



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 18 Mehefin 2013
Tuesday, 18 June 2013

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The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Elin Jones	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins) The Party of Wales (substituting for Bethan Jenkins)
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Sara Hawys	Ban Schoolyard Recruitment
Arfon Rhys	Prif Ddeisebwr, P-04-432, Atal Recriwtio i'r Fyddin mewn Ysgolion Lead Petitioner, P-04-432, Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools
Emma Sangster	Forces Watch

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Siân Hughes	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Matthew Richards	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.02 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.02 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da—good morning, all, and welcome to this meeting of the Petitions Committee. Normal housekeeping rules apply. We have had apologies this morning from Bethan Jenkins, and we are due to be joined shortly by Elin Jones, as her substitute.

9.03 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**
**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[2] **William Powell:** For the next item of business only, between now and approximately 9.10 a.m., I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public, in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[3] Are all Members content? I see that all Members are content.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 9.03 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 9.03 a.m.*

*Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor yn gyhoeddus am 9.16 a.m.
The committee reconvened in public at 9.16 a.m.*

**Trafodaeth am Sesiynau Tystiolaeth 4 Mehefin 2013: P-04-457, Yr Ymgyrch
Caplaniaeth Elusennol a P-04-474, Cefnogaeth i Wasanaethau Caplaniaeth y
GIG**

**Discussion of Evidence Sessions on 4 June 2013: P-04-457, The Charitable
Chaplaincy Campaign and P-04-474, Support for NHS Chaplaincy Services**

[4] **William Powell:** This discussion of our evidence sessions, tabled for 4 June, was postponed until today due to time pressures. We have access to the full transcript of those interesting scrutiny sessions. I found the scrutiny sessions to be rewarding and useful. I believe that there are several things that we can take from that, but I would welcome the views of colleagues as to how you would like to see us proceed.

[5] **Joyce Watson:** I found those sessions interesting—I learned many things that I knew nothing about previously, which is always good. I believe that several things flow from those sessions. We have only heard from two witnesses, and I do not believe that that is enough to be able to draw conclusions. Therefore, I would like to write to the individual local health boards, to see whether they record any data in relation to the use of the chaplaincy service. I believe that it is also worth writing to the Minister for Health and Social Services, informing him of what we have done so far, and of the views that have been expressed, and asking him whether he has anything to add to that. Time constraints—and I will go with the flow—might make it rather difficult to arrange further oral evidence sessions, but I am open to that if other people believe that it has an advantage. The witnesses talked about funding, and the obvious thing to do is to ask the Government whether there is any thinking going on about a change to the funding basis for that service.

[6] **William Powell:** I hear what you say about time constraints, but, if we can accommodate them, I would like to see us consider calling in the Royal College of Nursing, and maybe the NHS Confederation. They were referenced in those previous sessions, and I believe that they would, potentially, have something valuable to contribute. However, we need to consider that in terms of the logistics. Russell, you have indicated.

[7] **Russell George:** I was not here for the last session, but I have read the transcript, and

it seemed to be an interesting session. I note that there is no plan to make any change to the chaplaincy service; I believe that we had that confirmation from the previous Minister for health as well. I am not against spending further time on this, but, on the other hand, we have looked at both of these petitions quite extensively—more so than most petitions. Therefore, I suggest that we write to the Minister, with the transcript and a summary of the oral evidence, but I would not be in favour of doing too much more work on this, as we have already taken it quite far.

[8] **William Powell:** I am advised that we do not have capacity this term for any further oral evidence. If that was the desired route, it would have to be in the autumn. Possibly, it would be sensible for us to await the feedback from the Minister on the transcript and the airing that the issues have had.

[9] **Elin Jones:** Like Russell, I was not at the last meeting when you took the evidence, but on reading the evidence, two issues strike me. First, there is some lack of clarity as to how the funding is actually spent by the local health boards—the nature of the service that is provided. I can see here that £250,000 is spent per year by Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, which has three large district general hospitals and lots of other smaller community hospitals—or it does at the moment. I think that it would be quite good to ask one or two health boards perhaps—not all of them—to provide a clear indication as to how the funding is spent where there are several district general hospitals. Does Hywel Dda Local Health Board, for example, have a service at Bronglais, or is it only available in Glangwili. How do you cover the—

[10] **William Powell:** That strand would be quite interesting to explore, particularly to see whether the money is hypothecated or spent in different ways.

[11] **Elin Jones:** Yes. Perhaps we could also ask the Government for its view—whether it requests that local health boards have this as a funded service in some way, or whether it is a matter purely for local health boards. With many other issues, it is a matter purely for local health boards to decide what they do in their local area. Is this an issue that the Government expects local health boards—

[12] **William Powell:** Is it put into the remit letter, kind of thing?

[13] **Elin Jones:** Yes. After that, the committee could consider whether it wants to listen—

[14] **William Powell:** Whether to broaden or to close it.

[15] **Russell George:** That is fine.

[16] **William Powell:** That is a good suggestion. We can build that into our next set of actions. I think that that is it on those two petitions for now.

9.22 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[17] **William Powell:** The first is petition P-04-487, A Welsh Government deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh home buyers. This petition, along with a couple of others this morning, has been submitted by Sovereign Wales, which is an active group of citizens in Cardiff. It has collected 17 signatures. The wording of the petition is as follows:

[18] ‘We call on the Welsh Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to offer an annual deposit loan scheme for first time Welsh house buyers and/or renters. It is proposed that Welsh mortgage companies would also need to take part in this scheme and agree to ask for no more than 5% of a deposit on any suitable property (as well as offer a low interest own what you pay for mortgage).’

[19] Further details of the scheme are outlined within the text of the petition, and we also have some very interesting and relevant comparisons with practice in the Peak district and the North York Moors National Park Authority areas. We have not considered this petition to date, so it is open for us to take forward as we wish. I think that the first step, surely, is to write to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration to seek his views on these proposals.

[20] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[21] **William Powell:** That is excellent.

[22] We now move to P-04-488, The right to decide: an end to the compulsory study of Welsh to GCSE. This petition was submitted by David Fitzpatrick, with the support of 51 signatures. The wording of the petition is as follows:

[23] ‘We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to change the policy which makes it compulsory for pupils in English medium secondary schools in the Principality to study Welsh to GCSE level. This should be a matter of choice for the pupils and their parents.’

[24] I would be interested to see what the Minister for Education and Skills would say in response to that. Is that our first sensible action?

[25] **Joyce Watson:** Yes.

[26] **William Powell:** Let us do that. Let us write to Leighton Andrews to seek his views.

[27] We now turn to P-04-489, A National affordable and priority housing Act of Wales. This petition was also submitted by Sovereign Wales, with the support of 28 signatures. The wording of the petition is as follows:

[28] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to create a National Housing Act of Wales to regulate the building of new houses in accordance with sustainable, affordable local and national needs and capabilities: to be regulated by an exclusive independent Welsh Inspectorate and Welsh housing projections panel.’

[29] Again, this is a very contentious issue in several parts of Wales. This Sovereign Wales petition is clearly outlining a set of actions that could assist in the provision of housing across Wales. There are some parallels with the national park authorities in England—the Peak District National Park Authority and the North York Moors National Park Authority have been referenced once again. Russell?

[30] **Russell George:** I just think that, in line with our normal procedures, we should write to the Minister to seek his views—this would be the Minister for Housing and Regeneration in this case.

[31] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and that is the same person we will be writing to in connection with the earlier petition. It is worth noting that the housing (Wales) Bill is expected to be introduced in the autumn term. So, all of these matters are coming together at a

very useful time to inform potential policy making. Good.

[32] We move now to the next petition, which is P-04-490, Antiretroviral Medication in Cardiff. This petition was submitted by Joerg Thieme, and it collected 150 signatures. Indeed, we received the petition just last week on the steps of the Senedd. It reads as follows:

[33] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to act in regards to the very limited supply of antiretroviral HIV medications. Recent changes by the Cardiff University Hospital means that every single patient receiving antiretroviral medications has to come either to the hospital pharmacy with restricted opening times or opt for home delivery. Stable patients with good adherence are seen every 4-6 months for an appointment with the consultant yet distribution of medication is limited to a monthly supply only. The minister of health does not feel responsible and does not step in. Patients should receive a fair distribution of medication that is according to the guidance of the UK HIV association.’

[34] Now, we had the opportunity to speak to the petitioner just last week, when he and colleagues came for the presentation. They elaborated on some of these points. I propose that we write to the Minister for Health and Social Services and also to the relevant local health board, which is Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board, because there was some evidence of different messages coming through—e-mails have been forwarded in that regard also. Are colleagues content with that approach? Russell?

