



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 4 June 2018  
SP Paper 338  
2nd report (Session 5)

## **Public Petitions Committee Comataidh nan Athchuingean Poblach**

# **PE1603: Ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland**



**Published in Scotland by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.**

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# Public Petitions Committee

The remit of the Public Petitions Committee is to consider and report on - whether a public petition is admissible; and what action is to be taken upon the petition.



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[petitions@parliament.scot](mailto:petitions@parliament.scot)



0131 348 5254

# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Johann Lamont**  
Scottish Labour



**Deputy Convener**  
**Angus MacDonald**  
Scottish National Party



**Rachael Hamilton**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Rona Mackay**  
Scottish National Party



**Brian Whittle**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party

# Introduction

1. PE1603 calls for greater guidance, scrutiny and consultation in relation to visits made to schools in Scotland by the armed forces. The petition, by Quakers in Scotland and ForcesWatch, was lodged in March 2016 and received 1,027 signatures in support of the action it calls for, as well as 52 comments.
2. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take three actions in relation to armed forces visits to schools:
  1. Guidance is provided on how visits to schools by the armed forces should be conducted so that information presented to children takes account of the unique nature of armed forces careers, ensures political balance, and offers a realistic representation of the role of the armed forces and what a career in the armed forces involves.
  2. Information is collected to enable public monitoring of the number and location of visits, the purpose and content of visits, and comparison with the number of visits by other employers.
  3. Parents/guardians are consulted as to whether they are happy for their child to take part in armed forces activities at school.
3. The petition explains that these actions are called for to address a number of areas of concerns that the petitioners have about armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. These are:
  - the level and distribution of armed forces visits to schools in Scotland
  - the types of activity provided in the course of visits and whether they constitute careers awareness or recruitment
  - concern that school students participating in the visits do not encounter a balance of views on the armed forces
  - that there is insufficient consultation with parents/guardians in advance of visits taking place
  - that there is a lack of transparent data about armed forces visits to schools.
4. The Public Petitions Committee's consideration of the petition has captured a range of views on the actions called for in the petition. In addition to these actions, some of the evidence received by the Committee has commented on the question of whether people under the age of 18 should be able to join the armed forces at all. Many of these submissions referred to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in respect of the age of recruitment into the armed forces. Included among these recommendations were calls to raise the minimum age for recruitment to 18 years of age. As the age of recruitment is not the subject matter of the petition and is also within the responsibility of the UK Government, the Committee does not make any recommendations in this regard.

5. The Committee does, however, note that the [Scottish Government's report](#) (March 2016) on the implementation of the UNCRC in Scotland:

” Whilst defence policy is reserved to the UK Government, the wellbeing of children is not. As such we would want to be assured that any recruitment of children to the UK military takes full cognisance of all aspects of their wellbeing. We have therefore requested from the UK Government further detail on the Army Board's proposal to increase the number of personnel recruited prior to their 18th birthday, including with regards to recruitment from Scotland, and reassurance from the UK Government that it has no intention to change current policy which seeks to prevent the involvement in hostilities of UK Service personnel under the age of 18.

# Guidance on armed forces visits to schools

6. The petition calls for guidance to address armed forces visits to schools on the basis that careers in the armed forces carry with them a set of unique challenges, both in terms of the roles that some members of the armed forces may be required to carry out, the ethical circumstances that may be involved in those roles and the legal obligations, such as duration of service, to which armed forces personnel may be subject. Other potential issues in respect of armed forces careers have also been highlighted in submissions received by the Committee from organisations such as Medact (a charity for health professionals).
7. Dundee City Council explained why, in its view, the guidance called for in the petition is not necessary:
  - ” It is important that that the armed forces, along with all career areas, including those careers where there may be philosophical, or moral dimensions have access to schools, so pupils are properly informed about career choices that exist. Pupils require this information. If the view that the armed forces require separate guidelines for school interaction then this logically would require an extension to other areas as well. It is our view that this additional guidance is not required. <sup>1</sup>
8. East Ayrshire Council commented that:
  - ” We note the comment about political balance; it has not been our experience that there is political imbalance in presentations by the armed forces. In our experience, members of the armed forces explain the political environment in which they operate in and do not promote any specific political ideology. <sup>2</sup>
9. South Lanarkshire Council's response confirmed:
  - ” ...that the decision to invite members of the armed forces to visit schools is delegated to Head Teachers on the basis that the purpose of the visit is to let young people know about their role and potential career pathways and/or through activities on leadership and team building. No direct recruitment is undertaken in schools. This takes account of the unique nature of armed forces careers and provides an opportunity to discuss career and leadership skills with young people. <sup>3</sup>
10. North Lanarkshire Council, however, indicated its support for the recommendations in the petition and stated that their current practice is in line with the proposals. The submission stated:



