**Peacebuilding Briefing (January 2022)**

**Summary**

In September 2021 the Scottish Government’s programme for government included a commitment to establish a Peace Institute, with a focus on human rights to enable Scotland to develop its understanding on conflict resolution and peace. The governing parties, the SNP and the Scottish Greens, both have policies opposing nuclear weapons, and the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are signed up to the UN sustainable development goals, including SDG 4.7 which states that, by 2030, all learners should acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development including the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. And yet ties between the military and Scottish society remain strong, with all 32 Local Authorities signing up to the armed forces covenant; Armed Forces day being celebrated within many Scottish towns; the continued soft recruitment of young people into the armed forces through armed forces visits to, and cadet forces within, schools; and, the Scottish government, through Enterprise Scotland, continuing to fund companies working to produce military hardware.

**Where do Quakers stand?**

Quakers are known as a peace church, and have campaigned for a long time on matters that surround war, including lobbying to have the first ever exemption from military service on the grounds of conscientious objection written into law.  Quakers see peace as more than opposition to war and physical violence. It is a comprehensive approach to living in the world, which includes handling conflict in nonviolent ways and ensuring we avoid ways of living which damage the earth, and which might sow the seeds for future violence.

**Key messages**

* Creating a culture of peace requires us to challenge the promotion of war and violence and instead promote education rooted in peace and justice.
* Quakers believe that schools are a place for learning and education. We would like to see greater emphasis on creating a culture of peace within schools.
* Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 talks about learners acquiring knowledge and skills for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. But peace education is not a feature of the curriculum for excellence.
* By contrast, Armed Forces Visits to schools, cadet forces, and events such as Armed Forces Day often depict army life as glamorous, promoting a culture of militarism. This does not reflect the reality of the worse health outcomes that child recruits experience throughout and after their army career.
* The Scottish Government could reduce the risk of under 18s being recruited into the military by restricting Armed Forces visits to Schools.

**How to engage your MSP on this issue**

Within the Scottish Parliament you will be represented by one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPS. You can find out who your MSPs are [here](https://www.parliament.scot/msps)

Do your research

Find out your MSP’s background, views and interests before you contact them. This will help you phrase your email or letter in a way that will grab their attention and encourage them to respond positively. At www.theyworkforyou.com you can find MSPs’ voting records and view their recent appearances in Parliament to see the issues they tend to speak about. Their website and Twitter feed will also give you clues about their views and interests.

Make it timely

Try to choose a time when the MSP will be thinking about the issue you’re writing about. For example, if there is a debate coming up in Parliament about your issue, write about a week before the debate providing points and facts they could raise.

Be clear and concise

 Your MSP is more likely to take action as a result of your email or letter if you make your point clearly and concisely. And if you have a request, include it near the start.

Strike the right tone It’s easy to appear to accidentally make assumptions about an MSP’s view, or to appear to be asserting your own view without considering their experience. A deliberately careful and measured tone can often work better.

Add a personal touch

Tell your MSP why you care about the issue. If you can, briefly share a personal story or a case study of someone else’s experience (with their permission). If your MSP is a person of faith, they may respond positively to you saying how your Quaker faith leads you to act. Generic campaign emails can be a useful way of showing an MSP that a large number of their constituents care about a particular issue. But if you want a tailored response, take the time to write a tailored email.

**Some practicalities**

* Include your address in your email or letter so that your MSP knows you live in their constituency. They can only help you if you’re a constituent or if you’re contacting them on behalf of a national organisation.
* The vast majority of correspondence to an MSP is read by their staff. By making your email or letter personal, with a clear request, you will increase the chances of it actually reaching your MSP.

**Further reading**

[Finding Peace in the Scottish Curriculum](https://www.jstor.org/stable/26382616)

[Forces Watch Military influence in schools in Scotland](https://www.forceswatch.net/activity/wider-military-influence-in-schools-in-scotland/)

[Peacebuilders resources](https://peaceandjustice.org.uk/new-peacebuilders-video-resource-for-primary-schools/)

[BYM Peace Education Resources](https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/peace-education)

[CAAT Made in Scotland report](https://caat.org.uk/publications/made-in-scotland/)

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