[35] **Russell George:** Yes, Chair; I would be content with that. I think that it is important that we write to the LHB as well, because we had a good discussion with the group last week, and I thought that it is a very sensible petition. It is one that we should take forward.

[36] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The real impact on the lives of individual patients is clear in this particular policy that seems to have come forward in the Cardiff and Vale area. It will be interesting to see the responses that come through to our letter. I see that colleagues are content with that.

[37] We move now to the next petition, which is P-04-491, A National Bank of Wales and complementary Welsh currency. This petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales, and it has the support of 43 signatures. It reads as follows:

[38] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to help establish a National Bank of Wales / Banc Cenedlaethol Cymru that would seek to operate within a new modern, responsible, sustainable and transparent Welsh banking code of conduct. We also call for a complementary Welsh currency to be established by the bank: similar to the C3 complementary currency in Uruguay and the Swiss WIR, and issued to interested SME’s, the self-employed, industry, farmers and traders.’

[39] The petition goes on to state:

[40] ‘We believe that in the face of the global economic mismanagement seen in recent years especially, the Welsh Government needs to show economic accountability and leadership by encouraging and promoting debt free money in the public and state creation of money and by promoting currency innovation and sustainable banking as promoted by movements such as Positive Money. We believe that a Bank of Wales would be a perfect opportunity for Wales to demonstrate such economic innovation and leadership in the world. An independent transparent Welsh Monetary Committee containing a mixture of non-politically affiliated experts and a citizen observer panel could act as an advisory body between the bank and the Welsh government on all relevant matters.’

9.30 a.m.

[41] This is our first consideration of this petition. I think that it is a fascinating proposal and I would be interested to see what Mrs Edwina Hart would say in response to it.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** As there is an element of finance here, I think that we would need to write to Jane Hutt as well.

[43] **William Powell:** I would be happy for us to write to both Ministers, or do colleagues consider that it is a matter for the First Minister, given the depth of the proposal? I am not quite—

[44] **Russell George:** Let us write to both Ministers first.

[45] **William Powell:** Yes, and if they feel that they need to refer it, they will do so.

[46] **Russell George:** Yes.

[47] **William Powell:** Excellent. It is a very interesting proposal with some interesting international comparisons as well. Good.

[48] The next petition is P-04-492, Diagnosis of autism in children. This petition was submitted by the Pembrokeshire branch of the National Autistic Society and has collected 902 signatures. It reads as follows:

[49] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to: ensure timely diagnosis for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD], regardless of where they live, so that children with autism can be supported and lead fulfilled lives; and review implementation of and ensure compliance with the NICE guidelines on recognition, referral and diagnosis of children and young people on the autism spectrum as part of the Welsh Government’s refresh of its ASD Strategic Action Plan.’

[50] I am aware that the Minister for Education and Skills is due to make a statement imminently on related matters, from his response to a question that I raised last week in the Chamber. Also, we are due to receive this petition at 1.00 p.m. today on the steps of the Senedd, and I think that quite a significant party of parents and children will be coming from Pembrokeshire, so I would very much appreciate the committee’s presence there.

[51] At this stage, I think that we should write to the Minister in accordance with normal practice. Are colleagues happy with that approach?

[52] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed.

[53] **William Powell:** Good. I look forward to seeing you later at the presentation.

9.33 a.m.

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[54] **William Powell:** We move on now to the next petition, which is P-03-262, Wales Peace Institute. This petition was submitted by the Welsh Centre for International Affairs in November 2009. At that time, it had collected over 1,500 signatures. It reads as follows:

[55] ‘We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to investigate the potential for and

practicality of Wales having a Peace Institute concerned with Peace and Human Rights, comparable with those supported by state governments in Flanders, Catalonia and elsewhere in Europe’.

[56] We most recently considered this petition in January 2012 when we wrote to the cross-party group on human rights and peace and we have its response in our papers today. I think that we have possibly reached a crossroads with this petition. I would appreciate Members’ input about the next steps, because there are a number of things that we could do. Do colleagues have any reflections on this at this stage? Joyce, did you indicate that you wished to speak? I see that the light on your microphone is on.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** No, I did not, but I moved my papers and the light came on; it is so sensitive. However, as you say, we have reached a crossroads, and I do not know whether there is any point in going any further, but I am happy to go along with the majority. There has been a meeting and consideration by the cross-party group. I am easy; if people feel that they want to give further consideration and write the report and discuss it, I will go along with that. If it is the case that everyone has decided that we have gone as far as we can, and want to close it, I will go along with that as well.

[58] **William Powell:** This petition started back in the third Assembly; it has been around for a long time and a lot of issues have come to light. So, in a sense, I would like to see a short, focused piece of work to draw these strands together and then we will have something that harvests all the work that has gone on. However, I appreciate colleagues’ input into this.

[59] **Elin Jones:** I am very happy to agree to that. The last paragraph of the petitioner’s correspondence to the Chair states that

[60] ‘This petition has been discussed at length for over three years and been subjected to greater scrutiny than any other. It is time for a decision.’

[61] Obviously, this committee cannot decide to set up a peace academy or not. It is not in our nature or our budget to do that.

[62] **William Powell:** The only decision that we could come to at the moment would be to close it, and I am not sure that we are quite ready for that.

[63] **Elin Jones:** I would be happy to follow your recommendation, Chair.

[64] **William Powell:** If we consider capacity and can produce a short report, along the lines of the cricket report, given that it has some parallels and has, of course, provoked quite a lot of additional interest in the matter, then that might actually serve the interests of the petitioners, even if they would not appear to be content with such an approach. I would certainly back that, and if colleagues are like-minded, then let us go ahead on that basis.

[65] The next petition is P-03-150, National Cancer Standards. This petition was submitted by Rhondda Breast Friends back in July 2008 and has to be one of our more mature petitions. At that time, it had 43 signatures in support, but there was a much larger, related petition that had the support of 1,475 signatures. We last considered this petition back in April and we wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services. It was his first involvement as Minister following his recent appointment, and his response is in our public papers. There was also a Welsh Conservative debate on cancer services that some colleagues took part in as recently as last week. Again, we have a couple of options here, and I would appreciate colleagues’ views. Clearly, closing it is an option, given the way in which things have moved on and the level of compliance with cancer standards. On the other hand, there are some issues to clarify, possibly. Do colleagues have any views on the best way forward with this

one?

[66] **Russell George:** I have looked at the letter from the Minister and I do not feel that we are in a position to close this yet. I think that we should perhaps write to Public Health Wales first and clarify its role in relation to patient information in terms of cancer services.

[67] **William Powell:** That was one of the things that I thought might usefully be done ahead of any final actions on this. I am happy to do that if Members are content with that approach. I will write to Public Health Wales for that clarification. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[68] The next petition is P-04-366, Closure of Aberystwyth Day Centre. This petition was submitted by Pamela Ellis in February 2012 and collected 10 signatures, but an associated petition collected approximately 6,000 additional signatures. It calls upon the Welsh Government to consider specific actions in relation to the day centre in Aberystwyth. A number of concerns have been expressed there as part of a wider regeneration scheme that many of us are familiar with, no-one more so than Elin Jones, who is taking part in our committee today.

[69] We last considered the petition in April, when we wrote to Ceredigion County Council. Its response, together with a number of further points of information from the petitioner, is in our public papers. We are grateful to Ceredigion County Council for having supplied us with the report of the independent reviewer. Clearly, a lot of detail has been captured there. The one issue that is raised by the petitioners that seems of particular concern is the fact that the review was carried out only through the medium of English. Given the age profile and the chosen or preferred language of many of the service users, I would have thought that that was more than a little irregular, if that is borne out in confirmation from the council. I do not know what colleagues think with regard to that matter, but I am minded to seek clarification, given that that issue has been raised by the petitioners. Are there any other substantial issues that colleagues feel would be usefully taken forward?

[70] **Elin Jones:** I am fine with asking that question of the council. May I just check one thing? What are all these papers here today? I can see the report from the council, and I can see the response from the petitioners, but what are these other two bits of correspondence? There is one that starts, 'Dear Sian'—who is Sian?

[71] **Ms Stocks:** She is a member of our clerking team. *[Laughter.]*

[72] **Elin Jones:** Okay. Then there is one that starts, 'Dear councillor'.

[73] **Ms Stocks:** The petitioner submitted four pieces of evidence.