- ” For many years our schools have provided opportunities to young people to engage with employers through career events in schools or as arranged by North Lanarkshire Council, in partnership with our Employability Team and Skills Development Scotland. We also have a long-standing relationship with Skillforce who continue to work in a number of our schools. They are in an excellent position to provide us with an appropriate support regarding our relationships with the armed forces. Any other armed forces activities, not directly related to employment, are subject to normal risk assessments procedures. <sup>4</sup>
11. The former Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland explained in his submission that he supported the action called for in the petition, stating:
- ” I do not believe that the decision about whether such a visit should take place, and what such a visit should entail, should be left to local discretion. Rather, there should be clear national guidance about the content of such visits and when and where they are to be conducted. I am particularly keen, for example, to ensure that young people living in more deprived areas are not disproportionately targeted by such visits. <sup>5</sup>
12. The argument that any presence that the armed forces have in schools “must be accountable to scrutiny by staff and parents, and that all information presented must address honestly the risks and realities of military service” <sup>6</sup> was made in a submission from the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Scotland.
13. Factors that may heighten the vulnerability of some young people were noted by Medact as including socio-economic disadvantage and experience of childhood adversity. In this regard, the Medact submission invited the Committee to “note that children with these heightened vulnerabilities are likely to be present in every school – not only schools in typically socio-economically disadvantaged areas.” <sup>7</sup> The submission from Medact drew attention to its report 'The Recruitment of Children by the UK Armed Forces' stating that the report:
- ” ...examined the evidence that those recruited into the military as children face disproportionate health risks across the course of their military career, when compared with those recruited as adults. These health risks include PTSD, self-harm, suicide, death and injury. It also found that military recruitment marketing techniques take advantage of adolescent cognitive and psychosocial vulnerabilities. <sup>7</sup>
14. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Scottish Branch) also supported the petition and, in its submission, commented on early enlistment and the proportion of such recruits who drop-out which “therefore brought their full-time education to an end only to subject them to a risk of long-term unemployment.” <sup>8</sup> The submission refers to British Legion research which found “that the unemployment rate among working-age veterans is approximately twice the civilian rate; a lack of transferable, accredited qualifications acquired in service is a common complaint.”

15. Scientists for Global Responsibility<sup>9</sup> expressed concern about the scale of military influence on science and technology, including school education. As well as covering particular issues in relation to science, technology, engineering and maths within armed forces activities, the submission supports the right for children to withdraw from school activities involving the armed forces.

## Recruitment or raising awareness

16. A core issue raised in the petition is whether armed forces activities in schools constitute awareness-raising about careers in the armed forces or form part of the recruitment process. The petition argues that the armed forces use a narrow definition of recruitment so that it only refers to the act of 'signing up'. In taking evidence from the petitioners, the Committee sought to explore their understanding of recruitment and whether all careers-related activities in schools that promote particular careers or organisations should be considered as recruitment. Mairi Campbell-Jack of Quakers in Scotland stated that they:

” ...see recruitment as a process rather than an event—like many things in Scotland—and we know from armed forces documents that they see it as a process as well.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Mairi Campbell-Jack, contrib. 111<sup>10</sup>

17. Emma Sangster of ForcesWatch went on to say:

” We know from internal armed forces documents that they think that the pre-recruitment interest that they would like to gain in young people takes place over a number of years and that it might be sparked by any one encounter with the armed forces. We of course accept that the actual process of recruitment—of signing on the dotted line, as it were—does not take place in the school. In any case, it needs to involve parents at that final stage. However, we are concerned that a lot of what happens in schools is that pre-recruitment activity. There is certainly quite a bit of evidence from internal Ministry of Defence documents that that is how it views the situation.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster (ForcesWatch), contrib. 112<sup>11</sup>

18. The Committee also sought to understand whether the petitioners would take the same view in terms of the provision of careers-related information by other organisations or companies where career opportunities might carry particular risks or be considered to raise ethical or moral questions. Emma Sangster responded that:

” The education system should not be seen as a ready catchment for recruits into any industry, because going down any pathway needs a lot of consideration. Of course, it might be an arena where people start to gather information about different career pathways, but it should not be one where they go a significant way down any of those pathways.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster, contrib. 116<sup>12</sup>

19. Drawing a differentiation between the armed forces and other employers, Emma Sangster went on to state:

- ” The armed forces are a little different, because people can sign up at 16 and commit to a long period of service of up to six years, which is quite different from any other career... The unique nature of an armed forces career sets it aside from other employers in that respect.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster, contrib. 118<sup>13</sup>

20. A number of the activities offered to schools by the armed forces are not specifically careers-related but can involve activities that are related to particular aspects of the curriculum or which are focused on skills such as team-building activities. Further information about the range of activities offered was provided by representatives of the armed forces when they gave evidence to the Committee in November 2017.

21. In its first written submission to the Committee, the Scottish Government set out its view that:

- ” It is for each school to decide whether the armed forces have a role to play in their school in terms of offering positive educational and developmental opportunities for pupils. This is entirely separate from the forces’ recruitment activities.

Local authorities and schools are responsible for considering the arrangements under which any potential employer offers professional advice on career opportunities to pupils. This should be appropriate to their age and maturity and be done in a way which does not seek to exert undue or inappropriate influence. <sup>14</sup>

22. Similarly, the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces stated in his submission of November 2016, that:

- ” ...our Armed Forces never visit schools for recruitment purposes and would only ever visit a school after being invited by a teacher to support school activities. No pupil or school student is ever signed-up or otherwise makes a commitment to become a recruit into the Armed Forces during the course of any school visit by our representatives. These visits can comprise presentations, citizenship talks, meetings with staff, participation in career events, practice interviews and activities with the students, such as science and maths challenges, and other indoor or outdoor exercises. <sup>15</sup>

