



SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN  
IN EDUCATION IN WALES

CEFNOGI PLANT MILWYR MEWN  
ADDYSG YNG NGHYMRU

# SSCE Cymru ALN survey summary 2024/25



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Funded by  
**Welsh Government**

CLILC  
WLGA

# SSCE Cymru ALN survey

**Over 2024/25 SSCE Cymru conducted two surveys about the experiences of supporting Service children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).**

The initial survey was conducted with schools across 2024 and 2025.

In Spring 2025 a second survey was conducted with local authorities.

Both surveys included largely the same questions with respondents being asked to answer Yes/No and then invited to share further comments.

The aim was to capture a snapshot of the challenges and positives both schools and local authorities may be facing in supporting Service children with ALN, to identify examples of good practice and consider what further support schools and local authorities might need.

# Service children data

There is no formal mechanism for data collection in Wales. SSCE Cymru encourages schools annually to identify their Service children and inform SSCE Cymru of this data. The data here is based on 55% of schools in Wales responding between Sep23 to Aug25 and uses the Welsh Government definition of a Service children. 29% of schools responded in the 2024/25 academic year. ALN data was requested for the first time in 2024/25.

## Welsh Governments definition of a Service child:

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

- In HM Regular or Reserve Armed Forces – Royal Navy and Royal Marines; British Army and Royal Air Force, **Or**
- Is an Armed Forces Veteran who has been in Service within the past two years, **Or**
- One of their parents died whilst serving in the Armed Forces and the learner has received a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme.