[74] **William Powell:** They have been very active, to be fair to them.

[75] **Ms Stocks:** There is the e-mail from Martin Shewring.

[76] **William Powell:** Martin Shewring is a member of the local group.

[77] **Ms Stocks:** There was the e-mail from David and Meg Kirby, there was the letter, and then there was the response to the review of the daycare centre. Those four pieces of evidence were submitted by the petitioners.

[78] **William Powell:** They are additional strands that have come in from people who are active in the local campaign group in Aberystwyth. Are there any issues in particular to pick up in those e-mails or submissions, Elin?

[79] **Elin Jones:** No. It is a matter for this committee if it wants to progress its role as a conduit between the petitioners, local people, and their county council. If the Chair wants to progress with that, I am happy to go along with that.

[80] **William Powell:** I am happy to write regarding the specific issue that has been raised. I am conscious that, as you say, we have been acting as a conduit. However, in doing so, I believe that we have elicited some quite important responses. Again, the one issue that strikes me as being perhaps of greater substance than any of the others is with regard to a time frame for the delivery of the shelter over the entrance. That was a big issue in a previous time, when we visited—you were present, Elin, as were Bethan and I. I believe that Joyce may have visited independently. That was an issue of considerable interest, and I think that we need to keep an eye on that one. However, for the moment, the single issue that seems to me to be the most peculiar, and which may have had some impact on the validity of the work, is to do with why everything was carried out through the medium of English in a setting where you would not expect that. The suggestion also is that it is in contravention of the council's policy, which I am sure it is. Therefore, if we are happy to write just on that basis for the moment, then I am happy, on behalf of the committee, to sign off such a letter. I see that Members are happy; thank you.

[81] We now move to petition P-04-408, Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service. This petition was submitted by Helen Missen in July 2012, and it collected 246 signatures. It begins:

[82] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to fund the Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service in Wales to the same degree as the Adult Eating Disorder Service in Wales.’

[83] We last considered this petition in April, and we wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services, and indeed to the cross-party group on eating disorders, which is chaired by our colleague Bethan Jenkins. The responses, along with further information from the petitioner, are in our public papers today.

9.45 a.m.

[84] We have previously agreed that this would be an appropriate petition on which to take oral evidence. I am sure that the committee is still of that mind. In the context of the wider work programme, I think that it is clear that that would have to be in the autumn term. Are colleagues still happy with that approach, with the proviso that it takes place in the autumn? As we plan such an oral evidence session, we would look to invite the petitioners themselves so that they can tell their stories and raise their issues. We will also need to invite the Minister for Health and Social Services. In the meantime, we should probably write to the Minister for Health and Social Services to highlight the continued concerns that we have received from the petitioners with regard to the adequacy of funding and the level of service for young people with eating disorders. If Members agree, with the proviso that it takes place in late September or early October, then we will take that forward. So, we are agreeing an oral evidence session on child and adolescent eating disorder services for the autumn term. I see that everyone is in agreement. Excellent.

[85] We now move to P-04-460, Lives not Airports. This petition was submitted by Jeremy Derl-Davis in March 2013, with the support of 51 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to consider amending its practice with regard to the delivery of specialised medicines to patients through the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee. There are some very strong comments there, expressing extreme dissatisfaction with the current arrangements. We last considered this

petition in March. We wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services and to WHSSC, and we have their responses here. I think that it would be sensible for us to write to Mr Derl-Davis to seek his views on this matter. Also, I am aware that his wife has been extremely unwell recently. I am sure that colleagues would wish her a steady recovery from her illness, which I believe is related to the condition that has motivated the petition. Are colleges happy for us to write in that way?

[86] **Russell George:** As I read the words of this petition, I fully agree with it. From pieces of casework that I am working on, I have seen the evidence myself. The petition says that the procedures currently in place are fundamentally flawed; I think that that is right. It says that they are damaging and extremely distressing to patients; that is right. It also states that the system needs to be made simpler to navigate, which is right. I am looking at the correspondence that we have received back. We have received some correspondence from the Minister. We wrote to the Minister on 21 March and got an answer back on 4 April, which was a reasonable time frame to get an answer. However, we also wrote to WHSSC on 21 March and it took two and a half months to get an answer back. That does not surprise me in the slightest, because that is the length of time that it is taking to get back to patients. So, I would like to take this petition a little bit more seriously and I wonder if there will be an opportunity at some point to take oral evidence from WHSSC on this issue.

[87] **William Powell:** We could drill down into what its procedures are. Clearly, a response time of two to two and a half months is very disappointing indeed—

[88] **Russell George:** But not surprising.

[89] **William Powell:** No. Clearly, your views are formed by your experience in casework. I have some other relevant examples. It is not appropriate to share those now individually, but I take on board exactly what you have said. The first thing, as a courtesy, is to get back to the petitioner with the responses. I do not think that there is an appetite to close this by any means. We need to take on board what you have said, and we will do so.

[90] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, could we not write to ask why it took the period of time that it took for it to reply? Would that not probably be best in terms of a first move, so that we have an explanation, at least, and then we can see whether we accept it? We can also then pass that on to the petitioner.

[91] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I will write to the petitioner. I am also very happy to write to express our concern about that turnaround on the correspondence, and to include some of the wider issues that have come to our attention.

[92] **Elin Jones:** I agree with Russell's comments, and I think that we should reserve judgment at some point, taking this a step further and possibly inviting WHSSC to a meeting of this committee to scrutinise this area of work in a bit more depth.

[93] **William Powell:** Yes; some of the specific issues.

[94] **Elin Jones:** The letter from the Minister is quite dated now, and there are several actions that he has taken since then.

[95] **William Powell:** Yes, in the intervening time. I think that we need to include that to the petitioners.

[96] **Elin Jones:** The statement that the Minister has made could be sent to the petitioner, although I do know that he already knows of that work. However, his attention needs to be drawn to the fact that the letter from the Minister is dated, and that there has been some focus

on this general area of work by the Minister since then.

[97] **William Powell:** Exactly. We will ensure that what the petitioner receives from us is a comprehensive response. I am happy to do that.

[98] **Russell George:** I am just a bit conscious that I do not want my suggestion of oral evidence to be taken to be lost, so how are we taking that forward?

[99] **William Powell:** It will not be lost. Absolutely not. It has been parked just for the moment while we write to WHSSC expressing our considerable dissatisfaction and disappointment with the turnaround time on the correspondence, making some of the other related points that need to be made.

[100] **Russell George:** Okay. Thank you.

[101] **William Powell:** We now move to petition P-04-463, Reduction of Salt Levels in Food. This petition was submitted by Harry Hayfield in March 2013, and collected 11 signatures. Mr Hayfield is clearly very concerned with the potential health impacts of salt levels in food, particularly for people with particular lifestyles in Wales. We have had confirmation, in the form of a legal brief, that this matter is within our area of competence to consider further. In the light of that, I will write, with your support, to the Minister for Health and Social Services to seek his views on the petition. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[102] We now turn to petition P-04-396, Emergency Life Support Skills (ELS) for Wales Schoolchildren. This petition was submitted by the British Heart Foundation in June 2012, and it collected 4,000 signatures. The petition calls upon the National Assembly

[103] ‘to urge the Welsh Government to make ELS skills training, including vital cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) a compulsory part of the curriculum at secondary schools in Wales’.

[104] We last considered this petition in April, and we wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills. As you can see, we have a pretty clear response from Leighton Andrews with regard to this matter. Again, we seem to have come to something of a fork in the road, really, on this petition. There is absolute clarity from the Minister on his stance in relation to this, and that he has no intention of making this a compulsory component. The only thing that we could possibly do that would have some merit to take this further would be to write back to Leighton Andrews thanking him for his clear comments with regard to the petition, but request to be kept updated with regard to any Welsh baccalaureate review. I think that the alternative to that is also fairly clear: that we move to close the petition. I would appreciate a steer from Members as to which way they would prefer to go.

[105] **Joyce Watson:** I actually supported this petition, as did a number of us in this room, I think. Having said that—and that would be my position—we have had a clear answer. Given that we have had such a clear answer, and given that the person who makes this decision is the person who said that they would not include it in the baccalaureate, there is nowhere else for us to go. In that case, sadly, I think that we will have to close the petition.

[106] **William Powell:** That is my sense, also.

[107] **Joyce Watson:** There is nowhere else to go. However, on closing it, I see some merit in writing to him, asking for an update. We have gone as far as we can and, sometimes, we have to be honest about that. This is one such case.