## A balance of views

23. The petitioners expressed concern that children and young people who participate in armed forces visits to schools do not receive a balanced picture of the nature of a career in the armed forces and the potential risks that may be involved, including the risks that may be faced by members of the armed forces undertaking combat roles.
24. On the question of balance, the petitioners clarified in evidence that they see the issue more widely than just the content of information presented by the armed

forces. They also identify a role for teachers and other organisations in providing a balance of views:

” There are some questions around balance and who should provide that balance. It might be best if the class teacher provided balance after the visit, or if the school could provide balance by also having peace organisations come into the school to talk to children—there are some great organisations out there, such as Veterans for Peace and PeaceJam.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Mairi Campbell-Jack, contrib. 137<sup>16</sup>

25. The Scottish Youth Parliament's submission was based on consultation with 49 young people of their experiences of armed forces visits to schools. The consultation found that of "the 49 young people consulted, 27 had experienced an armed forces visit to school. Of these, 17 found this visit to be a positive experience, 8 did not find it to be a positive experience, while 2 were unsure." <sup>17</sup>

26. Specific comments made by those who had a positive experience included:

” I learnt quite a lot about what the armed forces are about and how they help our country.

They were friendly, informative and interesting.

It's always positive to meet the people in the uniform and see that they are just ordinary people, similar to police visits to schools, I think. <sup>17</sup>

27. The submission states that those "who did not find the experience positive highlighted that they found the visit to portray an imbalanced representation of the armed forces and enforce harmful stereotypes." <sup>17</sup> Comments from young people on their experiences of armed forces visits included:

” As a 14 year old who was in the closet at the time, hearing 'We'll make you into a proper man' was damaging. They presented the armed forces in terms of the stereotype of a 'macho man'.

No more Top Gun music (which I witnessed first-hand). It fictionalises what is really at points a matter of life or death, and glorifies killing.

The presentation talked about the positives of being in the army, but didn't address negative consequences. The presenter completely sidestepped a question someone had about PTSD. <sup>17</sup>

28. The submission noted that of the focus group participants who had experienced armed forces visits to schools, only one had experienced a presentation that highlighted possible negative consequences of a career in the army as well as the positive benefits.

29. The Committee asked the armed forces representatives how a balance is struck between the opportunities that may be offered in an armed forces career and the risks that might be faced by individuals who join the armed forces. Brigadier Paul Buttery, Head of Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting and Resettlement at the Ministry of Defence, responded:

” I watched the careers video last night and I thought that it was very balanced. That might be a subjective assessment, but I suspect that any such thing that is watched is liable to subjective interpretation. The video showed a diverse range of opportunities—from human resources to combat, to engineering, to logistics and a range of other opportunities. As far as I could tell, there was no shying away from activities that individuals might be called on to do in the armed forces. Equally, because the armed forces are a career opportunity, the diverse and broad opportunities that individuals have within the armed forces were highlighted.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 56<sup>18</sup>

30. Brigadier Buttery went on to explain that:

” The presentation that is given in careers fairs is just the first presentation. If an individual then wants to pursue their application to the armed forces, there are checks and balances along the way, and the risks and sorts of operations that they might be deployed upon are absolutely specifically brought to their attention.

My view is that presentations are balanced and are part of a journey. When a potential recruit expresses an interest in joining, the roles of the armed forces and what we are here to do are made very clear to them.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 56<sup>18</sup>

31. The Committee also asked about how the tone and content of armed forces visits are inclusive and appeal to a diverse population. In response, Brigadier Buttery indicated:

” Since 2014, our presentations and policies have been directed to make the armed forces more inclusive. In fact, in respect of the LGBT community, the armed forces are highly regarded by Stonewall as an inclusive employer...I watched the presentation last night for my own satisfaction, and my opinion—as I mentioned before—is that it portrays a diverse workforce across a diverse range of employment. It avoids gender stereotyping. Although it does not specifically mention LGBT, my opinion is that the material that is used, and has been used since 2014, is absolutely cognisant of wanting to portray the armed forces as a diverse and inclusive employer.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 76<sup>19</sup>

32. From the Royal Air Force perspective, Wing Commander Ian Garnett, Field Force Commander North, said:

” I have a wide range of people because we want to reflect to that community that our community is inclusive. We go to great lengths to say, “Come and join, come and have a go.” For us it is about the best athlete—if you pass the test, we will take you... All the material that we use is certainly inclusive and we are very careful in our use of language to make sure that we are inclusive.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Wing Commander Garnett, contrib. 81<sup>20</sup>

