

THE RECRUITMENT AGENDA BEHIND THE UK ARMED FORCES' 'ENGAGEMENT' WITH STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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OVERVIEW

The armed forces make around 11,000 visits to secondary schools and colleges schools in the UK each year², and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) spends around £26 million each year on school Combined Cadet Force (CCF) units³, both of which have a strong recruitment agenda behind them, contrary to the repeated denials of this in recent years by the MoD.⁴

This briefing is a compilation of evidence that contradicts the MoD and armed forces' claims that they don't recruit in schools and that 'engaging' with students does not have a recruitment purpose.

CONTRADICTING CLAIMS THAT THE ARMED FORCES DO NOT RECRUIT IN SCHOOLS

Evidence from the MoD and armed forces

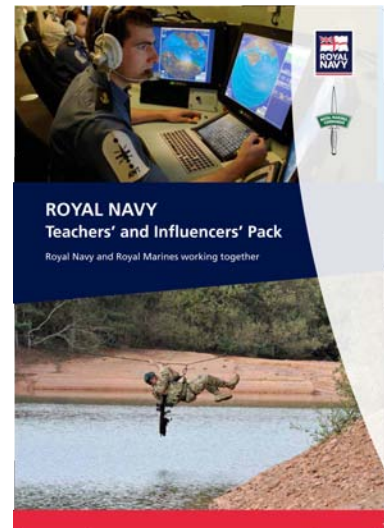
Internal and external documents and data from the MoD and the armed forces clearly demonstrate that the long-term recruitment of young people into the armed forces is a key outcome of 'engagement' with students in schools.

- The MoD's 2011 *Youth Engagement Review* states that armed forces activities in schools 'should have two clear Defence outcomes: An awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world and the quality of its work and people, in order to ensure the continued support of the population; and recruitment of the young men and women that are key to future sustainment and success'.⁵
- The MoD's 2007 document *Engagement with UK Schools* states that, 'Our overall rationale for engaging with schools is to encourage good citizenship, provide an environment which raises awareness of the MOD and Armed Forces among young people, provide positive information to influence future opinion formers, and to enable recruiters to access the school environments... *In gross numerical terms the main driver is recruitment... There are many other reasons given for visits but many of these have implicit careers links and any positive image created by an engagement is likely to have a positive effect in the recruiting environment.*'⁶ (emphasis added)
- In 2012, the private company Capita won the contract to oversee recruitment for the British Army. Capita's website states that their 'Outreach' team 'promotes Army Careers by going to schools, fairs and events to engage with potential Army recruits'.⁷
- An MoD spokesperson said in 2008, when the National Union of Teachers committed to supporting members in opposing armed forces recruitment in schools, that, 'all aspects of service life were discussed in detail, following a sensitive recruitment process, and that its recruitment practices avoided propaganda and glamorising war'.⁸ (The latter claim has been challenged by ForcesWatch and others.)⁹

Activities in schools 'should have two clear Defence outcomes: An awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world and the quality of its work and people, in order to ensure the continued support of the population; and recruitment of the young men and women that are key to future sustainment and success.'

Youth Engagement Review, Ministry of Defence 2011

- Regarding the recruitment function of the Combined Cadet Force units in schools, and the 170 ‘community’ Army, Sea and Air Cadet units that have been set up in schools (which the MoD is encouraging; some are purely for students at the school, and do activities in school time, so they are not that different to the CCF), the MoD stated in February 2014 that, ‘Cadet units are beneficial to both society and for recruitment into the Armed Forces, that is why we want to increase the number of them’.¹⁰ This followed the acknowledgement by the MoD Minister Lord Astor of Hever in November 2013 that the Cadets are an important recruitment tool for the armed forces.¹¹
- The MoD stated in 2011 that, ‘Cadet and [MoD] youth development experiences... can both enhance a young person’s desire to join the Service and make him/her better prepared to enter training... *All the Services are particularly keen not to overtly link cadets and recruiting and this must continue in the public eye. But as the link is so obvious it might be respectable to link (and help justify) the requirement for more senior cadets to the provision of a pool of more Service minded young people.*’¹² (emphasis added)
- The 2005 *Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives* describes curricular activities as ‘a powerful way to facilitate recruitment’.¹³
- Careers-oriented activities account for a significant proportion of armed forces visits to schools. Data from the armed forces shows that, in Scotland between 2010-12, careers-related activities accounted for 35% of the 1783 visits to secondary schools and colleges and other activities often have a careers dimension.¹⁴ A bilingual English-Welsh email sent by the Army to schools in Wales in 2013 (pictured right), entitled ‘The Army can give your students a career, a trade and a future’, is very much recruitment-focused.¹⁵ Similarly, a 2012 ‘Teachers and Influencers’ pack from the Navy (pictured right) includes several references to careers advice and assistance offered to students.¹⁶



- In addition, the Navy state in their recruitment handbook that visits to schools, ‘Provide potential recruits with opportunities to interact with Naval Service personnel. These contacts are a powerful tool that is able to dispel misconceptions, to convert awareness into a desire to find out more and may be the final motivator that leads to an applicant to join.’¹⁷
- *The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource*, produced in September 2014 by the MoD and the Prime Minister’s Office, and promoted to every school in the UK by the Department for Education, has been criticised for its politically-biased representation of the armed forces, its low pedagogical value, and its promotion of armed forces careers. For example, General Sir Peter Wall, describes the benefits of an Army career as, ‘training all over the world... always challenging and fun... Later on you will be able to get a good job if you have done well in the Army... There is a lot of information available about the Army. There is an Army facebook page, and Youtube channel and a website - see the links. You can also go to your local careers office and personally speak to a soldier.’¹⁸