[108] **William Powell:** I just need to ask for a reminder: did we ever engage or involve the national association of school governors in Wales with regard to this petition?

[109] **Ms Stocks:** I am not sure; I would have to check.

[110] **William Powell:** I do not say that because it could make it compulsory, but just in terms of raising the profile of this issue. In relation to another matter that we will be considering today, the key role of governors in relation to what goes on in schools has been flagged up quite strongly. It seemed to me to be something that we could do, even if it was combined with closing the petition—I share Joyce’s view that that is probably what we need to do—but it might be a useful outcome in terms of flagging up the issue. However, in terms of moving to close, with regret, that is probably the thing that we have to do, unless colleagues have a different view. I see that colleagues appear content with that. However, I would like to explore the scope for sharing that with governors across Wales; it might at least give the matter some additional profile and a useful boost.

[111] Staying with the theme of education, we move on to P-04-467, January Exams. This petition was submitted by A-level students in March 2013 and collected 90 signatures. As you will recall, it had its origins in the government and politics conference that was held at the National Assembly. We last considered this petition back in April. At that time, we wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills. His response and further information from the petitioner is in our public papers. Of course, things have moved on with regard to this in relation to the written statement that came in with regard to the position after January 2014. We now know that there will be no further January assessment opportunities for AS and A-level, and learners will have just one opportunity to resit each individual AS or A2 module each summer and that the best mark will count towards the final award. So, it might be useful for us to write to Leighton Andrews to seek more information as to what is motivating the removal of this opportunity for the January assessment, just to drill down into his thinking. What are colleagues’ views? We also need to share the written statement with the petitioners, if they have not had it flagged up to them elsewhere.

[112] **Joyce Watson:** My view is much the same as for the previous petition. We have to share the written statement. That is for sure; definitely. I am quite happy to ask for the reasons, although I am sure that he has made a statement on the reasons why, somewhere; I recall reading it. We can wait for those. However, as he is the only person who can make a decision on it, and he has made a decision—whether we agree makes no difference—we have gone as far as we can. We have to be honest and say that.

[113] **William Powell:** Absolutely, particularly with expectation management in mind.

[114] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, that is an important part of what we do here, and I think that we have. That is my view.

[115] **William Powell:** We need to move towards closure.

[116] **Joyce Watson:** We do. It is never about whether we agree or disagree with what we hear; it is about us doing our role here and managing expectation. Quite frankly, we have gone as far as we can, except for getting additional pieces of information.

10.00 a.m.

[117] **William Powell:** This has been a sharper, more focused consideration, because of the nature of events and ministerial announcements. So, we are moving to close the petition and share the written statement with the petitioners, as agreed. Are colleagues content with that? I see that they are.

[118] The next petition is P-03-263, List Stradey Park. The petition was submitted by Mr V. Jones in July 2009 and collected 280 signatures, with almost 4,500 signatures collected on an associated petition. We last considered this back in March. We wrote to the Minister for Culture and Sport and the petitioners, and we have their responses in our public papers today. At the last meeting, it was agreed that the committee should write to the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee highlighting the issues, to help to inform its consideration as part of the heritage Bill, including the issues arising from consideration of the Stradey petition. This issue has been around for a significant time. Clearly, there have been quite a lot of developments on the ground as well with regard to Stradey park. It strikes me that it might be of relevance for us to write to the Minister for Culture and Sport, as mentioned in some of the correspondence, asking if Cadw would consider the merits of designating the pitch as a kind of sport registration, within its powers. Would colleagues support that initiative? Russell, do you have any views on that?

[119] **Russell George:** Yes, that is fine, Chair. I support that.

[120] **William Powell:** Okay. We are moving towards the final phase of consideration on this one, particularly with a fresh pair of ministerial eyes on the matter and Cadw having clarified its position, which will have some merit as well.

[121] The next petition is P-03-317, Hijinx Funding for Arts. This petition, as colleagues will recall, was submitted by Mike Clark in March 2011 and collected 1,893 signatures. It flagged up the plight of Hijinx theatre with regard to its revenue funding. Hijinx has a long history of developing opportunities across Wales for people with learning difficulties to be included at all levels of artistic activity. We last considered this in February and we wrote to the petitioners. The response from Hijinx is in our public papers. I think that it is pretty clear that there is no prospect of additional Welsh Government funding at this time, for the reasons that have been stated. Given that, and the level of work that we have undertaken on this, we need to move to close this one, for reasons that Joyce has outlined with regard to several previous petitions that have come to this phase. Are colleagues content that that is the right approach? Okay. Let us do just that.

[122] The next petition is P-04-477, Support for the Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill. This petition was submitted by Councillor Dilwar Ali in April of this year and had the support of 1,119 signatures. The petition reads:

[123] ‘We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to proceed with the Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill.’

[124] This was a relatively recent petition presentation. I am sure that colleagues will recall the background issues with Councillor Ali’s own family experience of dog attack. There were also a number of members of the Communication Workers Union there in uniform who were able to share with us their experience of related difficulties and injuries. It is clearly an emotive issue, as we all understand. We first considered this petition soon after receiving it in April, and we wrote to the Minister for Natural Resources and Food. We have his response in the public papers today. In addition, on 11 July, the Environment and Sustainability Committee will take oral evidence on this and, hopefully, three of the members of this committee who are also members of that committee will be present and able to play a useful part in the session. At this point, it seems most sensible to write to Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, as the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, highlighting Councillor Ali’s feedback with regard to this issue and his disappointment at the approach that has so far been adopted. Do colleagues think that that would be useful, to inform that scrutiny session on 11 July? I see that you do; let us do that.

[125] To move to P-04-454, Call to end Councillor and Assembly Member Dual Role, this petition was submitted by Nortridge Perrott in January 2013, and he collected 52 signatures. As stated in the text,

[126] ‘the petitioner asks the Welsh Government to bring forward legislation to bar the practice currently exhibited by 7 currently serving Assembly Members to hold TWO elected positions simultaneously, namely holding office as a Councillor within the Welsh Jurisdiction and also holding office as an elected Assembly Member in the National Assembly of Wales.’

[127] I repeat what I have previously said, which is that I am a member of a principal local authority, namely Powys County Council, as I have been since 2004.

[128] **Russell George:** I would like to put on record that I am also an Assembly Member and a county councillor. The only thing that I would contribute to this is that I would have thought that the petitioner would be quite pleased with the response in the letter from the Minister on 22 May, because she says that she

[129] ‘will consider the matter carefully ahead of the next elections to the National Assembly for Wales.’

[130] That is the only contribution that I will make on this today.

[131] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The Minister for Local Government and Government Business is clearly minded to give this serious consideration. I am not quite clear, in terms of the wording of the petition, whether or not this also relates to membership of town and community councils, which is an issue that I should probably have raised previously. We tend to assume that this is with regard to county or borough councils, but I am not clear whether that is—

[132] **Russell George:** I would assume that it does, because the petitioner mentions—as long as the information is correct, which we can only assume that it is—that this is applicable to seven currently serving Assembly Members. I cannot recall that we have seven county councillors, so I assume that this also relates to town and community councillors.

[133] **William Powell:** We may need to drill down to establish the figures. That must include such. We could usefully undertake a number of actions here, but I am conscious that it would be more appropriate for colleagues who are not members of more than one of the bodies mentioned to lead on this item. Is there a volunteer?

[134] **Elin Jones:** Like Russell, I find the Minister’s answer quite refreshing in that she is open to considering a potential change in legislation for this. I think that it would be useful, at this point, for us to raise the issue, and possibly the petition and the Minister’s letter, with the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Reform Society to see whether they have, in the past, considered positions on this, because they may well have done so—I do not know—or have they considered anything for the next set of Assembly and council elections? I would suggest that, rather than writing to all of those organisations—I do not know some of those organisations, but I certainly think that the Electoral Commission and possibly the Electoral Reform Society may have an interest in this area of work.

[135] **William Powell:** I would have thought that it would also be sensible for the Welsh Local Government Association to have the opportunity to comment on the issue, and possibly also One Voice Wales, if, indeed, the remit of Mr Perrott’s petition extends to town and community councils, because I think that One Voice Wales is the representative body for those councils in Wales. It is interesting that all sorts of issues around eligibility and duality of candidature are very much in the melting pot at the moment given the contents of the

Queen's Speech and the controversy around people external to Wales deciding the methods of election to this body, and all sorts of related debates. It is very much highlighted at the moment, and we are grateful to Mr Perrott for having highlighted this particular aspect of our democracy. Excellent. This petition definitely has life. Joyce, with your background in local government, you will have some interesting comments.