## Careers information

33. Careers information is provided within the framework of Skills Development Scotland's Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service. In its submission, Skills Development Scotland explained:
- ” Career choices are discussed impartially at one-to-one meetings with a qualified Careers Adviser. During CIAG, regardless of the job, we do not promote one career or job over another. We also recommend to pupils that they discuss their career choices with their parent or guardian. If the individual is interested in exploring the armed forces as a career choice, the individual may be directed to contact the armed forces office for additional information on available opportunities and support.. Some colleges, for example Edinburgh, run pre-Army preparation courses, aimed at preparing individuals for selection tests. We would inform individuals of these opportunities when it is of interest to the individual and would refer them to the College for further information. <sup>21</sup>
34. The issue of balance in relation to armed forces visits to schools has been discussed above. Allied to the provision of information is the way in which CIAG supports young people to make informed career choices. In that respect, Skills Development Scotland outlined its work on Career Management Skills (CMS) which is undertaken from Primary 7. Skills Development Scotland stated that:
- ” CMS empowers individuals to identify the skills they have and those that they need to develop to help them realise their potential at any stage in their life. It helps them to understand themselves and identify their strengths, horizons and networks, so that they can take a balanced view of the right career step for their individual circumstances. A careers fair is therefore not the only influencer on a young person's decision in relation to future career choices. <sup>21</sup>
35. Skills Development Scotland further outlined that, in partnership with a school, it will provide "intensive and targeted, face-to-face coaching to those who need most support" <sup>21</sup> which will be delivered a number of times from S3 throughout a young person's school journey.
36. In evidence to the Committee on 20 April 2017, the Deputy First Minister was asked about the provision of careers advice. Having noted that "careers advice must be dispassionate" and "cover not only what might be exciting about the career, but what might be risky about it" the Deputy First Minister set out his view that:
- ” It is essential that careers advice is presented in that fashion. A core part of the curriculum for excellence's purpose is to equip young people with the decision-making capability to be able to look at what is presented to them and to make a judgment—so that they can weigh up something and know that it is right for them and to weigh up something else and know that it is wrong for them.
- There is an obligation—this is an implicit part of careers information, advice and guidance—that careers advice must be dispassionate and must present the whole picture. That enables young people to make their judgments about what is, and is not, appropriate for them.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 20 April 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 73<sup>22</sup>

37. On the question of the risks that might be associated with a career in the armed forces, specifically information of the sort of long-term consequences described in reports prepared by Medact, the Deputy First Minister stated that he "would have thought that that is fair material" to be part of dispassionate advice on a career in the armed forces.
38. In their submission of January 2018, the petitioners commented that there was inconsistency in the nature of information given about armed forces careers on the My World of Work web service, commenting that:
- ” Skills Development Scotland's *My World of Work* website mentions some of the risks and legal restrictions, but with serious omissions. Some sections refer to 'mental, physical and emotional challenges' but others, such as the Army Soldier page does not. There is no detail or indication of the severity of the risk.
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39. In the course of preparing this report, the Committee has reviewed the information on My World of Work. The Committee notes that references to the working environment for some roles, such as Royal Navy rating, Royal Navy officer and Royal Marines commando, contain the references noted by the petitioners while roles in the other branches of the armed forces do not.

## Conclusions and recommendations

40. The Committee acknowledges that views vary on visits to schools by the armed forces, and views about armed forces careers, sometimes very strongly. The Committee considers that this, in turn, can lead to different perspectives on the nature of the activity undertaken during a visit or different ways of describing the terms under which an individual may join the armed forces.
41. For example, the Committee notes the description offered in oral evidence of young people signing up at the age of 16 to a period of 6 years of service. This could be contrasted by another individual noting that this calculation adds the period of initial training to the 4-year period of service for people above the age of 18. Similarly, differing viewpoints have been put forward regarding the definition of 'recruitment' in connection with the armed forces.
42. The Committee has considered whether the range of activities undertaken by the armed forces in their visits to schools could be considered to constitute recruitment. The Committee considers it is not possible to conclude that such activities constitute an explicit act of recruitment. However, the activities include the promotion of careers in the armed forces and may, therefore, form part of the recruitment journey for some young people who choose to join the armed forces.
43. The Committee notes that the Deputy First Minister indicated that he "would be happy to consider" a child rights and wellbeing impact assessment on the issue of armed forces visits to schools. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government carries out a child rights and wellbeing assessment in relation to armed forces visits to schools to ensure that:

- content provided across all visit types is appropriate for the agreed purpose of a visit and the age group of those participating; and
- information resources are available which allow a balance of views, as called for in the petition, to be addressed. In this regard, the Committee notes that this is not solely a question of balance provided in presentations by the armed forces but more widely within the curriculum.

44. The Committee considers that all sources of careers information regarding the armed forces available to children and young people in Scotland should reflect both the opportunities and risks that may be associated with any particular career. In respect of the petition, the Committee considers that this should include information about the opportunities, challenges and risks of a career in the armed forces. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should review information provided about armed forces careers in all careers resources for young people in Scotland, to ensure that both the opportunities and risks are addressed to assist young people in their decision-making.



# Collection of data on armed forces visits to schools

## Arranging visits to schools

45. One of the underlying points of the petition is a concern about armed forces visits to schools potentially occurring disproportionately in areas of higher economic deprivation. The Committee's consideration of this aspect of the petition has sought to understand the process by which armed forces visits to schools are arranged and, from the available data, whether there are any indications to suggest that certain schools or areas are being disproportionately 'targeted'.

46. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces stated in written evidence to the Committee that this was not the case:

” The Armed Forces do visit some schools more frequently than others but this is once a good working relationship has been established and they are invited back subsequently. However, there are also schools which are never visited because the Head Teacher does not feel it appropriate to invite the Armed Forces to support schools activities. We respect both views and react to invites when appropriate; we do not target schools based on factors such as gender, social background or level of disadvantage in the surrounding area.<sup>24</sup>

47. In evidence to the Committee, Brigadier Buttery provided an overview of the policy regarding outreach activity under which visits to schools take place:

