

PE1603/T

Young Scots for Independence Letter of 9 January 2017

Young Scots for Independence (YSI) writes to the Public Petitions Committee (PPC) on PE no.01603 (*Ensuring greater scrutiny, guidance, and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland*)¹. We wholeheartedly support the Petitioners in their recommendations to the PPC, and we would like the following letter to be considered as evidence by the members PPC in the ongoing hearing of PE no. 01603.

The YSI is the largest political youth organisation in Scotland, with some 12,000 members. Our members range in age from 14 to 30 and we have representation from every demographic within this age range. While the YSI is an SNP affiliated organisation, we have the capacity to formulate policy, lobby and campaign independently of our mother-party. We did not write this petition, nor help formulate it and our involvement in this petition is our own and is not associated with the SNP.

We fully support the Petitioners in their aims and have a number of concerns with the status-quo in relation to military visits to schools in Scotland.

- We are concerned that there is a lack of political balance in the content of military visits to schools. In are particular we are disturbed by the evidence submitted to the PPC by the Scottish Youth Parliament suggesting that visits by the armed forces promote a glamourised view of service and a form of hyper-masculinity that makes many feel uncomfortable.
- We believe that the sparse evidence submitted to the PPC from Scottish local authorities indicates a lack of cohesion and organisation on this issue. We feel that a lack of clear guidance on an issue of such importance concerning child rights is regrettable. We urge the members of the PPC to consider rectifying this as soon as possible.
- We do not believe that the Armed Forces should be recruiting in schools. We disagree with the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) definition of recruitment as the final act of signing up or making a legal commitment but instead believe that recruitment is a process, of which school visits play a vital part.
- We believe that the armed forces is a unique employer in the disadvantages and opportunities that a armed forces career offers young people and see no issue with treating visits by the military to schools as different from visits by any other public or private sector body.

We believe that Scotland should move into line with international and national human rights bodies recommendations on these issue. We consider it shocking that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has recently once again found current armed forces practice to be lacking in regards to their relationship with young people, especially after the UK government faced criticism over this issue before in 2008.² We hope that the members of the PPC give special credence to the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland's support for '*clear national guidance*' on this issue.

As previously stated, the YSI is the largest political youth organisation in Scotland and many of our members are in education. We believe that ensuring national guidance, consultation and scrutiny of military visits to schools in Scotland would only seek to empower young people. We are saddened by the legislative void in this area, by the status-quo lying out with national and international child's rights organisations recommendations and by the lack of political balance in the delivery of content by the armed forces in their visits to schools. We feel that the Petitioner's proposals satisfy our concerns on this issue.

We find the Petitioners argumentation, evidence gathering and proposals to have been extremely compelling and reasonable. We are thrilled to see this issue under-consideration by the PPC and would urge greater discussion, research and policy proposals on the matter. We wholeheartedly approve of the Petitioners aims and their work thus far. We hope that the members of the PPC agree with us that their work is commendable, that they take action to address our concern and move towards the Petitioners desired outcome.