

Minister for Education and Welsh Language
Jeremy Miles MS

30 June 2022

Service children

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your [letter dated 24 May 2022](#) about Welsh Government support for Service children in Wales. We considered the letter during our Committee meeting on 16 June 2022.

Data collection

We welcome that you and your officials are considering the possible methods by which education-related data on Service children could be collected from schools. I am sure that you will agree that accurate and reliable data is a crucial starting point in gathering evidence about the experiences of children who are part of an Armed Forces family, and is therefore critical to determining what – if any – action needs to be taken by policy makers and educators to support them.

In 2018, the then Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote that “Work is continuing in Wales to enable the collection of data on Service children in schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census.”¹ We hope that, given that this work had already begun in 2018, it can progress with pace during the 6th Senedd, despite the challenges presented by Brexit and COVID.

We would therefore appreciate more clarity over the timescales associated with this body of work. Please can you set out:

- when you expect your scoping work to be completed;
- when do you expect an approach to data collection to be agreed; and

¹ Welsh Government, ‘[The Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018](#)’, page 26

- when you expect schools and other agencies to begin implementing whatever changes are required?

Support for Service children

We note that the Welsh Government's approach in Wales is different to the UK Government's approach in England, which is that Wales provides tailored support to Service children via the direct links between Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru, Regional Schools Liaison Officers, local authorities, schools and the children themselves.

We do not currently have a view on the merits of either approach.

However, we have compared the funding that the Welsh Government has committed to support Service children in Wales with the amount that the UK Government provides to support Service children in England via the Service Pupil Premium.

Your letter sets out that the Welsh Government has committed £270,000 for 2022-23 to support Service children in Wales. Schools in England receive £310 per year for each Service child on the school roll. Based on the data in your letter, it appears that if the Welsh Government adopted the UK Government's approach, we estimate that it would cost the Welsh Government around £830,000 per year,² around £560,000 more than the Welsh Government has provided for support for Service children in 2022-23.

Please can you:

- clarify whether, and why, the Welsh Government provides less money to support the education of Service children in Wales per head compared to the funding levels for Service children in England; and
- provide the Committee with a copy of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) that informed the Welsh Government's approach to providing support for Service children in Wales in respect of funding levels and the decision to fund the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru and Regional Schools Liaison Officer model as opposed to the approach of providing funding directly to schools.

We would be grateful for this information no later than Friday 9 September 2022.

Yours sincerely,

² The data collected by SSCE Cymru alongside local authorities and schools set out in your letter indicated that there are 2,677 Service children in Wales. Therefore, adopting the UK Government's approach to support for Service children would cost the Welsh Government £310 x 2,677 children = £826,770 per year.

Jayne Bryant

Jayne Bryant MS

Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

