

## **Written Response by the Welsh Government to the Report of the Petitions Committee entitled Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools – Report on the Consideration of a Petition**

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I welcome this report, which recognises both the benefits of armed forces' employer engagement in schools and the unique nature of the armed forces as a career.

We understand the value that employer engagement with schools can add in helping young people to decide on career options and to prepare them for the world of work. When young people engage with employers this can help them understand the value of employability skills and also to develop a fuller appreciation of the opportunities that exist in the labour market.

The challenge, therefore, is to increase the number and range of employers working with schools. We have recently awarded a contract for the development of an 'Enhanced Employer Engagement' project, which will provide a model for sustainable school-employer partnerships, and a platform for the delivery of employer-linked activities relevant to a wide range of curriculum areas. This new project will build on existing effective practice, and be delivered in partnership with Careers Wales and will begin roll out during the autumn.

Careers Wales continues to have a key role within its remit to facilitate links between schools and employers. It is also continuing to pursue ESF funding support for activities that will enable young people to experience the world of work and understand the skills and attitudes that employers require.

Ultimately schools, through headteachers and governing bodies, are responsible for decisions about which organisations should be able to visit a school. Restricting armed forces access to schools, as the petition suggested, may possibly disadvantage some young people as they will not have access to information about a full range of careers, including some which offer training of a very high quality. I am therefore pleased with the Committee's findings that it did not find the case had been made for an outright prohibition of the armed forces from schools in Wales at present.

My responses to the recommendations are listed below:

The Committee recommends that:

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government considers whether further research is needed into the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.

### **Response: Accept in Principle**

I accept this recommendation in principle.

The Committee found that despite anecdotal evidence, there was no compelling evidence that schools in relatively high areas of deprivation are deliberately targeted by the armed forces.

I do not believe the findings are sufficient to undertake further research urgently. School engagement with, and visits from, the armed forces can be looked at as part of the roll out of the Enhanced Employer Engagement project. Schools based in areas of relatively high areas of deprivation, including schools involved in the Schools Challenge Cymru programme, will be included in the target group for early engagement in the project. We will consider whether further research is needed in light of experience of the project.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Welsh Government reviews the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum framework to ensure that guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools take account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of view with pupils about their role.

**Response: Accept**

I accept this recommendation. Professor Donaldson's review of the curriculum, 'Successful Futures', identified one of the key purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that people develop as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.

Professor Donaldson's recommendations have been accepted in full by the Minister for Education and Skills. Curriculum changes will be taken forward as part of the implementation of 'Successful Futures', but we will provide further guidance to clarify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in delivering the careers and the world of work curriculum framework; and aim to provide tools and resources (for example best practice studies on work experience) to help schools deliver this aspect of the curriculum.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that the Welsh Government gives further consideration to how schools, businesses and employers can best be supported to ensure that a diverse range of businesses and employers visits schools to provide pupils with information about the career opportunities they offer.

## **Response: Accept**

I accept this recommendation. Qualified for Life, our education improvement plan for 3-19 year olds in Wales, sets out how we will direct Careers Wales to support the development of stronger and more sustainable partnerships between schools and employers. The Enhanced Employer Engagement Project, which will be delivered by Business in the Community and Careers Wales, is central to achieving this ambition. The project will be used to introduce a new model for facilitating school-employer links and will be rolled out from the autumn. Our aspiration is that, as a result of this project, all secondary schools are engaged in new employer partnerships by 2018 and that these partnerships are used to support a diverse mixture of activities.

Welsh Government officials are also working in partnership with Careers Wales on project applications seeking ESF funding, aimed at reducing the number of 11-16 year olds who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education or training by engaging them in employer-linked activities and experiences. The projects will raise individuals' awareness and knowledge of different economic sectors, of employers' expectations and provide information around potential careers within the local and regional labour market. They will also enable individuals to access role models and mentors.

The Welsh Government also sees the provision of impartial and balanced careers information, advice and guidance for young people as a key component of its lifelong learning agenda. This service is delivered through Careers Wales. Schools and Governing Bodies have a responsibility to respond to the needs of pupils and provide them with appropriate careers education provision which is laid out in the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework. This is to develop in pupils the skills necessary to make informed decisions and manage their own career pathways.

Schools should also support pupils by providing access to advice and guidance on potential careers. In this respect all young people in secondary education are entitled to receive a programme of school support from the age of 11 to help them make effective transitions to post 16 learning or employment. Educational visits from a vast range of potential employers take place against this background of provision.

**Financial Implications** – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.