

National Assembly for Wales
Petitions Committee

**Stop the Army Recruiting in
Schools - Report on the
Consideration of a Petition**

June 2015

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Tel: 0300 200 6565
Email: SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales
Twitter: [@SeneddPetitions](https://twitter.com/SeneddPetitions)

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Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee was established on 15 June 2011. Its role is to consider all admissible petitions that are submitted by the public. Petitions must be about issues that the National Assembly has powers to take action on. The petitions process enables the public to highlight issues and directly influence the work of the National Assembly. Its specific functions are set out in Standing Order 23.

Current Committee membership:



William Powell (Chair)
Welsh Liberal Democrats
Mid and West Wales



Russell George
Welsh Conservatives
Montgomeryshire



Bethan Jenkins
Plaid Cymru
South Wales West



Joyce Watson
Welsh Labour
Mid and West Wales

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The Committee's Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations to the Welsh Government are listed below, in the order that they appear in this Report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions:

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government considers whether further research is needed into the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in areas of relatively high deprivation. (Page 25)

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework to ensure that guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role. (Page 26)

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Welsh Government gives further consideration to how schools, businesses and employers can best be supported to ensure that a diverse range of businesses and employers visit schools to provide pupils with information about the career opportunities they offer. (Page 26)

The Petition

1. The following petition¹ was submitted by Cymdeithas y Cymod (Fellowship of Reconciliation) using the Assembly's online petitions system:

"Title - 'Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools.'

"Text - We call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces should not go into schools to recruit.

"Additional Information - Britain is the only country in the European Union that allows a military presence in its schools. Britain is the only country of the 27 European Union countries to recruit 16-year-old children to the armed forces. The armed forces target their recruitment in schools in the most deprived areas of Wales."

2. The petition gathered 374 signatures online. An associated offline petition gathered approximately 700 signatures.

¹ Petition reference number P-04-432

Consideration of the Petition by the Committee

Initial Consideration

3. The Committee considered the Petition for the first time on 6 November 2012 and agreed to write to the Minister for Education and Skills to seek his views on the petition.
4. The then Deputy Minister for Skills' response² indicated that:
 - responsibility for the control of the use of school premises rests with the Governing Body. The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, planning and day to day management of the school, which includes deciding who can enter the school premises;
 - schools and governing bodies have a responsibility to respond to the needs of pupils and provide them with appropriate careers education provision and educational visits from a vast range of potential employers take place against this background of provision;
 - restricting armed forces access to schools may possibly disadvantage some young people as they will not have access to information about a full range of careers, including some which offer training of a very high quality.
5. In their response³ to the Minister's letter the petitioners made the following points:
 - impartial and balanced careers information, advice and guidance for young people, even in the armed forces is important;
 - the petition asked the Welsh Government to urge schools not to allow the recruitment [our emphasis] of children by the armed forces;
 - the UK Government has said that the armed forces do go into schools to recruit children and thus has not provided impartial and balanced careers information, advice and guidance for young people;

² Letter dated 4 December from Jeff Cuthbert AM, Deputy Minister for Skills

³ Letter dated 14 December from Arfon Rhys, Hon. Sec Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales

- the petition was in accord with the recommendation by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2008 which stated that the UK state party should: “Reconsider its active policy of recruitment of children into the armed forces...”;
- the armed forces use of visits to schools for recruitment purposes was further evidenced by the fact that schools in the most deprived areas were visited 50% more often than those in affluent areas in Wales.

6. The correspondence was considered at a subsequent meeting of the Committee when it agreed to launch a public written consultation on the petition and, dependent on the consultation responses, hold oral evidence sessions.

Written Consultation

7. The Committee issued a consultation letter on 20 February 2013, which went to a wide range of organisations. The full distribution list is at Annexe A.

8. The consultation letter asked for views about the armed forces providing careers advice or training in schools and whether this is a service that is valued. It also asked for views on whether there are differences in the ways that the armed forces work in local authority maintained schools and independent schools. The following specific questions were also included:

- do you have any concerns about the armed forces giving career advice in schools or do you welcome such advice?
- what are the benefits and disadvantages of the armed forces giving career advice in schools?
- what impact, if any, would restricting armed forces’ access to schools have on young people’s access to information about armed forces careers?
- do you have any evidence that the armed forces target their activities in schools in more deprived areas?
- do the armed forces work differently in independent schools than in local authority schools?

