

Holding conversations around anti-militarism during the Scottish local authority elections on 4 May 2017

With the local authority elections looming in Scotland, Quakers have an excellent opportunity to engage with local candidates and make them aware of our concerns around militarisation in schools.

There are several ways this can be achieved, either through local meetings or individuals.

1: Manifestos

For local authority elections the party manifestos are often written at local branch level. This gives Quakers a chance to engage with local branches, firstly to ask for commitments on Cadet Forces* based in or linked to schools, and secondly to reiterate the calls in the petition which we have raised in the Scottish Parliament and which is currently being considered by the Petitions Committee. The petition asks that:

- a. There is information made available to the public on the frequency and number of armed forces visits to schools.
- b. There is guidance given on how schools can create balance around armed forces' visits.
- c. Parents/guardians and pupils have the right to conscientiously object by removing themselves from armed forces' visits.

*Many people are currently confusing our petition, a call for transparency round armed forces visits to schools, with a ban on cadet forces. The petition asks for reasonable checks and balances for armed forces visits. Please be careful to be clear with people about the difference between the petition and the issues surrounding cadet forces.

On the next few pages I have drafted some template emails to use and adapt as you wish when contacting local branches.

2: Hustings

Hustings may be held in your local area where you can speak to local candidates and ask questions about their position on these issues. Possible questions to start debate include:

- a. What is your position on armed forces visits to schools in the area?
- b. Do you believe that the risks of such a dangerous career are adequately explained to pupils, who can start the entry process as young as 15?
- c. Would you agree that if a school has a cadet force or linked detachment programme it is important that interesting alternatives are provided for those pupils who do not wish to take part?

- d. If elected would you be prepared to commit yourself/ XXXX Council to supporting/ issuing guidance to schools that are receiving visits from armed forces personnel AND/OR introducing an instrument to monitor armed forces visits to schools in XXXX Council area?

Finding who to contact

Not all political parties list their local branches. However, the links below take you to places to start seeking contact details for either local politicians or party headquarters.

[Scottish Labour](http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/people)

(<http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/people>)

[Scottish Liberal Democrats](http://www.libdems.org.uk/in_your_area)

(http://www.libdems.org.uk/in_your_area)

[Scottish Conservatives](http://www.scottishconservatives.com/people/councillors/)

(<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/people/councillors/>)

[Scottish National Party](https://www.snp.org/contact)

(<https://www.snp.org/contact>)

[Scottish Green Party](https://greens.scot/homepage/the-people-behind-the-party)

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You will also be able to find information on your local candidates through local media, social media and your local authority. It is likely that the council leader and leaders of the opposition parties in your council will also be involved in writing their local manifestos.

Dear XXXXXX

I am a Quaker and a member/attender of xxxxxx meeting.

Quakers in Scotland are concerned about the increasing militarisation of Scottish schools and as such we have had a petition in The Scottish Parliament asking for:

- a. Information made available to the public on the frequency and number of armed forces' visits to schools.
- b. Guidance given on how schools can create balance around armed forces visits.
- c. That parents/guardians and pupils have the right to conscientiously object by removing themselves from armed forces visits.

As you may be aware recent report from Medact* show that young recruits (who can start the process at 15years old) are disadvantaged physical and mentally during their army career, and in later civilian life directly because of their young age at sign up. We believe young people should be made aware of these facts before joining, and are concerned that many presentations in schools are one sided.

None of the petition requests seek to end the armed forces relationships with schools, but rather put in place reasonable checks and balances to make sure that the public can be confident that disadvantaged areas are not being targeted, and pupils are being given a rounded picture of an armed forces career.

We would like xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx branch to consider this issue and how you may wish to respond to it when preparing your manifesto for the local elections as local authorities have an important role in this public issue.

We would be happy to also discuss this issue further with your branch, if you wish, and Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack (mairic@quakers.org.uk) is able to provide you with more information if you would like to investigate the matter more fully.

In Friendship

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* <https://www.medact.org/2016/resources/reports/recruitment-children-uk-armed-forces/>

Dear XXXXXXXX

I am a Quaker and a member/attender at XXXXX meeting.

Quakers have a long standing concern about militarisation in schools and as such we are very concerned about recent reports of the roll out of Cadet Forces in state schools. We have found conflicting and confusing reports about this in national and local media.

We are concerned that in schools in Scotland where there exists a form of cadet force, or a linked detachment programme, pupils often have no alternative, or a poor alternative, if they do not wish to take part. We would also like to see balance provided by having more peace education in schools.

We hope that xxxxx xxxxxx branch will consider this when writing their manifesto for the upcoming local elections – as Local Authorities have an important part to play in this public issue.

If you would like to meet with us to discuss this issue, or if you would like the Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack, to contact you with more information on this issue we would be more than happy to provide it.

In Friendship

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