absence





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Introduction

The School admissions and term-time absence section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes information around national and individual policies that may be relevant to Service families. School admission information may be helpful for Service families moving to Wales for the first time. The guide also provides information for families when moving between homes and schools. A term-time absence overview is provided to give Service families an understanding of what may be available in individual schools in Wales.



School admissions

Identifying Service children

In the [Welsh Government Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018](#), Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education, made the commitment to collect data on Service children in Wales. SSCE Cymru and the Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding (AFFS) are supporting the Welsh Government in implementing this change.

“Over a third of schools indicated that they did not know how many Service children they had enrolled.”

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

“3.2.2 When Service families were asked what support they felt would benefit their Service child(ren), 61% indicated identifying Service children during the admission process.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

SSCE Cymru data collection activity (2021)

The [Regional School Liaison Officers \(RSLOs\) for Service children](#) worked with all 22 local authorities in Wales to engage with schools and collate an up-to-date snapshot of Service children in education in Wales. Over 2,000 Service children were identified in around 500 schools. Of those schools, around half had only one or two Service children.

For the most up-to-date record of this data, click [here](#).

Welsh Government School Admissions Code

All 22 local authorities in Wales are required to follow the guidance provided in the School Admissions Code which can be accessed [here](#).

This Code imposes requirements and offers guidance to local authorities (LAs), the governing bodies of maintained schools, admission forums and admission appeal panels. These bodies must act in accordance with the Code.

Section of code	On pages...	Content	What this means for LA admissions
Catchment areas	16	2.54 <i>"For children of UK Service personnel, admission authorities must treat a family moving to their area as meeting the residency criteria for the relevant school catchment area once proof of the posting has been provided, even if no address is currently established in that area."</i>	LAs must accept school application forms from Service families that do not currently live in the catchment area.
Infant class size limit	27-28	3.48 <i>"Where certain types of children ('excepted pupils') cannot be provided with education at the school in another infant class in which the limit is not exceeded without relevant measures being taken which would prejudice efficient education or the efficient use of resources, those children are not to be counted for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the limit of 30 pupils is exceeded. Excepted children are:</i> <i>6. Children of Armed Forces personnel who are admitted outside the normal admission round."</i>	Children of Armed Forces personnel that are to be admitted to an infant class outside of the normal admissions round (mid-year) are classed as an "excepted pupil", meaning LAs can exceed the 30-pupil limit.

Children of UK Service personnel and other Crown Servants (including diplomats)	31	<p>3.66 "Admission authorities must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the needs of the children of these families are taken into account • Allocate a school place in advance, if the applicant would meet the criteria when they move to their destination • Invite a Service representative or representatives of other significant concentrations of Crown Servants to join the admission forum • Accept a Unit postal address for applications from Service personnel in the absence of a new home postal address." <p>3.67 "Admission authorities must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserve places for blocks of these children, or • Refuse a place to such a child because the family does not currently live in the LA area." 	
Annex D: Admission forums	41	<p>D.10 "The core membership of each forum may ask the LA to appoint anyone it considers appropriate to represent significant interests in the local community. For instance, in areas where there is a significant concentration of Service personnel the forum must invite a UK Service representative and where appropriate, representatives from faith groups not already represented, and minority ethnic groups should be appointed."</p>	<p>LAs with a significant Armed Forces community should invite a Service representative to join their admissions forum. LAs with a significant Armed Forces community include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isle of Anglesey • Pembrokeshire • Powys • Vale of Glamorgan.

Local authority admissions

All 22 local authorities in Wales have a school admissions application process and forum. For information on each of the local authorities, including their policies and contact information, see the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#).

Appeals

Service families that have not been able to access an appropriate school placement for their child(ren) can appeal through the local authority's appeal process, which will vary between local authorities. See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for links to all of the local authority admissions sites.

The [Children's Education Advisory Service \(CEAS\)](#) of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides advice, guidance and support to Service families on a wide range of educational issues, including school admissions and school admission appeals. The support offered by CEAS is bespoke, with all advice being child-centred and focused on the best interests of the individual. SSCE Cymru recommends that Service families contact CEAS directly to access support and advice on school admission appeals.

Moving school

Data transfer of school records

"3.2 When asked what are the three most significant challenges they face in supporting their Service children, over 33% of secondary schools indicated: Gaining information on a Service child from a previous school."