9. The Committee received thirty responses. These can be broadly broken down into the following:

- 10 individuals;
- 7 religious bodies or individuals who identify themselves as religious;
- 3 teaching unions;
- 2 representative bodies;
- 3 campaigning organisations.

10. Responses were also received from one local authority, one school, one local youth forum, Jill Evans, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and from the Children's Commissioner.

11. The majority of responses (twenty) supported the aims of the petition. These responses were from the majority of individuals, religious groups, the MEP, the school and the campaigning organisations. Six responses had some concerns about the aims of the petition, including:

- the armed forces should have the same right to provide careers advice as other organisations;
- all careers advice should be welcomed;
- it would be discriminatory to restrict the armed forces from providing such advice.

12. The remaining four had mixed views or neither supported or objected to the petition.

Summary of Written Consultation

13. A more detailed analysis of the consultation responses⁴ indicates that responses fell into the following broad categories:

- definition and methods of recruitment;
- disadvantages and advantages of the military accessing schools;
- targeting areas of deprivation;
- military ethos;

⁴ All the consultation responses are available on the Assembly's website - <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=4793>

- educational attainment of recruits; and
- legislation.

Definition and methods of recruitment

14. In written evidence⁵, the petitioners said:

“Not all employers go into schools, but the armed forces do so in order to recruit children.”

15. They also made the point that:

“the Armed Forces do not provide balanced and accurate careers advice because they do not talk about the right to leave, the period of service, or the extent of the risk of injury or death.”

16. Forces Watch stated in written evidence that:

“recruitment is at the heart of armed forces engagement with education”

17. Forces Watch say that the Ministry of Defence and the armed services will claim that they do not ‘recruit’ in schools. They go on to say that a ‘significant proportion’ of armed forces visits to schools include careers related events and activities, such as presentations about the work of the armed forces.

18. They stated that the Ministry of Defence’s claim that the armed forces only visit schools following an invitation from a member of staff means very little as any external visitor to a school would need an invitation and the armed forces approach schools first to offer their services in order to secure an invitation.

19. However, the Reserve Forces’ & Cadets’ Association for Wales said in their consultation response:

“None of the Armed Forces visit schools for recruitment purposes and only attend by invitation from the school who welcome us in to support school activities that form part of the National Curriculum. As an integral part of society and an

⁵ The Petitioners, Forces Watch and Ban Schoolyard recruitment submitted further written evidence in preparation for oral evidence on 18 June 2013, which is also considered here along with written responses to the consultation.

important highly valued public service these visits have proven to be of great benefit to pupils, as demonstrated by the fact that the Services attend several thousand schools each year. Equally such visits add to school career advisers collection of employment options that are on offer in order to prepare their pupils for work in the future. In simple terms it is about providing careers advice and only that. As you will appreciate the Armed Forces present significant opportunities in terms of skills and trades and future careers.”

20. The Reserve Forces’ & Cadets’ Association for Wales also sought a view from the Ministry of Defence, who told them:

“it is not possible to sign up for the Armed Forces outside of a recruitment office and all recruitment into the UK Armed Forces is voluntary and no young person under the age of 18 years can join our Armed Forces unless their application is accompanied by the formal written consent of their parent or guardian. Comprehensive written and verbal guidance on the terms and conditions of Service and rights to discharge during the selection process are provided at various times before the parent or guardian provides their formal written consent for the individual to enter Service.”

21. The then Children’s Commissioner for Wales stated that there was a contradiction between the Ministry of Defence’s statements that the Army does not recruit in schools and the UK state party’s submission under Article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. This states that Army recruiting initiatives include presentations in schools by Army careers advisers, a variety of Army youth team and Army recruiting team activities, attachments and visits to units, school fairs, Combined Cadet Force, advertising and marketing initiatives, membership of the Army’s Camouflage Club. The Children’s Commissioner said:

“This contradiction needs to be resolved. I believe clarity is needed so that headteachers, pupils and parents are aware of the nature of MoD activity and can make informed decisions on whether or not they wish to be exposed to any presentations in school.”