[136] **Joyce Watson:** I came here as a councillor and, at the earliest opportunity, which was the next election, a year later, I gave that up, simply because I did not want to incur costs for the constituency in a by-election. There are all sorts of considerations that have to be made, and the Minister has made it quite clear that they will be, because this will be widely consulted upon before any decision is reached. I have views on it, and I also think it should be done in such a way that you do not exclude people who currently hold a position as an elected representative from moving onwards and upwards towards a national position. That would be my word of caution in all of this. We did see examples of where people got caught by certain procedures that were in place before. So, that would be my word of caution. The fact that the Minister has responded positively and openly is good, and, yes, I support writing to those bodies.

[137] **William Powell:** I am very encouraged by the whole tone of Lesley Griffiths's letter, and your words of caution with regard to issues around eligibility and the disqualifications Order, which we remember was of such inconvenience to Members of more than one party, because there were a number of people who were potentially implicated in that matter—some potentially and some actually—and that is a matter of public record. I look forward very much to hearing the response from the bodies that we have agreed to write to, and I am happy to sign off that suite of letters on behalf of the committee. Good.

[138] We now move on to petition P-04-435, Wales and Border Railways Franchise 2018 to be Operated on a Not-For-Dividend basis. This petition was submitted by Merlyn Cooper in November 2012 and collected 35 signatures. We last considered this back in April 2013 and we wrote to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and, indeed, the petitioner, and we have a pithy response from the Minister. I think it would be useful if I were to write on behalf of the committee asking for the petitioner to be included in the list of consultees for the future consultation on railways in Wales. Are colleagues happy with that? Good.

10.15 a.m.

[139] The next one is on shopping access, and follows on from our outreach visit to Cardiff city centre earlier in the year. This is petition P-04-438, and was submitted by Mencap Cymru and Ysgol Erw'r Delyn in November 2012 with the support of 55 signatures. It calls upon the National Assembly for Wales to undertake a whole suite of actions to improve quality of life and opportunities for people with specific mobility issues and disabilities. We last considered this petition in April, when we wrote to St David's Centre and Cardiff Council. Their responses are among the papers. We also requested a legal briefing, which we have received as a private paper. I am also grateful to Mr Hunt for clarifying to us in a short e-mail some other specific issues with regard to road crossings, and the requirements in terms of the sound to alert people as to the length of time that it is safe to cross. I think that the most sensible action that we can take is to facilitate a meeting between the petitioners and Cardiff Council to address some of the concerns raised during our outreach visit. Are colleagues happy with that? I see that you are.

[140] Finally, before we move to our evidence session, we have an update on P-04-475, Wanted—Buses for Meirionnydd. This was submitted by Barbara Snowball in April 2013 with the support of 174 signatures. We last considered this in April, and we wrote to the Minister. We have that response, together with further information from the petitioners. On this occasion, I will defer to Joyce Watson, who met with the petitioners very recently. I think

you have a brief update for us on this, Joyce, before we decide what to do with regard to this petition.

[141] **Joyce Watson:** I had quite a lengthy meeting with the petitioners—an hour long. I answered their questions and gave them some help and advice on how to proceed and who to write to, because that is my role as an elected Member in the area. What came out of the meeting for me was that the petitioners were welcoming, as were the people where it was held, namely Barmouth library, and I was well received and well looked after as a member of the Petitions Committee. That outreach work is clearly appreciated by people who get to meet people who are elected and who are members of this Petitions Committee, so that they can give us an outline of why they started the petition, where they are and where they hope to go. They did that extremely well, in a very orderly fashion.

[142] To that end, I found out that the cabinet member for this portfolio on Gwynedd Council had written to the petitioners, saying that he would be looking at reviewing this provision, as a consequence, I think, of their petition and lobbying. That is extremely good news. What would be useful for us and for them to know—I suggested this—is a timeframe for that review, what that review will entail and whether it will satisfy their needs—well, it will to a degree, I am sure—before we think of closing the petition.

[143] The petitioners raised lots of other issues that feed into this, such as the reconfiguration of health services in the area, and the need for joint working between the local health board, the council and others, because education was another factor, and access to education was being constrained by the re-provision or non-provision of bus services. So, it is a much wider issue, and it has far-reaching implications for many aspects of people's lives. I would like to thank all the people involved, particularly the library staff who made me welcome, and the petitioners who took time out of their busy lives to further apprise me of why this petition had been brought about, so that I could feed that back to the committee.

[144] I think that it would be a good idea to write to the Commissioner for Older People in Wales and the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and, because there are issues around using both trains and buses in that area, it might also be worth having some written evidence to see how those two streams are joining up to provide transport in what is a very rural area.

[145] **William Powell:** We are extremely grateful, Joyce, for your taking the time to meet the petitioners; it was obviously a very rewarding visit. I am very happy to agree, on behalf of the committee, to write to both of those commissioners. I suggest that we also add Age Cymru and Disability Wales to the list, because of the specific engagement and focus that they would have. I think that that would be a useful set of actions for the moment. Clearly, there is the option of engaging with this issue further in terms of the outreach visit that we were previously discussing, and, clearly, this petition has significant further life in it. Finally, we need to write to Gwynedd Council to get confirmation with regard to the positive news that you alluded to on that. As I said, thank you very much for that.

P-04-432 Atal Recriwtio i'r Fyddin mewn Ysgolion: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
P-04-432 Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools: Evidence Session

[146] **William Powell:** This is an oral evidence session that we have had scheduled for some time. Bore da a chroeso cynnes—good morning and a warm welcome—to Arfon Rhys, from Cymdeithas y Cymod, and also to Sara Hawys from Ban Schoolyard Recruitment and Emma Sangster of Forces Watch. You are most welcome and we look forward to hearing from you this morning. I ask you to please introduce yourselves for the record, and so that we can check the sound levels, and also to make an initial opening statement. We have a number of questions and we very much look forward to this morning's session.

[147] **Ms Hawys:** Fy enw i yw Sara Hawys. **Ms Hawys:** My name is Sara Hawys.

[148] **Ms Sangster:** I am Emma Sangster from Forces Watch. We work nationally around concerns about the ethical engagement of the military with young people in particular.

[149] **Mr Rhys:** Bore da. Arfon Rhys ydw i, ysgrifennydd Cymdeithas y Cymod. Yn gyntaf, diolchaf i chi, Gadeirydd, am adael i ni ddod yma heddiw, ac i'r pwyllgor am fod yn barod i wrando arnom heddiw. Mae'n beth gwych o ran democratiaeth yng Nghymru bod y cyfle hwn yn dod a bod pwyllgor o'r math hwn mewn bodolaeth.

Mr Rhys: Good morning. I am Arfon Rhys, the secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. First, thank you, Chair, for allowing us to come here today, and I also thank the committee for being willing to listen to us today. It is an excellent thing in terms of democracy in Wales that these opportunities arise and that this type of committee exists.

[150] Mae ffocws ein deiseb ni ar ddau faes sydd wedi eu datganoli, sef addysg a hefyd gofal a hawl y plentyn. Yn syml iawn, rydym yn gofyn i'r Cynulliad i annog Llywodraeth Cymru i annog ysgolion i beidio â gwahodd y fyddin a'r lluoedd arfog i mewn i ysgolion i recriwtio plant. Mae un camgymeriad yn ein deiseb, sef ein bod ni wedi dweud nad yw unrhyw wlad arall yn Ewrop yn caniatáu y fyddin i mewn ysgolion. Mewn gwirionedd, mae nifer o wledydd yn gwneud hynny, ond nid ydynt yn recriwtio yn 16 oed. Dyna'r gwahaniaeth. Nid oes unrhyw wlad arall yn Ewrop yn recriwtio plant yn 16 oed, ac mae hynny hefyd yn wir am wledydd NATO. Nid oes un ohonynt yn recriwtio plant yr oedran hwnnw. Wrth gwrs, nid yw hynny'n ymwneud â'r Cynulliad, ac mae ein ffocws ni yma ar addysg a hawl y plentyn. Rydym wedi rhoi'r papur i chi o flaen llaw, a nid wyf am ail-adrodd y cyfan, ond hoffwn bwysleisio erthygl 13 o Gonfensiwn y Cenhedloedd Unedig ar Hawliau'r Plentyn, sy'n datgan y dylai fod gan blentyn yr hawl i fod yn rhydd i fynegi ei hun, ac mae'r hawl hwn yn cynnwys y rhyddid i chwilio a chael a rhoi gwybodaeth a syniadau o bob math, yn llafar neu mewn ysgrifen neu brint, ar ffurf celf, neu mewn unrhyw gyfrwng arall o ddewis y plentyn. Yr hyn rydym yn ei ddweud yw bod hyn yn gosod cyfrifoldeb ar Weinidog addysg Cymru i sicrhau bod yr wybodaeth am yrfaeod yn gytbwys, ac fel mae'r erthygl yn ei ddweud, bod yr holl wybodaeth yn cael ei rhoi. Ar hyn o bryd, ni chredaf fod hyn yn digwydd, ac nid yw'r fyddin—neu'r lluoedd arfog—yn rhoi gwybodaeth gytbwys i blant.

