



## Quakers in Scotland submission

### About Quakers in Scotland

Quakers are a faith group committed to working for peace, equality, truth, and simplicity and sustainability. Quakers promote these values across Scotland through practical action and advocacy.

In relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, [Quakers in Scotland](#) are members of [Together](#) (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights). We wholeheartedly endorse Together's submission to this inquiry.

Here we submit our own additional response to Question 5 for your consideration. In general, Quakers in Scotland support the Bill and the "maximalist" approach taken by the Scottish Government to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish Law.

### **5. Are there any relevant equalities and human rights issues related to this Bill, or potential barriers to rights, that you think we should look at?**

Quakers in Scotland are committed to equality and peace and we would urge the Committee to consider the implications of this Bill for the issues of peace education and the role of the armed forces in schools.

In their 2016 Concluding Observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child raised concerns about the minimum age of voluntary recruitment into the UK armed forces and the percentage of new recruits who are under the age of 18. We recognise that the age of military recruitment is a reserved matter, and that the relevant parts of the First Optional Protocol are redacted from the Bill. However, there is considerable evidence that armed forces visits to schools are part of the recruitment process, and the Scottish authorities do have the power to increase regulation and guidance around these visits.

The lack of scrutiny around armed forces visits to schools is an equality and human rights issue for three main reasons:

1. There is increasing evidence that the younger somebody joins the armed forces, the worse their outcomes are, including death, disability, addiction and poor physical and mental health.
2. There is a concern about informed choice regarding joining the armed forces. Children and young people are presented with a glamorised image of life in the armed forces that does not take into account the uniqueness of the career, its dangers, and the ethical problems that soldiers and other people in the armed forces might face. Schools are not required to present alternative viewpoints or encourage pupils to think critically about issues regarding peace and conflict.



3. Not all parents are informed of these visits, so they do not have an opportunity to discuss the visit with their child, or with the school or teacher concerned. Their right to conscientiously object is thereby removed.

In 2016 Quakers in Scotland and Forces Watch submitted petition PE01603 (now closed), calling on the Scottish Parliament to ensure greater scrutiny, guidance and consultation on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland. Our concerns on this matter still stand.

In addition to these concerns we would also recognise that Scotland has signed up to, and committed to implementing, the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), which set out a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. As a faith group wholly committed to peace, we recognize that a culture of peace and non-violence, expressed in SDG 4.7, requires intentional focus and development. We are, therefore, calling on the Scottish Government to fulfil SDG 4.7 and ensure all learners get the knowledge and skills they need to promote sustainability, peace and equality.

As Quakers we challenge the promotion of war and violence in schools and instead seek to promote education rooted in positive peace and justice. We believe that these issues are both pertinent and significant to the rights of children in Scotland and the commitment of the Scottish government to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. We therefore urge the committee to consider these matters in light of the Bill.