22. The Children’s Commissioner also said:

“In presenting career options, the MoD has a responsibility to present a balanced and accurate picture. [...] I do have some reservations regarding the MoD’s ability to offer a balanced picture of military life. This statement is based purely on anecdotal examples of MoD online materials aimed at young people, for instance the Camouflage site:
<http://army.mod.uk/camouflage/default.aspx>”

23. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council’s response said that it should be pointed out that advice is different to recruitment.

24. Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC), said that, while they regret recruitment at age 16:

“Nevertheless, it must be accepted that the armed forces offer accredited and lawful professions.

“As a result, we believe that, from a school’s perspective, it is important to try to differentiate between recruitment on the one hand, and providing career advice on the other.”

Disadvantages and advantages of the military accessing schools

25. In their written evidence, Forces Watch said that:

“Military engagement with young people should be avoided as it is not benign and is potentially damaging to the future interests and opportunities of those young people they seek to influence”

26. They said that based on information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, in secondary schools in Wales:

“The greatest number of visits made by the army were focused on mock interviews and interview techniques, general presentations (which include a section on the types of careers available in the military), and Personal Development Activities (generally outdoor, team-building activities). Presentations and activities exclusively focused entirely on careers (such as stalls at careers fairs, presentations about early entry to the military, etc...) made up 7.5% of visits (equivalent to nearly 100 visits).”

27. The statistics provided by Forces Watch also appear to show that general presentations (which includes a general overview of army work with a section on the types of careers available in the army) and specific career focussed activities accounted for 28.5 per cent of visits to schools in Wales. The remaining visits were related to interview techniques, teambuilding, leadership, curriculum enrichment, army focused workshops, citizenship presentations, enterprise, fitness and sport and mentoring.

28. As outlined earlier, the Deputy Minister for Skills wrote to the Committee on 4 December 2012. His letter said:

“Restricting armed forces access to schools, as this petition suggests, may possibly disadvantage some young people as they will not have access to information about a full range of careers, including some which offer training of a very high quality.”

29. This view was echoed by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in their response to the consultation.

30. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) said that:

“The engagement of young people with the Armed Forces may help some young people with self-esteem and confidence issues, as well as developing resilience and wider skills and may encourage them to take part in healthy (mainly outdoor) activities. This can also include helping them to make informed decisions as to whether they want to join the Armed Forces. It is important that young people should receive objective guidance on joining the Armed Forces. Many young people use the opportunity of visiting Armed Forces to help inform their decisions for a future career.”

31. UCAC, said that they:

“...would defend pupils’ right to receive information regarding the armed forces as a possible post-18 career path, in the context of receiving information about various other career paths. It would be inappropriate to try to prevent pupils from receiving such information, which could lead to a career.”

32. A head teacher from an independent school, who wished to remain anonymous, said in his response:

“Provided the armed forces are treated equally to other organisations in careers advice and their access to schools, I can see no objection to their visiting schools or being included in careers advice. Many aspects of the armed forces provide valuable career pathways that do not involve combat – engineering, medicine, logistics, personnel etc – that can be of great benefit to individuals within a well-structured and disciplined working environment.”

33. He went on to say:

“There seems to be a dangerous element of discrimination here – if the forces’ 16+ recruitment is considered morally wrong, should not all prospective employers or recruiters be scrutinised for their ethics before having any involvement in schools – retailers of goods produced in sweatshops or tested on animals, banks, companies with questionable investment policies, organisations with a bad environmental record etc etc?”

34. The Reserve Forces’ & Cadets’ Association for Wales said in their response to the consultation:

“...such visits add to school career advisers collection of employment options that are on offer in order to prepare their pupils for work in the future. In simple terms it is about providing careers advice and only that. As you will appreciate the Armed Forces present significant opportunities in terms of skills and trades and future careers.”

And:

“If Armed Forces careers advice in schools is denied this will discriminate against exactly the specific group of people that the Welsh Government are trying to support and help in terms of finding and securing employment.

“Today, the Armed Forces are considered small in number and exposure to the career opportunities is limited to a handful of careers offices across Wales and advertising. I believe

restricting the impact will deny young people in Wales the chance to consider the Armed Forces as an option for their future careers.”

35. The Ministry of Defence view, obtained by the Reserve Forces’ & Cadets’ Association for Wales said:

“Similar contributions to schools are made by police, fire, ambulance, emergency and other services and professions. The Armed Forces get numerous informal and official requests from schools every year and get no special treatment or access, but neither should they be excluded or discriminated against.”

