

Petitions Committee

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

Response from anonymous

I am the Head of an independent school in North Wales. I represent independent schools on the ASCL Cymru council but am responding to the consultation in a personal capacity.

Unless the practice of recruiting 16 year olds is deemed to be illegal it should have no bearing on the relationships between schools and the armed forces.

The armed forces can often provide young people from deprived areas the support and structure and create life expectations that they might not otherwise receive from their circumstances. I don't have any first hand evidence regarding the recruitment practices of the armed forces.

CCF and ACF units have the support and endorsement of the government as providing a very worthwhile education experience to complement the academic aspect of schools' work.

Schools as employers are invited to support the work of the reserve forces, and it seems perverse that we should support the armed forces as employers but not as providers.

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.

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?

We involve the armed forces in our careers convention on the same footing as other organisations, and the army have provided team- building days for our Sixth form pupils which have been very valuable. As a boarding school we have a number of children from forces families as boarders, and we have day pupils from local MOD bases on Anglesey and the Conwy valley. The armed forces have an excellent reputation for high standards, self-discipline and public service, and it would be perverse to bar them from schools. I would expect the adverse publicity for the Welsh government to be significant if this petition were to be enforced through legislation.