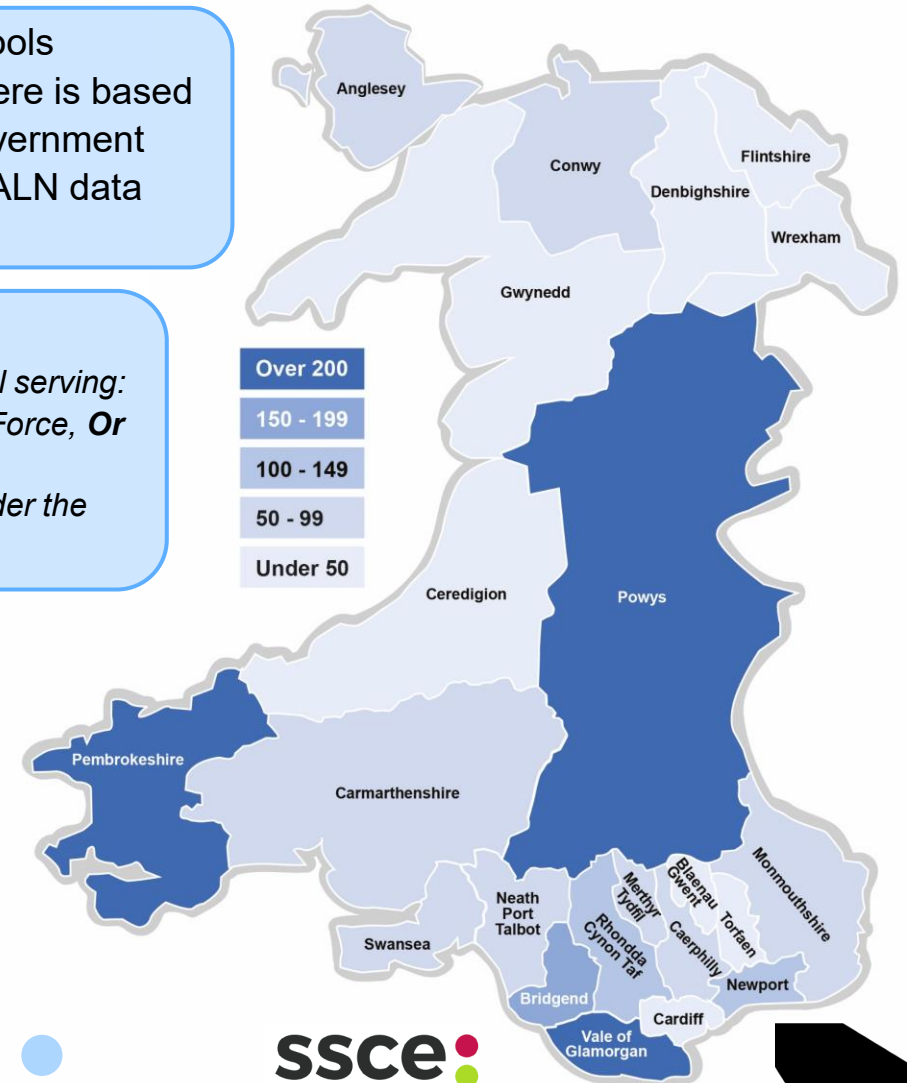
**2248**  
**Service**  
**children**

**In 474**  
**schools**

**102 (5%)**  
**Service**  
**children**  
**with ALN**

**In**  
**42 (9%)**  
**schools**

*\*Data snapshot taken Aug25*



**SSCE**  
**CYMRU**

CLILC  
WLGA

# SSCE Cymru ALN survey - responses

**The results of this summary will focus on the responses from six local authorities and 18 schools across 11 local authorities.**

The 18 schools whose responses are used in this summary report, all indicated they had Service children with ALN; other schools responded to the survey but either indicated they don't have Service children or don't have Service children with ALN. The 18 schools are representative of 45% of the schools in Wales that we know have Service children with ALN. The school responses were from 11 local authorities, which is half of the 22 local authorities in Wales. They are representative of the different cohorts of schools across Wales e.g. those with large numbers of Service children near Armed Forces bases and those with smaller numbers of Service children who are not mobile Service families.

Six local authorities, responded to the survey, offering a varied representation of Armed Forces communities across Wales. For example, Pembrokeshire and Powys have large numbers of mobile Service children due to their proximity to Armed Forces bases, in comparison to local authorities such as Gwynedd and Ceredigion who have much smaller Armed Forces communities and less-mobile Service families.

# SSCE Cymru ALN survey - responses

## School survey

**18 (45%) schools from 11 local authorities responded to survey.**

**Number of Service children (SC) in the school:**

Service children	Schools
Less than 5	3
5-10	2
11-15	5
16-20	3
More than 20	5

**Number of SC with ALN in each school:**

SC with ALN	Schools
1	9
2	2
3	1
4	3
6	1
9	1
10	1

## LA survey

**6 (27%) local authorities responded to the survey.**

- Ceredigion
- Gwynedd
- Isle of Anglesey
- Newport
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys

*NOTE: Gwynedd and Anglesey share an ALN team. Their responses will be shared as one.*

# Have you experienced any challenges when accessing / implementing support for Service children with ALN?

## Schools

No x10 (56%)

Yes x8 (44%)

### Types of comments:

Waitlists x 2

Staffing/resources x 2

Information shared from previous school/s x 2

Funding x 1

ALN diagnosis missed x 1

Access to medical support x 1

*“Very long waiting lists....”*

*“Often information from previous schools is incomplete.”*

## Local authorities

No x2 (40%)

Yes x3 (60%)

### Types of comments:

Difference in cross boarder policies x 2

Staffing/resources in schools x 1

Information shared from previous LAs x 1

Service families not disclosing military status x 1

Family understanding different school systems x 1

Restarting assessments/referrals x 1

Quick mobility timeline x 1

Funding x 1

*“We rarely get much advance notice of the pupils as it relies on other LAs noticing and notifying us (variable success) or families knowing they should.”*

*“Families often need to restart assessments or referrals under different regional frameworks.”*

*“Differences between Welsh ALN legislation [...] and SEND systems elsewhere in the UK [...] can create confusion or gaps in support.”*



# Have you ever accessed additional support from your local authority regarding Service children with ALN?

## Schools

No x10 (56%)

Yes x8 (44%)

### Types of comments:

Additional support/advice/provision x 5

Education Psychology referral/support x 3

*“Educational Psychology, referral to the Local Authority for consideration of ALN provision.”*

*“Additional support to support in class and access to specialist provision and support services.”*

*“We’ve liaised with the vulnerable learner lead, we have asked for financial support for this learner, we have risk review meetings regularly and have developed an IDP.”*

# What positive experiences have you had when accessing / implementing support for Service children with ALN?

## Schools

### Types of comments:

- Support from LA x 2
- School staff training x 2
- School provision/resources x 2
- Funding x 2
- Communication with previous schools x 2
- Service children clubs/activities x 1
- Engagement with parents x 1
- Liaising with MOD x 1
- No difference in supporting SC from any other learner x 1

*"We have supported parents by writing documents detailing the children's needs. This has allowed them to negotiate moves with their line managers and with stay in the area whilst diagnosis/ support is put in place."*

*"I don't think our experience has differed from any other learner, service child or not."*

*"The school has allowed me to complete courses to support specific needs of our service children."*