Parliamentary documents

- The House of Commons Defence Select Committee's report on *Recruitment and Retention* in 2008 made clear that, not only do the military refer to personnel going into schools as ‘recruiters’, but

that they and the Defence Committee have sought to establish a more systematic approach to engaging with school pupils for the purpose of recruiting.¹⁹ The Government's response to the report notes, under the heading 'Recruiting and Schools', that, 'The Ministry of Defence agrees that recruitment activity in schools can be better co-ordinated'.²⁰

- The UK's submission to the UN's Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict stated that, 'Army recruiting initiatives include presentations in schools by Army careers advisers (ACA), a variety of Army youth team and Army recruiting team activities, attachments and visits to units, school fairs, Combined Cadet Force (CCF), advertising and marketing initiatives, membership of the Army's Camouflage Club.'²¹

Other evidence

- Former soldier Martin McGing used to take part in Army visits to schools. He referred to it in 2007 as certainly being about recruitment.²²
- The cadet forces (both school and community based) are one route into a career in the armed forces. Although only 2% of 'other ranks' in the armed forces in 2014 said that they had been in the Combined Cadet Forces in school, 20% of officers had.²³ Across officers and other ranks, 23% were in community-based Army, Sea or Air Cadets.
- While other non-cadet 'Military Ethos in Schools' initiatives promoted by the Department for Education, such as military-style alternative provision for students at risk of failing, and the Troops to Teachers scheme, do not have an explicit recruitment function, they may facilitate recruitment of disadvantaged young people into the armed forces at a time when the Army, in particular, is struggling to recruit enough Regulars and Reserves.²⁴

DEFINING RECRUITMENT: NOT AN EVENT BUT A PROCESS

Despite all this evidence, the MoD and armed forces maintain that armed forces visits to schools are not for recruitment purposes. They do this by employing a very narrow definition of recruitment: signing students up on the spot. For example, Mark Francois, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare, and Veterans in 2013, stated in a letter to the Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee, regarding their investigation into visits to schools in Wales that, 'The Armed Forces do not "recruit" in schools. No pupil or school student is ever "signed up" or otherwise makes a commitment to become a recruit into the Armed Forces during the course of any school visit by our representatives.'²⁵

Getting students to formally sign up to an armed forces career in school would be difficult given that only a small fraction would be over 18, and thus able to sign up without their parent or guardian's signature. A more widely-recognised definition of 'recruitment' is as a process and the evidence suggests that the military also view recruitment in this way. In 2007 the head of the Army's recruitment strategy Colonel David Allfrey said that, 'Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, "That looks great" From then the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip.'²⁶

Finally, it is revealing that armed forces and MoD responses to early Freedom of Information requests on visits to schools stated that the armed forces did not visit 'for recruitment purposes'; this was later changed to not visiting 'to recruit'.²⁷

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Mark Francois, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare & Veterans, 2013

'Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, "That looks great" From then the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip.'

Head of the Army's recruitment strategy Colonel David Allfrey, 2007

NOTES & REFERENCES

- 1 ForcesWatch critically scrutinises the ethical basis of the recruitment of young people into the armed forces. We advocate changes to policy, raise public awareness of the issues and challenge the armed forces on their recruitment practices, especially those aimed at the youngest and most disadvantaged groups. See <http://forceswatch.net>
- 2 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm>
- 3 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11285136/Government-U-turn-on-school-cadet-force-funding.html>
- 4 See, for example, <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/armed-forces-more-likely-to-visit-affluent-state-schools.25261411>; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/7890659/Army-anger-over-primary-school-and-nursery-recruitment-claims.html>; and [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/139962/response/399661/attach/html/4/Freedom of Information Request Response 20120077528.docx.html](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/139962/response/399661/attach/html/4/Freedom%20of%20Information%20Request%20Response%20120077528.docx.html)
- 5 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-engagement-review>
- 6 <http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2008-2922/DEP2008-2922.doc>
- 7 <http://capitaarmyresourcing.co.uk/Our-Jobs/National-Recruitment-Centre.aspx>
- 8 <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/mar/26/schools.uk>
- 9 See, for example, <http://www.informedchoice.org.uk/> and <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-learning-resource>.
- 10 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/10640052/Public-school-funding-for-military-cadet-forces-diverted-to-state-sector.html>
- 11 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/10459443/Expand-cadet-force-to-encourage-youngsters-to-join-forces-defence-minister-suggests.html>
- 12 Interim draft of the MoD's *Youth Engagement Review* 2011, obtained by Freedom of Information request in July 2012
- 13 Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets, MoD, 2005, *MoD Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives*
- 14 <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-visits-schools-scotland>
- 15 https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/178452/response/457452/attach/5/Bilingual_email_design_03.06.13.jpg
- 16 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/178452/response/457452/attach/4/Teachers%20Pack.pdf>
- 17 <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/-/media/royal%20navy%20responsive/documents/reference%20library/br%203/Br3book/ch04.pdf>
- 18 <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-learning-resource>
- 19 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/1074/107402.htm>
- 20 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/1074/1074.pdf>
- 21 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.OPAC.GBR.1.pdf>
- 22 *Soldiers on the Run*, BBC Panorama, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>
- 23 MoD, 2014, *Armed forces continuous attitude survey, 2014*, Tables B2.3 and B2.4, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/312672/afcas_2014_annex_b_reference_tables.pdf
- 24 <http://www.forceswatch.net/blog/questioning-military-academies-and-free-schools>
- 25 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21391/30.09.2013%20Correspondence%20-%20Ministry%20of%20Defence%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf>
- 26 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/02/british-army-recruitment-iraq>
- 27 <http://forceswatch.net/blog/unpacking-recruitment-what-does-mod-mean-when-it-says-armed-forces-do-not-run-recruitment-activ>