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

"4.2.2 When Service families were asked what support they felt would have helped their child(ren) to settle into a new community and school, 50% indicated swift transfer of records between schools to ensure no gaps in additional support needs."

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

Without high-quality information about the attainment and progress of the pupil at their previous school, it is very difficult for a receiving school to quickly meet the pupil's needs and a range of information is needed to ensure continuity. Therefore, SSCE Cymru recommends that schools do what they can to collaborate with other schools in order to improve information transfer and develop corporate protocols and guidance.

The provision in the [Pupil Information Regulations](#) for securely transferring educational records as a pupil changes schools applies to all schools throughout the UK and encompasses transfers from maintained schools to academies, free schools and independent schools.

Schools are required to keep and update pupils' curricular and educational records and ensure that parents can have access to their children's records. Schools in England and Wales must also transfer a pupil's educational record as the child changes schools, and the regulations specify the information which must be transferred securely using the Department for Education's [school-2-school](#) system and common transfer file. This must be done within 15 school days of a pupil ceasing to be registered at the old school.

SSCE Cymru recommends that schools encourage new pupils to bring work from their previous school and use this information to make judgements on early progress and quick assessments to establish baselines and determine learning priorities.

Schools and parents can use the [SSCE Cymru Tools](#) to assist with a smooth transition for Service children.



Support when moving

The MOD's [Defence Children's Services \(DCS\)](#) has produced a document entitled [Moving Schools: A Parents' Guide](#) to help families when Service children are moving between schools. The [CEAS](#) is also able to provide advice and guidance to support Service families during transition between schools.

SSCE Cymru has produced a number of [Tools](#) for schools and Service families to support the transition process.

These include:

- Tool 5. Template: School welcome pack
- Tool 6. Checklist: Transition in and out of school
- Tool 7. Example questions: To ask a new Service child
- Tool 14. Template: Moving school booklet (for Service children)
- Tool 15. Template: Service children school transfer information.

"Our transition across the cluster is very strong and we ensure the pupils can move smoothly across the cluster ... We focus on social transition, and [it] is really important for the MOD students who sit within us [that] we are prepared and have information about the pupils."

Deputy Headteacher, Llantwit Major High School



"Moving is scary."

"It's hard getting used to moving, I don't like packing all the time."

Term-time absence policy

"3.2.2 When Service families were asked what support they felt would benefit their child(ren), 81% indicated a term-time absence policy for Service children."

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

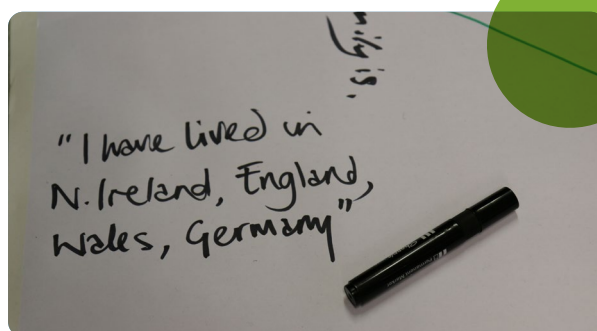
Headteachers do have a discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term-time where parents seek permission.

If a school does not already have a term-time absence policy that includes circumstances for Service children and their families, they may wish to consider:

- Ensuring where possible that consideration is given to Service families who may not be able to take holidays together at other times during the school year
- Encouraging Service families to tell the school when they plan to take their children out of school during term-time for a holiday or other reasons relating to Armed Forces commitments.

A headteacher should take into account the time of year of the proposed trip, length and purpose of the holiday, impact on continuity of learning, circumstances of the family and wishes of parents as well as the overall attendance pattern of the child.

Some schools have developed systems where Service personnel provide a letter from their unit with confirmation of their need to be absent. The headteacher would not authorise term-time absence without confirmation.



"We get to facetime sometimes."

Support and resources

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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IN EDUCATION WALES
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Health, wellbeing and ALN



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Introduction

The Health, wellbeing and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes information that may be useful for families moving to Wales for the first time or needing to access additional support for their child(ren). It includes information about the wellbeing provision provided by schools, local authorities and health boards in Wales. It also provides an overview of ALN provision, including details of the new ALN Code for Wales. Understanding that many Service families have moved or may move between different countries and education systems, the guide also provides Service families with a comparison of the terminology used in different nations in the UK and the support available.

Mental health and wellbeing



What is mental health and wellbeing?

“Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

[World Health Organisation](#)

“3.1 When Service families were asked what they felt schools find challenging in support Service child(ren), 56% indicated supporting Service children with their emotional and wellbeing needs.”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

“ I use the worry jar and put my worries in it. ”

Local authority wellbeing provision

“4.4 7% of schools indicated they had encountered issues in meeting prioritisation thresholds for mental health and wellbeing support for a Service child. This is higher, at 11%, when looking at just the four key LAs (Isle of Anglesey, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Vale of Glamorgan).”

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

Visit local authority websites for details on the local provision in the following areas:

- Independent counselling services – including school and community-based services
- Education welfare
- Education psychology
- Behaviour support
- Family Information Services – providing free, impartial help, support and advice on a range of family issues, including: childcare and help with its cost, healthcare, education and training, leisure services and finances
- Social services
- Youth services – offering support/advocacy/preventative/early intervention services for Service young people aged 11–25.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Support (CAMHS)

CAMHS provides a range of interventions and treatments, which include consultation, psychiatric assessment, developmental assessment, family therapy, individual therapy, behavioural therapy, medication and group work. It supports children aged up to 17.

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant commitments, any time that is accrued on NHS waiting lists in one location should be considered when moving to a new area. It is advisable to get copies of any supporting medical evidence and treatment to pass onto the new healthcare professional/practitioner.

For more information visit: www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs/



Fast-track referrals for Service children

Some [health boards](#) in Wales, have responded to feedback from their Armed Forces Forum colleagues to enhance the offer of priority healthcare for Service children. Children of Armed Forces families are fast-tracked through the referral process to access CAMHS.

This supports the health boards' continued commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. All referrals into paediatric services are screened to identify whether the referral is a child from an Armed Forces family.

“ When I am angry I do mindfulness and meditation. ”

School wellbeing provision

“3.2.2 When Service families were asked what support they felt would benefit their Service child(ren), 62% indicated wellbeing programmes (e.g. Little Troopers) and 61% indicated emotional/wellbeing/pastoral support (e.g. ELSA/Nurture/Thrive/Counselling).”

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

One of the four purposes of the new Welsh curriculum is for *“healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society”*. [Health and Well-being](#) is one of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs), meaning schools are to focus on and consider how wellbeing will be explored and developed more with young people through teaching and learning.

Wellbeing provision and ways of measuring wellbeing will be approached in different ways in each school. All schools will have a designated person responsible for wellbeing.

For further information, see the Welsh Government's [Thinking positively: Emotional health and well-being in schools and Early Years settings](#) document.

The [SSCE Cymru School Toolkit](#) provides schools with ideas of strategies and resources that could be utilised to achieve appropriate wellbeing support for Service children in education in Wales.



“ I would like to know more about where my parent is and what they are doing. ”

Additional Learning Needs

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 received Royal Assent in January 2018. The Act is accompanied by the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code.

The new ALN system will commence, on a phased basis, from September 2021.

Terminology comparisons

	Wales	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Ministry of Defence (MOD) Schools
What is it called?	Additional Learning Needs	Special Educational Needs & Disability	Additional Support Needs/ Support for Learning	Special Educational Needs	Special Educational Needs & Disability
Who should I turn to?	• ALNCo*	• SENCo** • SENDCo*** • AENCo**** • Inclusion Manager	• Principle Teacher for ASN • Guidance Teacher	• SENCo**	• SENCo**
Which plan?	Individual Development Plan/ Statement	Education, Health & Care Plan	Co-ordinated Support Plan	Statement of SEN	RIASEN***** MASO*****

*ALNCo: Additional Learning Needs Coordinator

**SENCo: Special Education Needs Coordinator

***SENDCo: Special Education Needs and Disabilities Coordinator

****AENCo: Additional Education Needs Coordinator

*****RIASEN: Record of Identification, Assessment and Intervention for pupils with Special Educational Needs

*****MASO: Military Assessment of Supportability Overseas

The Draft Mandatory Code December 2018

The ALN Code is statutory guidance for education providers and settings in Wales, including schools and further education institutes and also key partners in health and social services. Local-authority-funded, non-maintained providers of nursery education will also be required to have regard to relevant guidance in the ALN Code. Key sections of it include:

- **Chapter 7** – Duty to keep additional learning provision under review: local authorities will have to consider the particular needs of any Service communities within their boundaries when providing or planning Additional Learning Provision (ALP) for Service children and young people with ALN.
- **Chapter 18** – Children and young people in specific circumstances: this centres around “Children and young people of Service Personnel”.