” Outreach activity, which includes the visits of armed forces personnel to schools and is the main topic of this brief, is covered in our policy and in joint service publication 545. Each of the armed services has its own outreach teams, which are represented here. The outreach teams bring the armed forces to the attention of the wider community through their outreach programmes of direct-to-public external events and community engagement, which fall into one or more of the following categories: raising awareness, recruiting events, support to education and community-based engagement. Outreach teams visit educational establishments only following a specific invitation. They are not to actively recruit in schools, and students cannot be signed up or otherwise make a commitment to become a recruit in the armed forces during the course of any such visit.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Paul Buttery (Ministry of Defence), contrib.<sup>25</sup>

48. The Committee sought further information about the process through which an invitation for an armed forces visit would be arranged. Major Deborah Scott, SO2 recruiting and engagement at the 51st Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Scotland, explained:

” We have numerous relationships in existence with schools that have used our services over the years to support their activity. They often contact us following an initial engagement, as they see the value in what we are able to deliver to their pupils and want it to be repeated. At no point do we visit a school uninvited; we always do so through an invitation, and we confirm that our attendance is still appropriate with the school prior to the event, if required. Reviewing whether our attendance is appropriate is an on-going process.

If a school requests our support in any form, we will try to support it if we can. We are not selective and do not look to include or exclude schools based on any set of criteria. We aim to support all schools, whether independent, state sector or special needs, and regardless of postcode area. We can deliver a range of activities, which can be tailored to meet the needs of the school's request, subject to our resources being available.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Major Deborah Scott (Army), contrib. 5<sup>26</sup>

49. For the Royal Navy, Commander Billy Adams stated:

” We send an annual letter out with updates on careers information and activities available. We learn from the previous year what activities have been popular in certain schools, or we have new activities that we would like to offer. There is a range of ways but, generally, information is spread through word of mouth; it may be that we are in contact with careers teachers at specific events and they learn what is available to them then.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Commander Adams, contrib. 12<sup>27</sup>

50. The Air Force's approach was explained by Wing Commander Garnett:

” The RAF contacts schools by letter in the first instance, as we do across the UK, and they then come back and contact us. However, an awful lot of the schools are repeat schools, which like our products and what we offer, and then word spreads to other schools and they contact us. A lot of it is word of mouth; for example, at careers fairs teachers will come and ask us what we do for other schools. We always write a letter annually to all schools offering our services in case they change their minds or whatever, but that is the only time we will do it. Schools learn about us through word of mouth or by letter.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Wing Commander Garnett, contrib. 8<sup>28</sup>

51. Asked about whether the armed forces target any particular schools or areas, based on data previously presented to the Committee, Brigadier Buttery stated:

” The data that I have, which we have been sharing with the committee, is more recent than that, and our approach to engagement activities has matured and is quite different now. Since about 2014 we have had far more control—if that is the right word—of how our engagement activity is monitored, who actually engages and what messages are explained and delivered to the schools. I know that now there is no targeting of schools based on gender, social background or the relative level of deprivation in the surrounding area or anything like that. There is absolutely no targeting on those grounds.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 27<sup>29</sup>

52. The petitioners consider that:

- ” While the armed forces state that they only go to schools on request, the witnesses acknowledged that each service contacts all schools in Scotland annually and ensures each school has up-to-date information available to pupils. Communication about potential visits is therefore not initiated by schools but by the services cold calling.<sup>23</sup>

## Data about armed forces visits

53. The petition, and subsequent submissions from the petitioners, comment on the availability of armed forces visits to schools. In the background information to the petition, the petitioners highlight:

- ” A ForcesWatch report, analysing data for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 academic years, found that 83% of state secondary schools in Scotland were visited by one of the armed forces at least once. 1455 visits were made to 303 Scottish state secondary schools, of which 42% were made by the Army, 31% by the Navy and 27% by the RAF, equating to an average of two visits per year for every school. Many schools were visited numerous times; 31 state secondary schools were visited 10 or more times (six were visited over 20 times, and two were visited 31 times). By comparison, visits were only made to 50% of independent secondary schools. All the Army's visits were made to state schools.

54. In the course of taking evidence from the Deputy First Minister, the Committee asked whether he would ask for a commitment from the armed forces "to make accessible, good-quality data available to the public or to the Parliament." The Deputy First Minister undertook to do so and information was provided to the Committee in July 2017.

55. The information indicated that a total of 1,091 visits were made to educational institutions in Scotland by the armed forces in the period from, broadly, April 2016 to June 2017. The figures provided included visits to colleges and universities, as well as visits to schools. Of the total number of visits, 770 were made to schools.

56. A number of locations have been visited by armed forces representatives on more than one occasion. The number of locations visited by each of the armed forces is as follows:

- Army: 293 locations
- Royal Air Force: 121 locations
- Royal Navy: 142 locations.

57. The nature of the activities undertaken in the course of the visit vary in their descriptions. The systems for recording data about those activities also appear to differ between the various armed forces. The presentation of data about Army activities seems to be the most consistent in the descriptors of the activity undertaken. This data shows that, of the 669 visits undertaken, 316 were for

careers fairs or events, 136 were for careers presentations or visits, 78 were for Introductory Personal Development Activity, 68 were for curriculum support (e.g. mock interviews), 36 were Army in Education liaison visits and 19 were STEM related.

