I am submitting to the call for evidence for the Education (Scotland) Bill, on behalf of Boarding School Action. We are a campaign group who aim to raise awareness of the harm caused by boarding education, and ultimately hopes that boarding - especially early boarding - will be phased out, as is recently the case in Rwanda. I believe that any discussion ‘inequalities of outcome’ ought to consider the effects of raising children in institutions, and challenge the validity of institutions which have charitable status, but which have been shown to have negative effects emotionally on children and do not operate within the framework of the rights of the child.

In making this submission I will focus on two main points:

1) The effect of boarding education on inequalities of education outcome
2) Concerns surrounding the practise of placing children from challenging backgrounds in boarding institutions.

1) As director of Boarding School Action, I wish to argue that placing children in boarding schools is fundamentally damaging to equality. All private education, of course, segregates children according to economic background, but in a boarding environment this is so much worse because the children actually live there; children from different economic backgrounds do not mix at all. Moreover, the potential emotional of leaving home at an early age can cause psychological splitting which it has been suggested can lead to a lack of empathy. Therefore I suggest that boarding schools give wealthier children an advantage in terms of measurable educational attainment, but a disadvantage in terms of their ability to understand the needs of others in society, and therefore add significantly to social injustice.

2) There is a growing tendency for Boarding Schools to seek to justify their charitable status by offering bursaries to so-called disadvantaged children. This is very problematic for us. Firstly, the numbers are tiny, nowhere near enough to justify the charitable status. Secondly, there is no evidence that this is ultimately beneficial, research carried out by Dr Clement De Chaisemartin of underprivileged children in French boarding schools showed that only those who were more academically
capable to begin with improved in such institutions. Thirdly, the UNCRC, article 18, states that governments should do all they can to help parents raise their children, removing them to boarding schools contravene this. We would argue that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should be supported and helped within their families and communities as far as possible, not removed to elite institutions which then claim tax breaks and charitable status because of them.

I hope that, where relevant, our organisation will be considered to take part in meetings or have the opportunity to make an oral submission on these matters. Thank you for reading my contribution,

Sally Fraser, Director, Boarding School Action

sallycfraser@outlook.com, 0131 5554583