Service Children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Report

Commissioned by SSCE Cymru and conducted by the University of South Wales and Arad Research, this research explores the challenges of identifying, assessing and implementing support for Service children with ALN in Wales. It examines the impact the new ALN code may have for Service children living in and moving into Wales.

The report includes the following:

- Policy context
- Literature review
- Feedback from the SSCE Cymru Conference 2017
- Analysis of survey data from schools
- Key stakeholder interviews
- Areas for further consideration.

"[T] the percentage of Service children (6.1%) being supported at School Action level is considerably lower than the percentage of all pupils (11.17%) from across our sample. [...]the differential of five percentage points is interesting in that it would appear to support comments received during the qualitative phase of the research, where parents, practitioners and stakeholders expressed the view that the Additional Learning Needs of Service children with lower levels of need are more likely to go unidentified and unsupported. One explanation for this may be that the transient nature of this population may make it less likely for any initial differentiated learning approaches to be evaluated and, in turn, progressed onto support through School Action."

Service Children ALN Report (2018)

The full report can be found [here](#).

Defence Children's Services (DCS)

The [Children's Education Advisory Service \(CEAS\)](#) within the DCS provides advice and guidance to Service parents, education establishments and local authorities on education issues relating to Service children and young people, including in respect of ALN.

As the resources available overseas are different from those in the UK, MOD services complete an MOD Assessment of Supportability Overseas for all Service children with complex needs before an overseas posting is agreed.

Children and young people whose parents are Service personnel may face difficulties that are unique to the nature of their parents' employment. These needs may arise from:

- Service-induced mobility – Service personnel may relocate more often than the rest of the population and, sometimes, at short notice. Such transitions need to be well managed to avoid Service children with ALN experiencing delays in having their needs identified and met.
- The fact that the deployment of serving parents to operational arenas, whilst not necessarily constituting ALN, may result in a Service child or young person experiencing anxiety, dips in educational performance and/or emotional difficulties. Children and young people may also be affected similarly by siblings' deployment.

For further information, visit: gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-transformation-programme

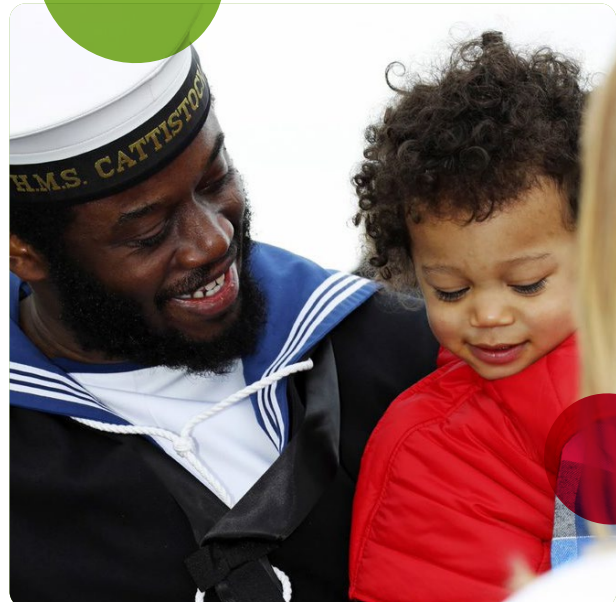
Registration with Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS)

Service families are encouraged to engage with [CEAS](#) if any of their children have an identified ALN that requires additional learning provision and thus an Individual Development Plan (IDP), or who are recognised as requiring support through School Action Plus or beyond. The purpose of registration is to enable CEAS to offer information, advice and support to Service families on any issue relating to their needs.

For contact details, see the [SSCE Cymru directory of support](#).



**“
Being with people
who also understand
how I am feeling
helps. ”**



Support and resources

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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School support



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Introduction

The School support section of the SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide includes an overview of the support available to schools in Wales, to help them prepare for understanding and responding to the needs of their Service children. It contains information about resources and support made available through the SSCE Cymru programme and Regional School Liaison Officers. It also provides information on funding that is available for schools in Wales to access to support their Service children and the Armed Forces community.



SSCE Cymru

Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru is a [Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\)](#) programme, initially funded by the Education Support Fund of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and funded by the Welsh Government from 2019. The SSCE Cymru mission is to provide the best possible educational support to Service children in Wales.

Mission

Knowledge and evidence

Coordinate research and compile evidence on the experiences of Service children in education to ensure their needs are well understood.