## Local authorities

### Types of comments:

- Strong transition communication with MOD x 2
- Multi-agency collaboration x 1
- Engagement with parents x 1
- Timely identification and implementation of support x 1
- Working with SSCE Cymru x 1
- No difference in supporting SC from any other learner x 1

*"Emphasising early identification of additional learning needs allows for timely interventions."*

*"We have supported school staff and Family Engagement Officers to recognise the unique challenges of service life and have provided tailored support."*



# Do you feel your *school/LA* would benefit from further support to assist with supporting Service children with ALN?

## Schools

No x7 (39%)

Yes x11 (61%)

### Types of comments:

Funding x 4

Attachment / TIS training x 3

Training to understand the Armed Forces lifestyle x 1

Closer links with NDT team x 1

Liaising with previous school/s and LA x 1

Linking with local MOD x 1

Materials/resources x 1

*"It would be useful to know how you could support the child further. This particular child suffers emotionally and misses his Dad while he's away."*

*"I would love to explore other training opportunities to support our learners."*

## Local authorities

No x2 (40%)

Yes x3 (60%)

### Types of comments:

Working with SSCE Cymru x 1

Funding x 1

Guidance from Welsh Government x 1

*"We can always improve what we already do to support our service families."*

# Are there any specific resources that you feel could further assist schools with being able to support Service children with ALN?

## Schools

No x11 (61%)

Yes x7 (39%)

### Types of comments:

Staff time x 2

Specialised training/materials x 1

Parent information sharing x 1

Outdoor equipment x 1

Armed Forces themed ALN resources x 1

*"We would love more ALN specific resources, such as very simple stories about children who have parents in the forces, puppets in Service uniform (both male and female)...."*

*"An MOD well-being contact to suggest services in addition to what we have in the LA."*

*"The resources I have received from Little Troopers are great resources to be able to start with them."*

## Local authorities

No x3 (60%)

Yes x2 (40%)

Good practice examples x 1

Information about MOD support x 1

ALN transfer crib sheet x 1

*"Case studies and best practice examples from other LAs successfully supporting Service children."*

# Have you experienced Service children moving in/out of the Local authority with IDP/EHCP etc?

## Local authorities

NOTE: This question only featured on the local authority survey. Three local authorities were able to reflect on their experiences here. Their responses have been summarised below into positives and negatives rather than common comments.

**No x2 (40%) / Yes x3 (60%)**

### Positives comments included:

- Early communication
- Good communication between previous LAs
- Service children champions in schools
- Experienced schools with strong processes in place
- ALN panel ensure previous provision continues.

### Challenges shared included:

- Delays in record transfer from previous school/s and LA
- Cross-boarder policy differences
- Lack of family understanding.

# Is your *school / local authority* aware of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Education Advisory Team (EAT)?

## Schools

No x16 (89%)

Yes x2 (11%)

## Local authorities

No x0 (0%)

Yes x5 (100%)

# Summary

Schools and local authorities reflected on both challenges and positive experiences of supporting Service children with ALN.

When communication was strong, experiences were equally positive, and some schools and local authorities felt there was no difference between supporting civilian ALN children to Service children with ALN. Although identified as a positive, a key challenge was also communication e.g. delays in information sharing between schools and local authorities.

There were a number of positive responses around being able to access funding, which could be used to complete courses to further support the identified needs of the Service children e.g. Trauma Informed Schools, ELSA, training on the Armed Forces lifestyle.

The differences between cross border policies, e.g. the Welsh ALN system and English SEND system, was also a cause for concern creating confusion and gaps in support. More support in this area was identified as a requirement from both local authorities and schools, as well as parents, with both schools and local authorities also commenting on a lack of understanding by families.

The overall messages outlined within this summary report, are largely reflective of SSCE Cymru's understanding of the needs and experience of Service children with ALN, through engagement with families, Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers, MODs Education Advisor Team and others.

# What next?

SSCE Cymru will liaise with Welsh Government to explore opportunities to overcome challenges in supporting Service children with ALN.

Opportunities will be explored to create new SSCE Cymru resources and templates for schools and local authorities, to support with transition of Service children with ALN when moving between schools, local authorities and nations.

SSCE Cymru will develop links with local authority ALN teams to support with increasing their understanding of Service children's experiences.

Continue to provide SSCE Cymru resources and funding to schools, to enable appropriate training for staff and provide individual pupil interventions.

SSCE Cymru will continue to work with the MODs Education Advisory Team to share understanding and identify opportunities for collaboration.