36. In their response, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) said:

“We have concerns about the principles underpinning this petition. What are the implications of a government influencing, whether explicitly or implicitly by means of advice, which legally permitted careers young people should receive information and advice on? Would support for this petition set precedents by which other careers, such as banking, might be deemed unacceptable in the future? Indeed, might it even mean that schools should not allow any elected politician into school in case he/she may recruit new party members?”

37. They went on to say that “a total prohibition on all contact with representatives of the Armed Forces could be interpreted as being an attempt to influence choices”.

Targeting areas of deprivation

38. The petitioners said in written evidence:

“Obviously, as a poor country, Wales is being targeted by the Army.”

39. Forces Watch stated that maintained schools in Wales are more likely to be visited by the Army than other areas of the UK, but this is not the case for independent schools.

“Within Wales schools with a more disadvantaged demographic [...] were not visited a significant number more times than those with less deprived demographics. However, the high

average number of visits during a year compared to other areas in the UK suggests that there is increased engagement of the armed forces with local authority schools in Wales as a whole compared to, for example, the South East of England where the number of visits is substantially lower.”

40. They also say during 2010-11 and 2011-12 the army had visited 163 (74 per cent), of state secondary schools in Wales.

“To put this in a national context, in London all three armed forces had visited less than 30% of state schools and in Scotland over 85% were visited by the three forces. The army alone visited Welsh state schools an average of twice a year during that period (compared with just once in London for all three services and twice in Scotland).”

And:

“...of the 21 independent schools registered with the Welsh Independent Schools Council, only six, or 29% have been visited by the army compared to 75% for state schools.”

41. However, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council said that locally there was no evidence that the armed forces target their activities in schools in more deprived areas.

Military ethos

42. In Appendix 1 of Forces Watch’s written evidence, they said:

“In the past six months there has been an increase in visible efforts to integrate the military into national education policy.”

43. They cite the (UK) Department for Education's military skills and ethos programme; the UK Government’s announcement of a budget of nearly £11m to expand cadet units into state schools; the Military to Mentors programme and say:

“The Department for Education states that “these programmes will give young people the opportunity to develop teamwork, self-discipline, resilience and leadership” but do not explain what is meant by 'military ethos' or why a military framework will develop these skills more effectively than one based in other 'service' contexts. Furthermore, that there may be aspects

of a 'military ethos' that are not appropriate to education does not seem to have been considered.”

Educational attainment of recruits

44. While the petitioners recognised that education in the armed forces is not a devolved matter, they said that the level in the numeracy and literacy curriculum in the armed forces is lower than the recommended level for that age group. While they did not provide a direct source for this information, they referred to the Wolf Report.⁶

45. The Report was commissioned in England by the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove to consider how to improve vocational education for 14-19 year olds and promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes. The Report recommended that students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A*-C in English and/or Maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or provides significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success.

46. Evidence by Child Soldiers International submitted to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee and the Petitions Committee stated that the Army recruits far greater numbers of minors than the other two services combined and the large majority of these now undertake Phase One training at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate (AFC Harrogate). They stated that they consider that provision at AFC Harrogate to be inadequate as it consists solely of Functional Skills rather than GCSE qualifications.

47. In her response to the consultation, Jill Evans MEP said that:

“Armed forces recruitment concentrates on poorer schools more often, as well as on young people with low educational attainment.”

Legislation

48. The Petition as submitted called for the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces should not go into schools to recruit. The petitioners recognise that powers in

⁶ [Review of Vocational Education, the Wolf Report](#)

relation to the armed forces are not devolved and ask that schools should be encouraged not to invite them. However, in their written evidence, Leon Russell and Sara Hawys say:

“The outcome of the petition has broader relevancy than the question of MOD recruitment in schools, and may serve as something of a test-case for the depth of autonomy of the Welsh legislature, following the March 2011 referendum for increased powers.

“We feel that this petition faces Welsh politicians with the dilemma over whether to truly represent the interests and values of the people of Wales, or to simply serve other interests. Has the Assembly become sufficiently democratic that it legislates on behalf of the welfare of the children under its care, in opposition to the requirements of the UK military-industrial complex?”

49. They go on to say:

“The question of Ministry of Defence recruiters’ pursuit of minors in the school environment offers a very clear case for legislative change on moral grounds alone.”

