

Petitions Committee

Consultation on petition P-04-432 Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools

Response from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru

Response to request for information from the Petitions Committee with regard to Armed Forces and Schools.

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 17,000 heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL Cymru has members in more than 90 per cent of secondary schools in Wales. This places the Association in a unique position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of secondary schools.
- 2 **Q1:** Do you have any concerns about the Armed Forces giving career advice in schools or do you welcome such advice?
 - *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?*
 - *Feedback from members suggests a mixed picture at present- some Governing Bodies have adopted a policy of not involving the Armed Forces in careers events, whilst individual pupils showing an interest are welcome to participate in army/navy/air force activities. Other schools have a policy of involving the Armed Forces in career events whilst prohibiting explicit recruitment activity.*
 - *Many schools use the Armed Forces as a learning resource for team building and outdoor activities.*
- 3 **Q2:** What are the benefits and disadvantages of the Armed Forces giving career advice in schools?

- *It ensures equality of opportunity to those students who wish to pursue a career in the armed forces*
 - *It allows students who may not previously have considered a career in the armed forces to have access to that information*
 - *Whilst it could be seen as tacit approval for the armed forces, in reality it is no more than ensuring that a full range of employers are represented.*
- 4 **Q3:** What impact, if any, would restricting armed forces access to schools have on young people's access to information about Armed Forces careers?
- *Schools have to be careful to remain politically neutral on all matters – the role of school is to enable students to gain information on such matters as careers rather than to seek to influence the choices made by the students. A total prohibition on all contact with representatives of the Armed Forces could be interpreted as being an attempt to influence choices.*
- 5 **Q4:** Do you have any evidence that the Armed Forces target their activities in schools in more deprived areas?
- *We have no evidence to that effect.*
- 6 **Q5:** Do the Armed Forces work differently in independent schools than in local authority schools?
- *The feedback from members suggests a broadly similar approach in schools in both sectors, with the independent schools more likely to have Army/Navy Cadet Forces as a school activity.*
- 7 In conclusion, we would suggest:
- there are too many regulations already bearing on schools and there is no good reason to add another one about this
 - the matter should be left to individual schools and their leaders when arranging for careers advice
 - there should be no presumption that the armed services or any other group have a right of access, but equally
 - there should be no prohibition on careers advice being given on any legal and decent occupation (the latter criterion being decided by the school)
- 8 I hope that this is of value to your consultation. ASCL Cymru is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.



Gareth Jones, ASCL Cymru Secretary