Activity and resources

Collaborate with members of the [SSCE Cymru Network](#) to conduct activities and produce resources that will help to support Service children throughout their education.

Supporting policy and systems

Work with organisations to provide evidence and impact policy relevant to supporting Service children in education.

Research

In 2019/20 SSCE Cymru conducted a number of activities to better understand the needs of Service children and identify the most effective support structures.

The views of schools, parents/carers and Service children were instrumental in supporting and planning the new [SSCE Cymru School Toolkit](#) and SSCE Cymru Service Family Guide.

School survey

In 2019, SSCE Cymru invited all schools in Wales that have Service children enrolled to participate in a survey.

A total of 167 schools across Wales contributed details of their experiences in supporting Service children in education through an online survey.

Some of the key findings included:

Challenges Service children face

- The most significant challenge identified by primary schools was the emotional impact of separation
- The most significant challenges identified by secondary schools are making friends and missing curriculum content.

Challenges schools face in supporting Service children

- The most significant challenges identified by primary schools were supporting Service children with their emotional and wellbeing needs and understanding the Armed Forces lifestyle
- The most significant challenges identified by secondary schools were supporting Service children with the gaps in their learning and gaining information from a Service child's previous schools.

School support for Service children

- The most beneficial types of support offered to Service children are tailored pastoral support and having a dedicated member of staff to support their Service children
- A substantial percentage of schools have put specific interventions in place to support their Service children or referred them for Mental Health and Wellbeing support. Many of these schools had issues meeting the prioritisation threshold, presenting disadvantages to Service children.

To see the full findings from the survey, visit: [SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#).



“ I didn't know the language when we lived abroad. ”

Listening to our Service children

In 2019/20, SSCE Cymru ran a number of discussion groups in schools in Wales, to hear from Service children about their experiences of education in Wales. A total of 115 Service children from 14 schools took part in the project.

Some of the key findings included:

- A number of discussion topics prompted responses and comments that were both positive and negative
- One consistent message that is seen throughout the discussions regarding mobility is the importance of the support Service children receive from friends and family, and the negative view of leaving/being away from them

- Understandably, the majority of comments and views from Service children regarding their experiences of deployment were overwhelmingly negative. A wide range of coping mechanisms are used by Service children to deal with their emotions and feelings during deployment
- Discussions about their experiences of living and being educated in Wales prompted responses and comments that were both positive and negative but were primarily positive.

These findings will feed into the [SCiP Alliance's Year of the Service Child Voice](#) project.

To see the full findings from the discussion groups, visit: [Listening to our Service children \(2020\) findings](#).



Parent/carer survey

In 2020, SSCE Cymru conducted a survey with parents/carers of Service children. The survey gave them the opportunity to share their experiences about living in and moving to Wales, the impact their lifestyles have on their children's education and the support they have received from schools.

The survey responses represented families from all three services and encompassed regular, reservist and veteran/ex-Service personnel.

Some of the key findings included:

Service family experiences

- Service families felt that making friends and the job security of the serving parent had the most positive impact on Service children
- Dealing with the emotional impact of separation and settling into a new school had the most negative impact on Service children.

Education experiences

- Service families felt that gaining an understanding of the Armed Forces lifestyle and identifying Service children were the most significant challenges that schools face
- Communication through school social media (e.g. Facebook/Twitter) and identifying Service children during the admission process have been the most beneficial type of support
- Having a term-time absence policy for Service children and having Service personnel on the school governing body were identified as support that would be most beneficial.

Living in Wales

- Service families indicated that the physical environment (countryside, waterfalls, mountains, cities) and meeting new people were what they enjoyed the most about living in Wales
- Visiting the school and area before a move (meeting teachers, classmates, understanding what to expect on the first day/week) was identified as the most effective form of helping a Service child settle into a new school and community
- Information about education in Wales and the curriculum, as well as having an identified person in a school to support with transition, were identified as support that would be most beneficial in helping a Service child settle into a new school and community.

To see the full findings from the survey, visit: [SSCE Cymru Service parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#).

Resources

"7.1 When asked what resources they would find beneficial in helping them to support their Service children, 54% of schools indicated they would like a Toolkit/information pack."

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

The SSCE Cymru website has a substantial suite of resources for schools and Service families, to help raise awareness of Service children's experiences and to support schools in embedding good practice. The resources are informed by SSCE Cymru research and developed in collaboration with members of the SSCE Cymru Network and schools in Wales.