Oral and Further Evidence

50. In the light of the consultation responses, the Committee agreed to take oral evidence initially from the Petitioners, from Forces Watch and from Ban Schoolyard Recruitment, organisations campaigning on the subject.

51. Subsequently, the Committee visited Prestatyn High School and spoke informally to a group of students as well as taking oral evidence from one of the teachers at the school Mr Alex Barons, and from three of the pupils Daisy Major, Sebastian Collings and Holly Hinson.

Oral Evidence from Petitioners, Ban Schoolyard Recruitment and Forces Watch

52. On 18 June 2013, the Committee took evidence from, Arfon Rhys, Cymdeithas y Cymod (lead petitioner); Sara Hawys, Ban Schoolyard Recruitment and Emma Sangster, Forces Watch. The full

transcript of the session is available on the National Assembly's website.⁷ In summary, they said:

- no other country in Europe or NATO recruits 16 year-olds;
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child places a responsibility on the Minister for Education and Skills to ensure that careers information in schools is balanced and complete;
- the education of children who are in the army is poor;
- while the armed forces work in schools is considered as 'promotion' this leads to recruitment. There is no evidence that children are 'signed-up' but work in schools is part of the process;
- in terms of outcomes, it is not possible to specifically determine whether the armed forces work in schools is successful in recruiting young people;
- armed forces exhibitions present an exciting picture for school children, but there is no discussion about the effects of killing and combat risks. The violent side of the armed forces is not represented;
- providing balance in careers advice is not necessarily the role of the armed forces, but others should provide an alternative view;
- the armed forces put huge resources into their work in schools;
- careers Wales should be responsible for providing careers advice on the armed forces;
- there is no educational value in visiting an armed forces base;
- depending on the information that is used, it appears that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have a higher proportion of armed forces visits to schools and there are indications that certain areas of Wales and Wales as a whole has a greater number of school visits.

53. Following the meeting, the Committee Chair wrote to the Rt Hon Mark Francois, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans seeking more information on the desired outputs from engagement with young people in schools.

⁷ [Transcript](#) of Petitions Committee Meeting of 18 June 2013

54. The Minister's response⁸ reiterated that the armed forces do not recruit in schools and only attend schools at the invitation of the schools themselves. The Minister also stated that while the Ministry of Defence do not record performance indicators for all their educational activities, a sample survey taken between June and July 2013 found that 74 per cent of schools believed that the Army provided impartial careers advice (sample of 303). Sixty-one per cent of those who thought that the Army may not be impartial felt they would still invite the Army to provide careers presentations.

55. The Chair also wrote to Careers Wales asking for information on what other types of employers go into schools. In response⁹, Careers Wales said that as part of its Education Business Partnership role, they facilitated links between employers and schools to support schools delivery of the Careers and World of Work Curriculum framework. The types of employers linked with schools through Careers Wales were "many and varied". In the previous year, Careers Wales worked with over 21,000 employers. The armed forces, as with many other organisations, offer their services direct to schools.

Forces Watch New Report

56. On 28 October 2013, Forces Watch published a report, *The Last Ambush? Aspects of mental health in the British armed forces*¹⁰, which claims that, compared with older personnel, younger recruits are significantly more likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); to drink at levels harmful to health; and to behave violently on their return from war. Young recruits from disadvantaged backgrounds are at greatest risk. In response¹¹, the Ministry of Defence was reported to have said that:

"It is also important to put these figures in context as independent research shows the rates of PTSD are similar to rates in the civilian population and the rates of suicide are actually lower."

⁸ Letter of 30 September 2013 from Rt Hon Mark Francois, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans to William Powell AM. Considered at Committee's meeting on [11 November 2013](#).

⁹ Letter of 8 August 2013 from Ray Collier, Interim Chief Executive Careers Wales to William Powell AM. Considered at Committee's meeting on [10 December 2013](#).

¹⁰ [The Last Ambush? Aspects of mental health in the British armed forces](#)

¹¹ The Guardian website, [Young British army recruits at higher risk of PTSD and suicide, says report](#), 28 October 2013 [accessed 9 April 2015]

Prestatyn High School

57. On 11 November 2013, the Committee visited Prestatyn High School where it met privately with a group of students who were studying the Public Services course and a group of students who were studying an Army Based course at the school, and attended Kinmel Camp on a regular basis.