The focus of our petition is on two devolved fields, which are education and care of and the rights of the child. Quite simply, we are asking the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to urge schools not to invite the army and the armed forces into schools to recruit children. There is one mistake in our petition, and that is that we have stated that no other country in Europe allows the army to go into schools. In fact, many countries allow that, but they do not recruit at the age of 16. That is the difference. No other country in Europe recruits at the age of 16, and that is also true of NATO countries. None of them recruit at that age. Of course, that is nothing to do with the Assembly, and our focus here is on education and the rights of the child. We have provided a paper in advance, and I do not want to repeat all of it, but I would like to emphasise article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children should have to the right to be free to express themselves, and that right includes the freedom to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, orally or in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other medium of the child's choice. What we are saying is that that places a responsibility on the Minister for education in Wales to ensure that the information about careers is balanced, and, as the article states, that all the information is provided. At present, I do not believe that this happens, and the army—or the armed forces—does not provide balanced information to children.

[151] Felly, yr ydym yn gofyn i'r pwyllgor hwn ystyried y ffaith nad yw'r addysg y mae'r plant yn ei chael yn y fyddin yn addysg dda. Mae lefel llythrennedd a rhifedd yn isel iawn, ac mae hynny wedi dod allan yn adroddiad Wolf, sy'n dangos yn eglur nad yw hynny'n digwydd. Felly, mae'n bwysig cadw'r plant yn yr ysgol—dyna yr ydym ni'n ei ddweud. Hefyd, ni chredwn ei bod yn beth da i blant golli diwrnod o ysgol i fynd i weld rhyw arddangosfa gan y fyddin, fel sy'n digwydd yn y Bala ac ym Mharc Margam eleni, oherwydd mae'n golygu colli diwrnod o ysgol a cholli addysg, a dyna yw'n consŷrn mwyaf ni.

Therefore, we would ask this committee to consider the fact that the education that children receive in the army is not a good education. The level of literacy and numeracy is very low, and that has come out in the Wolf report, which shows clearly that that does not happen. Therefore, it is important to keep children in school—that is what we are saying. We also do not believe that it is good for children to miss a day's school to go to an army exhibition, as is happening in Bala and Margam Park this year, because it means missing a day's school and missing out on education, and that is our main concern.

[152] **William Powell:** Diolch yn fawr. First, I believe that I should declare a form of interest, in that, in a former life, when I was teaching, I was for a brief period—in a very undistinguished capacity—a member of a combined cadet force. I was more of a conscript than an enthusiast, but I believe that it would be improper not to declare that on this occasion. I am also a member of the Assembly's armed forces cross-party group, which is chaired by my colleague Darren Millar, although I think that I could be regarded as a fairly inactive member of that group currently. However, I wish to make those two declarations.

[153] **Elin Jones:** Are you a conscript of that group?

[154] **William Powell:** No, I enabled it to exist by giving my signature and my support to enable it to have such status. However, my activity levels have been low up to this point. I wanted to mention that before opening up with some specific questions to take the issue forward. Thank you for the clarification in terms of the content of the petition, as well as with regard to international comparisons.

[155] **Ms Hawys:** May I say something quickly?

[156] **William Powell:** Yes, certainly.

[157] **Ms Hawys:** I wanted to say that there is a distinction between talking about the army and having them in schools. We are not here to show disrespect to the army or to say anything like that—it is just in terms of their being on school premises.

[158] **William Powell:** We have fully understood that. My declaration was probably relevant for context. You are clearly not looking for the abolition of the armed forces, or whatever—you are focused on schools. That is actually my first question. The petition calls on the Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to recommend that the armed forces do not go into schools to recruit. I believe that we have some issues here around definition. What do you define as 'recruitment' in this context?

[159] **Ms Sangster:** You are right to suggest that there is a difference of opinion on what that term means. The MOD and the armed forces publicly say that they are not recruiting in schools. However, we consider that their activities are very much pre-recruitment, or are activities that lead—

[160] **William Powell:** Promotion.

[161] **Ms Sangster:** Yes, it is promotion, and it leads up to recruitment. Many activities are quite general and are aimed at all children. However, some activities are near the recruitment points. Therefore, some young people will go on for insight interviews, for example, which can lead them on to an insight course, which means spending several days at a base in order to see whether they like the armed forces life. Therefore, they are getting quite close to the point of recruitment at that point. If you look at the background documents that inform the armed forces and the MOD's policy in this area, you will see that one outcome—and probably the main outcome—for them is recruitment. However, you have to look at the background documents and at their internal documents for that. For example, in 2012, they published a youth engagement review, which identified three clear outcomes, two of which were defence related, namely recruitment and raising awareness among young people, in a general way.

10.30 a.m.

[162] The third one was linked to the cadets and social or personal development for individuals within the cadet forces. So, I think that you have to look at those documents to understand why the armed forces want to do this activity, why they put a lot of resources and a lot of money into it, and what they see as the outcome.

[163] **William Powell:** Presumably, one thing that would be very interesting, among those background documents, is the key performance indicators and outcomes that they have in terms of targets for interest levels that flow from such visits. I do not know whether any of the documents that you have seen relate to traceable outcomes in terms of particular visits to schools, follow-up interest and eventual recruitment. Is there anything of that level of detail that you have seen?

[164] **Ms Sangster:** I am not aware of that. I think that it would be quite difficult to trace the route of an individual. Another thing to say is that there is certainly anecdotal evidence from individuals within the armed forces who are responsible for this area that their strategy is very much to interest children at a young age with exciting activities. Then, that sows the seed, they build on that and, eventually, some of those young people who will have become interested will want to sign up. Others will be supporters of the armed forces more generally. They have a strategic way of approaching this and they are not providing the activities just for the benefit of the young people. There is a clear outcome for them.

[165] **Mr Rhys:** Fe'ch cyfeiriau chi hefyd at lythyr sydd yn y pecyn gwybodaeth gan Gomisiynydd Plant Cymru, sy'n dweud fod Llywodraeth Prydain wedi datgan i bwyllgor hawliau plant y Cenhedloedd Unedig fod y lluoedd arfog yn recriwtio mewn ysgolion. Mae'r Llywodraeth ei hun wedi dweud hynny, ac mae'n eithaf clir o'r llythyr gan y comisiynydd plant fod hynny'n digwydd.

Mr Rhys: I refer you to a letter that is in the information pack from the Children's Commissioner for Wales, which says that the UK Government has stated to the United Nations committee on the rights of the child that the armed forces are recruiting in schools. The Government itself has said as much, and it is quite clear from the letter from the children's commissioner that that is happening.

[166] **Ms Hawys:** We would not want to trip up on semantics and stuff like that. We have an issue with their presence in schools, not just the whole argument around what is recruitment and so on. Arfon mentioned the children's commissioner; we were the first country in Britain to appoint a children's commissioner. I have seen and spoken to Keith Towler's aides, but not to Keith Towler. The commissioner's work has to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The stance of the UNCRC towards the British military's recruitment of children is very clear—it is a no-go area. So, he should represent that, follow it through and be on board with what we are trying to do.

[167] **William Powell:** Do you feel that it would be helpful to have clearer guidance from the Welsh Government on what can and should go on in schools with regard to this? Do we need clearer definitions?

[168] **Ms Hawys:** At the moment, it is the headteacher's prerogative with regard to who goes into schools. Here we have a political chamber, a democratic sphere and our own elected representatives, who should debate the issue. There has been no formal Government review or parliamentary debate in the past 100 years. It would be interesting to see how some of the parties—especially Labour—could defend something that is morally indefensible and something that I do not think reflects Welsh values.

[169] **Joyce Watson:** As a Labour Member, I have to ask why you targeted one political party.

