

Children, Sports & Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Wards Involved	All
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an update for information, following on from a series of previous reports on meeting the needs of children of Service Personnel. It provides an indication of the composition of this small group of children and work that has been done to improve their access to services where required as well as linking the families in with the wider community.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A report "Meeting the Needs of Children of Service Personnel in Westminster" was presented to the Children and Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2013 with subsequent reports for information provided to the Committee. The reports previously concluded that children from these families living in Westminster were not subject to any particular barriers in relation to issues such as access to school places and other universal services when they moved into the borough.
- 2.2. Since the last report, the numbers of children in this cohort have been monitored through the annual pupil census which is carried out in January each year. The 2016 figures are unlikely to be available until late February 2016 but the comparative numbers for 2014 and 2015 were as follows:

	2014	2015
Number of children attending Westminster schools (including academies)	33	29
Number in primary schools	33	29
Number in secondary schools	0	0
Number of Westminster schools with children on roll	6	5
Maximum number in a school	11	12
Minimum number in a school (where children from military families were on roll)	1	2

- 2.3. The numbers remain broadly constant although it should be pointed out that such children tend to be highly mobile as their parents are subject to changes to where they are stationed. Therefore there is likely to be some turnover in the cohort of children from year to year.
- 2.4. As with 2014's census, no children of secondary school aged from a Service family were recorded as attending local schools. Three of the children in the 2015 census were on their schools' Special Educational Needs register although none of the children had met the threshold to require a statement of special educational need or Education, Health and Care plan.
- 2.5. There is an ongoing a partnership between council officers and the London Central Garrison Welfare team. This has helped understanding of the profile of the community with a high number of Services Personnel working in a range of roles in Westminster but commuting in from outer London boroughs and beyond. In these cases, their families tend to live and their children are educated in their home boroughs. It was also pointed out that significant numbers of the older children tend to be educated in residential schools, particularly when their parents' roles involve frequent moves.
- 2.6. Funding has been received in 2015 from the Armed Forces Community Covenant to train parents from Service families to become childminders in Westminster. The grant was to cover the charge for attendance at local information sessions, formal registration and additional required training as well as a DBS check. The aim of this project was to find ways to respond to the wish of some parents from this community to work but finding it difficult to find employment that fits in with other responsibilities and demands. To date, 8 parents have taken part in the programme and are at different stages of registering to become childminders.
- 2.7. Those who successfully complete the process are able to take part in regular, flexible paid employment where their services are in high demand. Those trained

can also potentially work as childminders in other parts of the country, should they be stationed elsewhere. The training might also provide opportunities for employment in other parts of the childcare sector, for example in nannying. It also provides insight into running a small business which may lead to other potential self-employment opportunities for those who take part. Another aim of the project was to facilitate more integration of the families from an Armed Services background with those from the wider community who may choose to employ them to care for local children.

- 2.8. In summer 2015, the Army Welfare Service shared details of needs analysis carried out on local families. They identified 77 children aged 0-17 in Westminster. 20 of these were of primary school age (i.e. a smaller number than identified in the schools census at the start of 2015), 42 children aged 0-4 (i.e. below statutory school age) and 15 aged 12-17. The identification of the older children of statutory school age suggests that there may be an issue with local schools being made aware of or recording their status although it could also be that they attend schools in other boroughs. From the schools census, it has also been identified that no children of secondary school age have been recorded as attending schools in the nearby boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea or Hammersmith & Fulham.
- 2.9. The welfare service had recorded 42 children aged under 5 in a previous survey. The wider needs analysis carried out identified a particular issue with the cost of childcare and nursery places with children being on waiting lists for Ministry of Defence nursery provision and concern about the cost of other childcare. Consideration has been given to how to address this. It has recently been suggested that the Army Welfare Service may have undercounted the number of under-fives living in the borough as some were found to be living in other kinds of accommodation that they were not previously aware of and so the demand for childcare may be higher than thought.
- 2.10. Commissioners are planning to meet with Army Welfare representatives later this month to consider and agree further joint working to potentially access funding to meet the needs of children military families as well as providing services for the wider community.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

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BACKGROUND PAPERS