58. There was also one visit listed for an Army Preparation Course (indicated as being a school run course) and on Combined Cadet Force. Of the visits not captured in these descriptors, the majority were to universities and included stands or presentations at fairs. The data for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, while not captured in the same way, also indicate that the majority of visits were for careers-related purposes.
59. In their submission of January 2018, the petitioners provide some further analysis of the data, noting that:

” The headline findings are:

- 770 visits were made by the armed forces to schools in Scotland between April 16 and March 17, including a small number to primary schools and special schools.
- The Army made 58% of all visits.
- 68% of state secondary schools are visited in one year, some many times.
- Three-quarters (75.5%) of visits are promoting a career in the armed forces.
- State schools are visited far more than independent schools, even taking into account that they are far larger in number. <sup>23</sup>

60. In respect of concerns about potential 'targeting' of visits, the petitioners' most recent submission noted:

” State schools are visited far more than independent schools (even taking into account that they are far larger in number). Only 27 (3.5%) of visits were made to independent schools. This is an indication that, while the armed forces may not actively target schools in areas of deprivation, more emphasis is put on schools with certain demographics. <sup>23</sup>

61. The question of the number of visits made to state schools in comparison to independent schools was taken into account by the Committee in its consideration of the petition. In taking evidence from the armed forces, the Committee sought to clarify the role played by cadet forces, which are more a feature of the independent sector than the state sector. Brigadier Buttery outlined that:

” The cadets are a national youth organisation and, therefore, separate from the distinct British armed forces. They are a voluntary organisation with voluntary helpers. As I understand it, everything that the cadets do involves parental consent, either for their children to be cadets or for any of the activities that the cadets then undertake. The cadets are supported by the armed forces but, in the same way with schools, it is at the request of the cadets units; the armed forces then provide the support that has been requested.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 52<sup>30</sup>

62. When asked whether the data that had been provided about armed forces visits would also have included cadet visits, Major Deborah Scott responded:

” From an Army perspective, I do not think it would, because a unit going in to support the cadets training activity is part of our normal business. A unit is affiliated to a cadet organisation, so it would be doing requests on a weekly basis and that is normal business. From a careers presentation perspective, I know that the only time we brief the cadets is once a year at their annual camp. We do not go in on a more frequent basis than that.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Major Scott, contrib. 54<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusions and recommendations

63. The Committee considers that the approach taken by the armed forces in writing to schools is the type of action that could be expected of any organisation in terms of making a school aware of the activities that can be provided. Having been made aware of the services, the Committee considers that it is a matter for the school to decide whether or not to issue an invitation. The Committee also recognises the role that previous engagement with any external organisation, not just the armed forces, may have on whether similar activities take place in certain schools year-on-year.

64. The Committee also notes that the provision of data about the interactions with schools should be considered best practice for all organisations that seek to engage young people or promote particular career opportunities.

65. The Committee considers that good quality information about armed forces visits to schools should be made available to the public. While the Committee does not consider that most recent data about armed forces reflects any targeting of schools with student bodies drawn from areas of higher economic deprivation, it recognises the validity of concerns about such targeting and that such concerns cannot be assuaged unless credible and consistent data is available for analysis.

66. The Committee is, therefore, of the view that information about armed forces visits to schools should be collected and published. In terms of who should be responsible for the collection and publication of data about armed forces visits,

the key consideration for the Committee is how to ensure that the data collected is credible and consistent to allow a fuller understanding to be gained of armed forces activities in schools over a period of time. For this reason, the Committee does not consider that data collection and publication should be the responsibility of either individual schools or local authorities. From the information made available throughout consideration of this petition, it is clear to the Committee that the data requested is already held by the armed forces. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should ask the Ministry of Defence to publish information about armed forces visits to schools in Scotland on an ongoing basis.

# Consultation on participation in armed forces visits to schools

67. The third element of the petition, which called for parental/guardian consent to be provided prior to participation in armed forces visits, was the one on which the views of stakeholders diverged from the action called for in the petition.

## Current practice

68. The Committee sought written submissions from local authorities as to current practices in relation to providing information to parents/guardians about activities, including armed forces visits. A number of local authorities explained that parents were informed of the range of activities that may be offered to school pupils and would have the opportunity to raise any concerns that they may have about visits by the armed forces or other organisations.
69. The evidence provided to the Committee by local authorities and the armed forces indicated that previous contact with a school is one of the factors that will influence whether an invitation to deliver a particular activity is issued. A number of local authority responses commented on this. For example, Angus Council stated:
- ” In Angus we are aware that a number of our young people pursue careers in the forces and we therefore include armed forces in careers events in our schools. A number of our schools have link with RM Condor which have proved fruitful. We also have a number of service families within our catchment.”<sup>32</sup>
70. Renfrewshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council also commented that their existing practices ensure that parents/carers are kept up to date with a range of schools activities, including arrangements for visits by representatives of the armed forces. South Lanarkshire Council noted that if “any child or family express a wish not to take part this will be considered and actioned by the school.”<sup>3</sup>
71. In respect of the ways in which parents/guardians would be informed of activities, Glasgow City Council explained:
- ” Parent Councils would be kept up to date with developments in the curriculum, which would include business partnerships. Parents would be kept informed of activities offered to their child by the school.”<sup>33</sup>
72. Both East Ayrshire Council and East Dunbartonshire Council also reflected on the opportunity for parents to provide feedback. East Ayrshire Council notes that it “is happy to hear and act on parents’ views with regard to children taking part in armed forces activities at school”.<sup>2</sup> East Dunbartonshire Council also commented on actions that could be taken should there be an objection, stating that schools “consult with parents about activities which are taking part and should there be any objection by parents then alternative arrangements would be put in place.”<sup>34</sup>