SSCE Cymru resources

[SSCE Cymru School Toolkit](#)

[SSCE Cymru Tools](#)

[Good-practice examples](#)

[Service children – funding guidance for schools in Wales](#)

[Service children's experiences films](#)

[Films about learning Welsh](#)

[Directory of support](#)

[SSCE Cymru newsletters](#)

Regional School Liaison Officers for Service children (RSLOs)

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, the four RSLOs work collaboratively with the SSCE Cymru Programme Manager to deliver activities linked to a comprehensive workplan. This workplan was developed in collaboration with the SSCE Cymru Network members and is focused on supporting schools in understanding the experiences and needs of Service children. Following this workplan allows the RSLOs to embed activities in schools that will ensure sustainable support systems.

Contact details for the RSLOs can be found on the [SSCE Cymru website](#).



School support

Ways that the RSLOs can work with and support schools include:

- Running/facilitating discussion groups with Service children
- Developing an understanding of how a school can utilise the SSCE Cymru Toolkit and Tools
- Identifying good practice that can be shared with other schools in Wales
- Supporting collaboration opportunities
- Identifying actions/activities that schools can carry out to support their Service children and Armed Forces community
- Delivering training sessions to raise awareness on the experiences of Service children
- Providing advice and support to access and use funding to help Service children.

Case management

The RSLOs can provide case management support to schools that have an individual Service child or a very small number of Service children with a specific need related to the impact of their Armed Forces lifestyle.

For example, the mobility of Armed Forces families can have an academic, social and emotional impact on Service children. Issues may subsequently arise that require support outside of the capacity of the school and/or local authority. In these instances, the RSLO will work with the school and relevant local authority to identify support that could be accessed to overcome the barrier(s) that the individual child or small groups of Service children are facing.

The RSLOs will case manage this support – coordinating intervention(s), monitoring the progress and measuring the impact with each school. RSLOs will have access to funding for some of these interventions when required. The case management support from RSLOs is available for schools to access at any point of the year.

To access this support, schools should contact their [RSLO](#) directly to discuss the individual case.



Funding

Inclusive education funding in Wales

As education is devolved in Wales, there is a different approach to grant funding which is moving away from targeting specific groups and towards ensuring all grants are inclusive of different groups of learners, including Service children. Funding is in place to support all learners to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Service Pupil Premium

The [Service Pupil Premium \(SPP\)](#) in England grants £310 per Service child to help provide additional pastoral support during periods of parental deployment and reduce the disadvantages Service children may face.

There is no SPP in Wales. However, there is a vast amount of support that schools and local authorities can access to help their Service children. This includes SSCE Cymru tools and resources, support from the RSLOs for Service children, the Welsh Government's [Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund](#) and a range of other grant funds.

Funding for schools and local authorities in Wales

"Schools in the four key local authorities (Isle of Anglesey, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Vale of Glamorgan) are 18% more likely to be accessing funding to support their Service children. This links to their greater awareness of Service children needs."

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

"2.2 26% of Service families indicated that schools having access to additional funding positively impacted their child(ren)."

[SSCE Cymru parent/carer survey \(2020\) findings](#)

Schools across Wales are being very proactive and doing some great work to ensure that their Service children are not disadvantaged due of the impact of being part of an Armed Forces family. See the [SSCE Cymru website](#) for case studies and examples of good practice.

In previous years, funding for schools and local authorities has been made available from the Welsh Government, the MOD, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the Armed Forces Education Trust.

For further information on funding streams that schools and local authorities can access to support their Service children, click [here](#).



Funding guidance

"7.1 When asked what resources they would find beneficial in helping them to support their Service children, 58% of schools indicated they would like guidance on funding."

[SSCE Cymru school survey \(2019\) findings](#)

Sometimes, schools and local authorities need to access additional funds in order to continue to support Service children in the most effective way. SSCE Cymru recognises that it is not always easy to identify which funds are available, which grants are most relevant to a project and what is the best way to approach completing the application forms.

In 2019 a group of SSCE Cymru stakeholders produced a document in order to provide schools and local authorities in Wales with a guide on the grant streams that were available that year, along with advice on completing the application forms. This advice comes from members of the funding panels, as well as schools and local authorities that have been successful in applying for the grants.

For further information on the guidance, click [here](#).



Support and resources

See the [SSCE Cymru Directory of Support](#) for information on organisations and charities relevant to supporting Service children.

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