58. Later that day, the Committee met formally in Prestatyn High School and took oral evidence from Mr Alex Barons, an associate senior leader in the school, Ms Daisy Major a year 11 pupil, from Mr Sebastian Collings a pupil and member of the school council and from Ms Holly Hinson one of the head girls at the school and also a member of the school council.

59. In the private meeting Committee Members and students discussed the petition and explored views on the armed forces work with schools. During this discussion a number of issues emerged:

- pupils did not feel that they were being 'recruited' at events involving the armed forces and did not feel under pressure to join up;
- although there were some reservations, the pupils concerned were very strongly in favour of the armed forces having the opportunity to go to schools;
- there were varying opinions about the correct age for contact with the armed forces. Some pupils thought that 16 was too young to make career decisions while others thought that it was good to start thinking about these matters at a younger age;
- pupils felt comfortable asking questions of the armed forces. Sessions provided in school tended to be more professional and may have glossed over some of the negative aspects but pupils believed they received honest answers to questions when talking to individual soldiers;
- it was important that pupils were able to ask searching questions on difficult issues, particularly for a career like the armed forces where the stresses and consequences of the job were of a different nature to most other careers;
- pupils were critical that they did not receive information about careers and professions from other employers, particularly in

the public sector. The Police, Fire Services, the National Health Service were mentioned specifically in this context.

60. A number of these points were reiterated in formal oral evidence later that day.

61. Mr Alex Barons, an associate senior leader in the school told the Committee:

“I completely agree with a lot of the points that you have raised about getting other groups in to promote their professions. The school has a lot of freedom in terms of how much it gets people in to do things. The army is very willing and keen to come in; therefore, there is a lot of opportunity to come in because it is willing to do so.”

He went on to say:

“...getting other services in—especially other public services—can be trickier. If businesspeople have to give up their time, it costs them money and that can be difficult. In this school, particularly, we have good relationships with a lot of local entrepreneurs who come in and provide entrepreneurial workshops for the pupils before they go out to work experience and things like that. Those are often very successful. So, they have some opportunities. However, it would be very helpful for people who work as careers advisers and those who co-ordinate ‘Careers and the world of work’ in schools to have guidance or framework from the Government to say which people should be coming into schools.”

62. Ms Daisy Major a year 11 pupil told the Committee she was aware of the need to avoid glamorising the forces:

“I just think that we do have access to other things, like I said, with the ambulance service coming in for work experience day and crucial careers and stuff. However, I think that there is an aspect where the army is glorifying it and making it look like it is better than it is. If it brought along people who could explain the risks of entering the army and the things that could happen, that would make it more balanced.”

63. Mr Sebastian Collings a pupil and member of the school council told us:

“Personally, I think that it is a good thing, because it would not be as strong as it is today if it did not recruit. It has to go somewhere to find people to go into the army. I agree with what you are saying in that it should not be forced upon students, but it should be providing a realistic view of what the army will be like. ... I think that they should do more realistic forms of army recruitment, giving people the choices in schools to go to experience it themselves, as I did. We camped with the proper TA, which opened my eyes to see that it was not for me, but if other people had the opportunity to do that, they could decide for themselves whether it would be for them, instead of just doing a day on the field that does not really show you what the army is really about.”

64. Ms Holly Hinson one of the head girls at the school and also a member of the school council pointed other advantages:

“... They get GCSEs and qualifications out of it, which they would not normally get in school, so it is really quite helpful. [...] I could leave school straight away and go with them and get the qualifications and stuff. So, it does help. School does take us on a lot of things. I do not think that the army should stop recruiting because it is really handy.”

65. While agreeing that having the army in the school could be helpful, Mr Barons also spoke of the need to ensure that their role was not glamorised and that guidance on this would be helpful:

“...there has to be a realistic view; it cannot be glamorised. It has to be a kind of open and honest thing. I think that that is very true, but I think that that is also very true of all professions. Anyone who comes into a school tries to promote their profession. I tell them all how wonderful teaching is, and how it is the best career in the world and that they should do it. I love my job, but it is not going to be for everyone. We all have a tendency to glamorise what we do, and that will be difficult to rule out completely. However, there has to be guidance on who should come in to promote their career choices in school.”