## Ability to consent

73. A number of submissions commented on whether it would be necessary or appropriate to seek parental/guardian consent for young people above a certain age. For example, it was noted by Dundee City Council that many activities in relation to careers are with pupils aged 16 and over and that "in these cases it is the young person that would make this decision, not the parents." <sup>1</sup>
74. The then Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland also commented on this point, stating that he:
- ” ...would suggest that children in secondary schools would generally be assumed capable of providing informed consent to activities in their own right, as long as they were provided with balanced information before doing so. <sup>5</sup>
75. In its response, the Scottish Youth Parliament noted that of its 49 focus group participants, only 15 agreed that parental/guardian consent should be required. 23 participants disagreed and 7 were unsure. A range of views were expressed on whether the age of the child or young person should determine whether parental/guardian consultation should be required and on how both young people and parents could be involved in decision making.
76. Overall, the Scottish Youth Parliament concluded:
- ” Young people consulted had more mixed views on the call for parents and guardians to be consulted, with the majority disagreeing; many felt that it should be the child or young person consulted as to whether they want to take part in armed forces activities in school. <sup>17</sup>
77. The Committee asked the Deputy First Minister about the issue of consent during its evidence-taking on 20 April 2017. The Deputy First Minister stated:
- ” Once young people are 16, they are free to offer their own consent on such issues, and that becomes a complicating factor in the consideration of all these questions.

Source: Public Petitions Committee 20 April 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 85<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusions and recommendations

78. On the basis of the range of views expressed in the evidence it has received, the Committee is of the view that, for young people aged 16 and over, the decision on whether to participate, or not, should be solely for the individual concerned. The Committee also recognises that some stakeholders are of the view that most secondary school-aged children and young people are able to decide whether they wish to participate in armed forces visits to schools that are specifically careers-related.
79. However, the Committee also recognises the need to ensure that parents/guardians are informed about a full range of school activities so that they are able to discuss them with their child. The Committee considers this to be an important part of



assisting young people to make informed decisions on their own behalf. The information provided to the Committee by local authorities indicates that current practices align with what the Committee would consider to be good practice.

80. The Committee recommends that the issue of consultation on participation in armed forces visits to schools should be included in the child rights and wellbeing impact assessment that the Committee has recommended should be undertaken by the Scottish Government.

81. The Committee is clear that young people over the age of 16 can provide consent on their own behalf. However, the Committee does not take a view on whether there should be a specific age threshold for people below the age of 16 to provide their own consent. The Committee recommends that this is an issue that should be addressed through a child rights and wellbeing impact assessment.

# Annexe A: Extracts from Minutes and links to oral evidence

## **3rd Meeting, 2016 (Session 5), Thursday 15 September 2016**

**1. Consideration of new petitions:** The Committee considered PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie, on behalf of Quaker in Scotland & Forces Watch, on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland and took evidence from Mairi Campbell-Jack, Parliamentary Engagement Office, Quakers in Scotland; Emma Sangster, Coordinator, Forces Watch; and Rhianna Louise, Education and Outreach Project Office, Forces Watch. The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, local authorities, the Armed Forces Careers Office, Skills Development Scotland, the Association of Heads and Deputies in Scotland, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and the Scottish Youth Parliament.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

## **7th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5), Thursday 24 November 2016**

**3. Consideration of continued petitions:** The Committee considered PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie, on behalf of Quaker in Scotland and Forces Watch, on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. The Committee agreed to write to organisations representing parents and teachers, schools, children's rights organisations, young people's organisations, veterans and careers bodies such as Skills Development Scotland.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

## **4th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5), Thursday 2 March 2017**

**3. Consideration of continued petitions:** PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie, on behalf of Quaker in Scotland and Forces Watch, on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. The Committee agreed to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and COSLA to give evidence at a future meeting and to request a briefing from the Ministry of Defence.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

## **7th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5), Thursday 20 April 2017**

**1. Consideration of continued petitions:** The Committee considered PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie, on behalf of Quaker in Scotland & Forces Watch, on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland and took evidence from John Swinney, Deputy First Minister. The Committee agreed to reflect on the evidence from the Deputy First Minister and to consider a note by the clerk at a future meeting.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

**11th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5), Thursday 25 May 2017**

**3. Consideration of continued petitions:** PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie on behalf of Quaker in Scotland & Forces Watch on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

**20th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5), Thursday 9 November 2017**

**1. Consideration of continued petition:** The Committee considered PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie on behalf of Quaker in Scotland & Forces Watch on Ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland and took evidence from Brigadier Paul Buttery, Head Training Education Skills Recruiting and Resettlement, Ministry of Defence; Wing Commander Ian Garnett, Field Commander North, Royal Air Force; Commander Billy Adams, Commanding Officer Recruiting Field Force & Area Recruiting Officer, Scotland & Northern Ireland, Royal Navy; and Major Deborah Scott, SO2 Recruiting and Engagement Coordination, HQ 51st Infantry Brigade and Army Headquarters Scotland. The Committee agreed to invite the petitioner to respond to the evidence heard, and to consider the petition further at a future meeting.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

**3rd Meeting, 2018 (Session 5), Thursday 15 March 2018**

**2. Consideration of continued petitions:** The Committee considered PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie on behalf of Quaker in Scotland & Forces Watch on Ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. The Committee agreed to publish a report on the Committee's consideration of the petition.