[170] **Ms Hawys:** We have been in touch with Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats and a few others, and we have had backing from certain Members, but we received nothing back from Labour; nothing. We have not even had a 'Sorry, we cannot get involved'.

[171] **William Powell:** I do not know whether this has been the subject of a group meeting or a party discussion, Joyce, but I believe that you have some other questions to raise in any event.

[172] **Joyce Watson:** I have. The first thing that I will put on the table is that my father was in the army for 25 years. He spent five of those years as a prisoner of war in Germany in trying to defend this country in the second world war. I put that on the table for the sake of clarity. What I do want to ask of the witnesses is what evidence they have that the armed forces do not provide balanced and accurate careers advice. I would also like to ask whether they have made a comparative, if that is the conclusion that they have reached, with other careers advice that is offered within schools.

[173] **Mr Rhys:** Diolch am y cwestiwn. Rwyf yn credu ei bod yn dibynnu, mewn ffordd, ar y wybodaeth yr ydym yn ei gweld. Er enghraifft, roedd arddangosfa gan y fyddin yn y Bala eleni ac ym Mharc Margam. Yn y ddau ddiwyddiad hynny, roedd tanciau a holl offer y fyddin, ac roedd y cyfan yn ymddangos yn beth eithaf bywiog ac atyniadol iawn i bobl ifanc. Rwyf wedi cyfeirio at fideo a wnaeth y bobl ifanc yn y Bala y byddai'n werth i bobl ei weld. Plant ysgol oedd yn yr arddangosfa hynny. Mae plant ysgol mewn noson gyrfaoedd, er enghraifft, yn gweld bod y fyddin yn mynd ag arfau i'w dangos i'r plant. Mae hynny, wrth gwrs, yn creu brwdfrydedd a diddordeb, ond nid ydynt byth yn siarad am faint o ladd sydd yn digwydd a beth yw canlyniad lladd pobl. Gwaith milwr yn y pen draw, wrth gwrs, yw lladd. Yr hyn sydd ddim yn dod drosodd yw'r risg i bobl ifanc mewn rhyfel.

Mr Rhys: Thank you for the question. I believe that it depends, in a way, on the information that we see. For example, there was an exhibition staged by the army in Bala this year, and also in Margam Park. In both events, there were tanks and all the army paraphernalia, and it all had the appearance of something quite lively and attractive to young people. I have referred to a video that was filmed by young people in Bala and which would be worth people seeing. It was schoolchildren who attended that exhibition. Schoolchildren in careers evenings, for example, see that the army takes along arms to show the children. That, of course, creates enthusiasm and interest. They never speak about how much killing goes on and the consequences of killing people. At the end of the day, the work of a soldier is to kill people. What does not come across is the risk that young people face in a war.

[174] **Ms Hawys:** May I also say that my great-granddad was in the merchant navy? He was caught and captured in Norway. This is a separate thing. We are talking about the presence of the armed forces in schools. In terms of the education thing, I wonder what kind

of a country we live in when the only means for a teenager to go on and get education is with a permanent risk of death lurking around the corner. No young person should feel obliged to join the armed forces in order to fill an educational vacuum, nor should the Ministry of Defence be required to fill a gap left by the inadequacies of the educational system. It is the whole issue of saying, 'You can go away, you can get an education and you can do this', but, again, with the risk of death around every corner.

[175] **Joyce Watson:** I would like an answer to the question as stated. You have given me an answer about what you perceive as the inadequacies in the armed forces' information when they hold careers days. That is an opinion that you clearly hold, and that you are happy to demonstrate proof of. My question was: have you compared what you see as imbalanced careers advice against other forms of careers advice? We are trying to do an impartial piece of work here that has value. For it to have value, it has to have at least some comparative information that the army is doing something that is so very different to all the other careers advice available.

[176] **Ms Sangster:** One answer to that is 'no'. We have not done a straightforward evaluation of different public services and the exact detail of how they deliver that advice. However, I think that there is something different about the military in that when someone signs up, they are risking, ultimately, their life. There is a whole number of risks associated with joining up, apart from death: being wounded; the risks associated with going into combat; mental health risks; and the post-service risks of fitting back into civilian society. There are a whole lot of things that could be talked about under those headings. The military is in a unique position because of that. Schools have a particular duty of care because of those risks and the contractual obligations in that when someone signs up, they are signing up for a four-year period at least and they cannot go back on that contract. It puts the military in a particular position and schools should consider their duty of care with particular seriousness, as well as the need to provide a balance. I do not think that the balance can necessarily come from within the military itself: it is going to be presenting one perspective. After all, it is trying to sell its careers and we understand that. The balance has to come from elsewhere, from within the school system and from other groups that have an opposing view. After all, military action is not an uncontroversial, apolitical activity. It always needs to be understood in the political context.

[177] The other thing that is of concern is that the military puts a huge amount of resources into engaging with young people generally, particularly through going into schools. Other public services do not have that level of resources so they cannot compete. The figures that we at Forces Watch put in our submission about the number of visits show that in 2011-12, there were 11,000 visits in the UK as a whole, and in Wales, there were 713 across the different services. Why are they putting all those resources in? That is the important question to ask. What is that agenda and does that agenda fit with the agenda of education?

[178] **Joyce Watson:** Another statement was made about the day off in Bala, which was obviously for a careers convention of some sort. Does that happen for other career conventions? I want to be clear about that. Is that the only opportunity and the only day that is taken off to have an opportunity to decide whether you want a career in a particular direction, or are there opportunities for days off for other careers? I just want some clarity on that.

[179] **Mr Rhys:** Un peth y carwn ei ddweud yw y byddem yn hapusach gweld Gyrfa Cymru yn sôn am y fyddin a'r lluoedd arfog ynghyd â'r holl gyfleoedd eraill sydd ar gael am waith. Mae Gyrfa Cymru yn asiantaeth i roi gwybodaeth uniongyrchol a chyflawn i bobl ifanc ac mae'n gweithredu **Mr Rhys:** One thing that I would like to say is that I would be happier to see Careers Wales talking about the army and the armed forces, along with all the other work opportunities that are available. Careers Wales exists to provide young people with direct and comprehensive information and

hyd braich oddi wrth unrhyw gyflogwr. Byddai unrhyw gyflogwr yn naturiol yn edrych ar hynny. I ateb eich cwestiwn, cyn belled â'n bod yn gwybod, heblaw am y lluoedd arfog sydd â'r adnoddau i gynnal diwrnod o'r fath, nid wyf yn gwybod am fudiadau eraill sy'n barod i roi diwrnod cyfan i blant. Mae plant yn mynd ar ymweliadau i ffatrïoedd o bryd i'w gilydd—mae hynny'n digwydd—ond, cyn belled â fy mod i'n gwybod, nid oes dim ar y lefel hon. Nid oes gan fudiadau eraill yr un adnoddau â'r fyddin.

operates at arm's length from any employer. Any employer would naturally look at that. To answer your question, as far as we know, apart from the armed forces, which have the resources to hold a day of that kind, I do not know of other organisations that are willing to give a whole day to children. Children go on visits to factories now and again—that does happen—but, as far as I know, there is nothing on this scale. Other organisations do not have the same resources as the army.

10.45 a.m.

[180] **William Powell:** Russell George, thank you for your patience. I am conscious of the passage of time.

[181] **Russell George:** I know that we have run out of time, Chair, so I will be quick. In your petition, you talk about 16-year-olds being recruited. To me, 'recruitment' means being signed up. Is there any evidence of children being signed up? Is this happening? Are children making a firm commitment in school, perhaps even without their parents' consent? Is that what is happening?

[182] **Mr Rhys:** Na, nid yw hynny'n digwydd. **Mr Rhys:** No, that does not happen.

[183] **Ms Hawys:** There is no dotted line.

[184] **Mr Rhys:** Nid yw hynny'n digwydd, oherwydd mae'n rhaid i'r rhieni roi eu caniatâd iddynt ymuno â'r fyddin. Nid ydynt, o reidrwydd, yn arwyddo dim yn yr ysgol. Fodd bynnag, nid dyna'r pwynt. Mae recriwtio yn broses sy'n dechrau gyda rhoi gwybodaeth ac sy'n gorffen, yn y pen draw, gydag arwyddo cytundeb. Fodd bynnag, nid yw arwyddo'r cytundeb yn digwydd yn yr ysgol.

Mr Rhys: That is not happening, because parents have to give their consent for them to join the army. They do not necessarily sign anything in school. However, that is not the point. Recruitment is a process that begins with imparting information and ends, ultimately, with the signing of the contract. However, the signing of the contract does not take place in school.