66. However, he believed that teenagers were able to see through any apparently glamorous aspects:

“When you are dealing with teenagers, you will know that they are quite savvy at teasing it out for themselves. ... Given that we are in an era of such mass media, people and teenagers can either see the glamorous side of the army or they can make a judgment for themselves from things that they can see on the internet or television about the not-so-glamorous side of the army.”

67. He returned to the need for more guidance for schools:

“That is, I think, why it is really good that this petition has come before this committee, because, hopefully, as a result of that, there may be some guidelines as to what schools should do in terms of the army, but maybe also other public services in terms of them coming in. That would be something that, as schools, we would appreciate.”

The Committee’s View and Recommendations

68. Any employer will legitimately target their recruitment efforts in the way they consider most appropriate to meet their needs. However, the armed forces are unique in that they are the only employer where recruits accept, as a normal function of their employment, that they may need to harm or kill other human beings. Relatively high risks of injury or death are not unique to the armed forces but asking recruits to deliberately put themselves in positions where these risks are maximised is also different to most other jobs. From this perspective, inviting the armed forces into schools should perhaps be treated with considerably more care than other potential employers.

69. Despite these fundamental differences, joining the armed forces is a legitimate and, for many, an appropriate and fulfilling career choice. Indeed many of the roles in the forces do not involve combat or even a significantly higher risk of injury or death than other similar fields of employment.

70. Some Members of the Committee share the petitioners’ grave concerns that the armed forces use school visits as a recruitment tool and that their visits are targeted on areas of relatively high

deprivation. There does seem to be evidence that the armed forces disproportionately visit schools in areas of relatively high deprivation. However, there is no compelling evidence that shows that the armed forces deliberately target schools in these areas. Moreover preventing the forces from visiting schools, as the petitioners wish, could disadvantage some young people, including those from less affluent backgrounds, from accessing careers and training of a very high quality.

71. While there is no compelling evidence that schools in areas of relatively high deprivation are deliberately targeted by the armed forces, the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in these areas is not clear.

We recommend that the Welsh Government considers whether further research is needed into the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.

72. It would be naïve to believe that in visiting schools the forces have no interest in projecting themselves as providing interesting and accessible career opportunities. However, the evidence we have received from schools, pupils and education authorities is that the fine line between informing pupils of potential career choices and actively recruiting pupils is one that is not crossed. The pupils we spoke to in Prestatyn did not feel pressured into joining the forces and wanted the visits to continue. Indeed, in oral evidence the petitioners themselves and their supporters agreed that there was no evidence that young people are actually recruited in school or that the armed forces work in schools is successful in attracting recruits.

73. The petitioners have argued that on moral grounds alone there is a case for preventing recruitment in schools, but this is a slippery path. Moral arguments can also be made against other types of employment and employer. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that visits to schools are balanced and conducted in a way that allows pupils to ask and receive honest answers to their questions. Schools should also be concerned to ensure that the often very necessary work of the armed forces is not overly glamorised and that the risks are clearly explained.

74. However, we believe that young people, with the support and guidance of their teachers are more than capable of reaching their

own judgement on the morality of the armed forces role. Indeed, they should be encouraged to think about these issues when the forces visit schools.

75. Despite this, what came across very clearly to us from our visit to Prestatyn High School was that schools would welcome further guidance on inviting the armed forces into schools to ensure that visits are balanced and appropriate. We agree that this could be a sensible improvement.

We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework to ensure that guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role.

76. As a side issue, what was also clear from our visit to Prestatyn High School is that other employers, particularly in the public sector, may not be as active, or successful, as the armed forces in explaining the career opportunities they provide. Small businesses may also find that the cost of visiting schools is prohibitive.

We recommend that the Welsh Government gives further consideration to how schools, businesses and employers can best be supported to ensure that a diverse range of businesses and employers visit schools to provide pupils with information about the career opportunities they offer.

Conclusion

77. We are extremely grateful to the petitioners for submitting this petition. It has raised a very legitimate area of concern about the recruitment of young people by the armed forces. We are sympathetic to those concerns and agree that there is a need for continuing vigilance to ensure that the legitimate role of informing pupils of the work and role of the armed forces does not become a naked recruitment vehicle.

78. We are conscious that our recommendations do not go as far as the petitioners would like on this occasion. However, we do not believe that the case has been made for an outright prohibition of the armed forces from schools in Wales at present.

79. We would like to place on record our thanks again to the petitioners, to those who responded to our written consultation and to those who gave oral evidence, in particular pupils and staff at Prestatyn High School.