[Official Report of the meeting](#)

[Meeting papers](#)

**8th Meeting, 2018 (Session 5), Thursday 17 May 2018**

**2. Consideration of a continued petition (in private):** The Committee considered a draft report on petition PE1603 by Mairi Campbell-Jack and Douglas Beattie on behalf of Quaker in Scotland and Forces Watch on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. The Committee agreed to consider a further draft at a future meeting.

**9th Meeting, 2018 (Session 5), Thursday 24 May 2018**

**4. Consideration of a continued petition (in private):** The Committee considered and agreed a draft report on petition PE1603 on ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland.

## Annexe B: Written evidence submitted to the Committee

Below is a list of all [written evidence](#) submitted to the Committee in relation to this petition:

- PE1603/A: Dundee City Council Letter of 22 September 2016
- PE1603/B: North Lanarkshire Council Letter of 26 September 2016
- PE1603/C: Angus Council Letter of 27 September 2016
- PE1603/D: East Dunbartonshire Council Letter of 29 September 2016
- PE1603/E: Glasgow City Council Letter 4 October 2016
- PE1603/F: East Ayrshire Council Letter of 5 October 2016
- PE1603/G: Argyll and Bute Council Letter of 6 October 2016
- PE1603/H: Aberdeen City Council Letter of 7 September 2016
- PE1603/I: AHDS Email of 7 September 2016
- PE1603/J: Renfrewshire Council Letter of 10 October 2016
- PE1603/K: East Renfrewshire Council Email of 11 October 2016
- PE1603/L: South Lanarkshire Council of 11 October 2016
- PE1603/M: Stirling Council Letter of 12 October 2016
- PE1603/N: Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland Letter of 13 October 2016
- PE1603/O: Scottish Government Letter of 14 October 2016
- PE1603/P: Scottish Youth Parliament Letter of 21 October 2016
- PE1603/Q: Minister of State for the Armed Forces Letter of 1 November 2016
- PE1603/R: North Ayrshire Council Letter of 7 November 2016
- PE1603/S: Petitioner Letter of 11 November 2016
- PE1603/T: Young Scots for Independence Letter of 9 January 2017
- PE1603/U: Minister of State for the Armed Forces Letter of 4 January 2017
- PE1603/V: Together Scotland Letter of 11 January 2017
- PE1603/W: Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Scotland Letter of 12 January 2017

- PE1603/X: Medact Letter of 12 January 2017
- PE1603/Y: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Scottish Branch) Letter of 12 January 2017
- PE1603/Z: Eileen Cook Email of 13 January 2017
- PE1603/AA: SPTC Letter of 13 January 2017
- PE1603/BB: Conor McAllister Letter of 16 January 2017
- PE1603/CC: Skills Development Scotland Letter of 16 January 2017
- PE1603/DD: Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) Letter of 17 January 2017
- PE1603/EE: Petitioner Letter of 10 February 2017
- PE1603/FF: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 5 April 2017
- PE1603/GG: Petitioners submission of 15 May 2017
- PE1603/HH: Petitioners submission of January 2018

- [1] Dundee City Council. (2016, September). Written Submission.
- [2] East Ayrshire Council. (2016, October). Written Submission.
- [3] South Lanarkshire Council. (2016, October). Written Submission.
- [4] North Lanarkshire Council. (2016, September). Written Submission.
- [5] Children and Young People's Commissioner. (2016, October). No title
- [6] Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Scotland. (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [7] Medact. (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [8] Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Scottish Branch). (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [9] Scientists for Global Responsibility. (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [10] Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Mairi Campbell-Jack, contrib. 111, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10525&c=1932621>
- [11] Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster (ForcesWatch), contrib. 112, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10525&c=1932622>
- [12] Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster, contrib. 116, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10525&c=1932626>
- [13] Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Emma Sangster, contrib. 118, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10525&c=1932628>
- [14] Scottish Government. (2016, October). Written Submission.
- [15] Minister of State for the Armed Forces. (2016, November). Written Submission.
- [16] Public Petitions Committee 15 September 2016 [Draft], Mairi Campbell-Jack, contrib. 137, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10525&c=1932647>
- [17] Scottish Youth Parliament. (2016, October). Written Submission.
- [18] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 56, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039539>
- [19] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 76, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039559>
- [20] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Wing Commander Garnett, contrib. 81, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039564>
- [21] Skills Development Scotland. (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [22] Public Petitions Committee 20 April 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 73, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10904&c=1993319>

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- [23] Quakers in Scotland and ForcesWatch. (2018, January). Written Submission.
- [24] Minister of State for the Armed Forces. (2017, January). Written Submission.
- [25] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Paul Buttery (Ministry of Defence), contrib. 2, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039485>
- [26] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Major Deborah Scott (Army), contrib. 5, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2050909>
- [27] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Commander Adams, contrib. 12, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039495>
- [28] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Wing Commander Garnett, contrib. 8, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039491>
- [29] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 27, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039510>
- [30] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Brigadier Buttery, contrib. 52, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039535>
- [31] Public Petitions Committee 09 November 2017, Major Scott, contrib. 54, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11198&c=2039537>
- [32] Angus Council. (2016, September). Written Submission.
- [33] Glasgow City Council. (2016, October). Written Submission.
- [34] East Dunbartonshire Council. (2016, September). Written Submission.
- [35] Public Petitions Committee 20 April 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 85, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10904&c=1993331>