[185] **Russell George:** Thank you for your answer. I think that you are talking about pre-recruitment rather than recruitment. I have clarification on that.

[186] **Ms Hawys:** Once again, we do not want to get bogged down on the recruitment thing; it is the presence in school that we are on about. That is, the presence of the military in schools.

[187] **Russell George:** I understand. In your opening remarks—Mr Rhys, as well—you talked about pupils missing a day of school to go to an armed forces base and therefore missing a day's education. Do you think that there is any educational value in visiting an armed forces base?

[188] **Mr Rhys:** Na, nid wyf yn credu bod gwerth addysgol. Rwy'n digwydd bod yn **Mr Rhys:** No, I do not think that it has educational value. I happen to be an educator

addysgwr fy hunan ac yn gweithio mewn coleg addysg bellach. Felly, rwy'n gwybod yn iawn beth yw addysg yn yr ystyr o ddysgu am lythrennedd a rhifedd ac yn y blaen, ond nid oes unrhyw beth o'r fath yn digwydd yna; dim ond mynd i weld arddangosfa fawr mewn cae maent yn ei wneud. Nid wyf yn gweld hynny fel addysg, heblaw yn gyffredinol bod pob profiad, mae'n debyg, yn y pen draw, yn addysgol; mae pob profiad yn y byd yn addysgol, wrth gwrs. Fodd bynnag, nid oes dim byd sy'n benodol addysgol.

myself and I work in a further education college. Therefore, I know quite well what education is in the sense of learning about literacy and numeracy and so on, but nothing of the sort happens there; they just go to see a large exhibition in a field. I do not see that as an education, except generally that every experience, in the long run, is educational; every experience in the world is educational, of course. However, there is nothing specifically educational.

[189] **Russell George:** If the armed forces changed the way in which they made their presentation and it was not a promotional event, perhaps, as you see it, but that they took them around the base and told them about their work, do you believe that that would be more acceptable, rather than it being more of a presentation?

[190] **Ms Hawys:** In 2008, the National Union of Teachers wanted a vote to ban misleading propaganda in schools. It wanted a more balanced view to be given to people. I came up with the idea of putting a video against it in the schools, when someone goes in to speak for it. However, the army has a lot of trouble signing people up for a second tour. A lot of the time, the statistics are very low for the number of people who go back, because they were given a false, glamorised image of military life.

[191] I will finish quickly by going back to Emma's point on finance. In 2007, the Government spent £89 million on army recruitment in schools. That is almost £7,000 per recruit. That is, again, an increase on the year before. We feel that, when it comes to Government spending aimed at our youngsters' future prospects, there are more positive things that it could be put into.

[192] **Mr Rhys:** I fynd yn ôl at eich cwestiwn am eiliad, y broblem yw bod gennych nifer fawr o gyflogwyr yn ceisio cyflogi pobl, ond nid oes un ohonynt â'r un lefel o adnoddau ag sydd gan y fyddin. Mae hynny'n rhan o'r broblem, yn aml iawn. Mae pobl ifanc yn cael eu dylanwadu gan yr hyn y maent yn ei weld. Heb fod rhyw wrth-ddylanwad i ddangos yr ochr arall iddynt, sef yr ochr wir o ryfel, y lladd a'r hyn sy'n digwydd mewn rhyfel, mae'r darlun yn un ffals iawn. Maent ond yn gweld yr ochr dda o'r hyn maent yn ei wneud. Nid ydynt yn gweld ochr ymladdgar y fyddin.

Mr Rhys: To go back to your question for a second, the problem is that you have a large number of employers trying to employ people, but none of them has the same level of resources as the army. That is very often part of the problem. Young people are influenced by what they see. Without a counter-influence to show them the other side, namely the true side of war, the killing and what happens in war, the picture is a very false one. They see only the positive side of what they do. They do not see the violent side of the army.

[193] **Ms Hawys:** Do they talk about post-traumatic stress disorder and things like that when they go to schools? If so, how much do they tell them about it?

[194] **Russell George:** I would have more questions, but I know that we have run out of time. I take that last point and thank you for your time.

[195] **William Powell:** Elin Jones sydd â'r cwestiwn olaf.

William Powell: Elin Jones has the final question.

[196] **Elin Jones:** Rwy'n gwerthfawrogi ein bod yn cael y drafodaeth hon ar recriwtio i'r lluoedd arfog achos, yn y Cynulliad, rydym yn hala tipyn o amser yn trafod rhai o'r problemau sy'n deillio o adael y lluoedd arfog, megis edrych am swydd neu dŷ neu broblemau iechyd meddwl. Rydym yn hala tipyn o amser yn trafod hynny, felly mae'n beth da ein bod yn trafod y rhan hon o'r *equation* hefyd.

Elin Jones: I appreciate that we are having this discussion on recruitment into the armed forces, because, in the Assembly, we spend a lot of time discussing some of the problems that arise for people who leave the armed forces, such as looking for employment or a house or mental health problems. We spend a lot of time discussing those aspects, so it is good that we are discussing this part of equation as well.

[197] Rwyf am ofyn yn gyflym, o ran targedu ardaloedd difreintiedig yn benodol yng Nghymru, yn eich tystiolaeth rydych yn sôn bod gennych ystadegau bod tua 30% o ysgolion y wladwriaeth yn ardal Llundain yn cael ymweliad gan y lluoedd arfog, ond bod 74% o ysgolion yng Nghymru yn cael ymweliad gan y lluoedd arfog. Gwn fod patrwm economaidd gwahanol iawn yn neddwyrain Lloegr i gymharu â Chymru. A allwch ehangu ar y wybodaeth sydd gennych am dargedu penodol? Os oes targedu penodol yn digwydd, pam ydych yn meddwl bod hynny'n digwydd?

I want to ask quickly, in terms of specifically targeting disadvantaged areas within Wales, in your evidence you mention that you have statistics that about 30% of state schools in the London area are visited by the armed forces, but that 74% of schools in Wales are visited. We know that there is a very different economic pattern in south-east England compared with Wales. Can you expand on the information that you have regarding specific targeting? If specific targeting is going on, why do you think that that happens?

[198] **Mr Rhys:** Fe wnaf ofyn i Emma ateb.

Mr Rhys: I will ask Emma to reply.

[199] **Ms Sangster:** It depends on the level at which you are looking at this issue and also what data set you use. We were using a set of data that was provided under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for the army. However, I happen to know that it is not quite complete, because I have also compared it with a more recent data set that was provided in a parliamentary written answer. It does not go down to the local authority area, but it does look at the different countries within the UK. There is a disparity: in England, although it has 84% of the population, only 78% of schools are visited, while schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland get a higher proportion of visits. When you get down to a more local level, it is difficult to find a correlation at school level between deprivation indices and the number of visits. I think that it is a bit too random, in a way, for that. When you look at a local authority level, there are distinctions. I have a list here that was not in the evidence, but is based on these data, which states that although there are 22 local authority areas within Wales, Rhondda gets 12% and Swansea gets 11% of the army visits. That is way above the average. Other local authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan, Torfaen—sorry, excuse my pronunciation—Gwynedd and other places get—

[200] **Elin Jones:** Perhaps, Chair, we could have that information provided?

[201] **Ms Sangster:** Yes, I will have to type this up.

[202] **William Powell:** That would be extremely helpful for the committee.

[203] **Ms Sangster:** So, it depends on how you look at the information, but there are indications that certain areas in Wales, and Wales as a whole, get more visits, as does Scotland and Northern Ireland.

[204] **William Powell:** I am afraid that the clock is in the process of beating us, but I would like to thank Sara Hawys, Arfon Rhys and Emma Sangster very much.

[205] Diolch yn fawr iawn am y sesiwn y Thank you very much for this morning's bore yma. session.

[206] It has been an extremely useful session to enable us to gain a better insight into the motivation and the context in which you bring the petition forward. It is a bit ironic that we are this morning discussing the issue of army recruitment on a day when I understand that 5,000 current serving members of the armed forces, including hundreds, inevitably, in Wales, are receiving notice of their redundancy. As a committee, we need to be aware of that and take cognisance of that. Thank you very much indeed for today's session and for your full submission. I also thank Emma for undertaking to supply further information that will inform our consideration of the petition at our next meeting, when time will be allocated for our consideration of the evidence. Thank you very much. Diolch yn fawr. Safe journey home.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.55 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.55 a.m.*