Annexe A – Distribution List for Written Consultation

- Sample of secondary schools – urban, rural, area of disadvantage, affluence.
- *Teachers' unions:*
 - o National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
 - o Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
 - o National Union of Teachers (NUT)
 - o National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
 - o National Union of Teachers, Wales (UCAC)
 - o Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
- Church in Wales Education Service
- Catholic Education Service
- Careers Wales
- Children's Charities
- Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Children in Wales
- Action for Children
- The Adolescent & Children's Trust
- Barnardos Cymru
- NSPCC Cymru
- Save the Children
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Royal Forces Cadets Association for Wales
- Armed Forces Careers Office
- *Faith groups:*
 - o Baptist Union of Wales
 - o Cytûn

- Church in Wales
- Roman Catholic Church
- Evangelical Alliance Wales
- Free Church Council of Wales
- Buddhist Council of Wales
- Sikh Council UK
- Reform Judaism
- Muslim Council for Wales
- Inter-Faith Council for Wales
- Methodist Church in Wales
- Orthodox Wales
- Presbyterian Church of Wales
- Orthodox Mission Wales
- Archbishop of Wales
- Baha’I Faith
- Hindu Temple Whitchurch
- South Wales Jewish Representative Council
- Shree Swaminarayan Temple
- Fellowship of Reconciliation (petitioners)
- British Humanist Association
- National Secular Society
- Welsh Independent Schools Council
- End Child Poverty Network Cymru
- Welsh Local Government Association/Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- Bevan Foundation
- Oxfam Cymru
- Race Equality First

Annexe B - List of Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1310>

<i>18 June 2013</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Arfon Rhys	Cymdeithas y Cymod (Lead Petitioner)
Emma Sangster	Forces Watch
Sara Hawys	Ban Schoolyard Recruitment
<i>11 November 2013</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Alex Barons	Associate Senior Leader, Prestatyn High School
Daisy Major	Pupil, Prestatyn High School
Sebastian Collings	Member of School Council, Prestatyn High School
Holly Hinson	Head Girl, Prestatyn High School

Annexe C - List of Consultation Responses

The following people and organisations responded to the Committee's consultation. All responses can be viewed at

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=4793>

<i>Person or Organisation</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Reverend Gwynn ap Gwilym	PET(4) SAR 01
Fellowship of Reconciliation	PET(4) SAR 02
Children's Commissioner for Wales	PET(4) SAR 03
Dr Kelvin Mason	PET(4) SAR 04
ASCL Cymru	PET(4) SAR 05
Ban Schoolyard recruitment	PET(4) SAR 06
Dr Gwyn Williams	PET(4) SAR 07
Dorian Williams	PET(4) SAR 08
Meeting of Friends in Wales	PET(4) SAR 09
Tim Hart	PET(4) SAR 10
John Williams	PET(4) SAR 11
Llandrindod and Pales Local Quaker Meeting	PET(4) SAR 12
Vale Youth Forum	PET(4) SAR 13
Reverend R. G. Morris	PET(4) SAR 14
Hefin Jones	PET(4) SAR 15
ATL Cymru	PET(4) SAR 16
Amie Duggan	PET(4) SAR 17
Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Wales	PET(4) SAR 18
Teacher who wished to remain anonymous	PET(4) SAR 19
West Carmarthen Association of Independent Churches	PET(4) SAR 20
UCAC	PET(4) SAR 21
Jill Evans MEP	PET(4) SAR 22

<i>Person or Organisation</i>	<i>Reference</i>
WLGA	PET(4) SAR 23
Forces Watch	PET(4) SAR 24
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	PET(4) SAR 25
S.W. Edwards	PET(4) SAR 26
M. Angharad Roberts	PET(4) SAR 27
Child Soldiers	PET(4) SAR 28
Conwy County Peace Group	PET(4) SAR 29
Mererid Hopwood	PET(4) SAR 30

Annexe D - List of Written Evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed at <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=4793&Opt=3>

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Meeting Considered</i>
Jeff Cuthbert AM, Deputy Minister for Skills	15 January 2013
Petitioner	15 January 2013
Background Paper from Witnesses	18 June 2013
Rt. Hon. Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans	11 November 2013
Careers Wales	10 December 2013
Petitioner	10 December 2013