

- **armed forces 'youth engagement'**
- **'military ethos' in schools and military sponsorship of education**
- **curriculum materials provided by the military and arms industry**



'The army careers advisers who operate in schools are skilled salesmen.'

Head of Army recruitment strategy, quoted in New Statesman, 2007

'I think schools need a learning ethos, not a military ethos'

Brian Lightman, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders, 2015

should the military be promoted in SCHOOLS?

"The three Services each run or part-fund very comprehensive external engagement operations with children and young people in schools and communities. This external engagement should meet two clear Defence outcomes: An awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world...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."

Ministry of Defence Youth Engagement Review, 2011

'The UK's largest arms corporation, BAE Systems, runs an 'Education Roadshow' (in conjunction with the RAF and Royal Navy) which they claim has reached over 365,000 young people in over 2,200 schools and was expected to reach over 90,000 children aged between 10 and 13 in 2016 alone... While there are numerous images and references to military technologies, there is very little about what they are used for, let alone acknowledgement of the serious ethical issues they raise.'

Scientists for Global Responsibility, 2017

The influence of the military in schools and colleges

The armed forces are increasingly involved in secondary schools, colleges and even primary schools in the UK. They run activities in schools as part of the Ministry of Defence's youth engagement programme and the Department for Education promote 'military ethos' within education. The armed forces and arms industry provide curriculum activities and sponsor or partner with some schools and colleges.

The armed forces make **thousands of visits** to schools and colleges annually across the UK. Far more state schools are visited than independent schools, and in some areas almost every school is visited, often a number of times each year.

Visits include: • careers related activities • curriculum related materials and activities • student development • physical activities • interviews for Insight courses (pre-recruitment courses at armed forces bases) • sessions with staff • visits to bases and military museums

The Ministry of Defence state that they do not recruit in schools, specifying that, "no pupil or 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". However, it is clear from their own policies that long-term **recruitment** is the goals of such visits, along with **promoting the armed forces** and their activities.

Since 2012, the Department for Education has promoted **military ethos in schools**. This has led to significant funding of new cadet units in state schools under the Cadet Expansion Scheme and school activities with a military ethos, run by organisations providing activities for disengaged pupils or whole-class or whole-school activities.

With the growth in the provision of technical education, some schools and colleges are now **sponsored or partner** with the military. Around half of University Technical Colleges, which provide academic and technical education for 14-18 year olds, are sponsored by a part of the armed forces or arms industry.

Schools are offered **military-related curriculum materials**. The armed forces and arms industry provide resources for STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) learning. Free resources promoting the armed forces and the defence agenda are also available to schools for Armed Forces Day and for education activities around the First World War. In 2014, the Government promoted *The British Armed Forces Learning Resource* to schools. This was criticised by educationalists as a very poor learning resource, and a politically biased tool for promoting recruitment and uncritical support of the armed forces and its activities.

Some educational institutions have signed an Armed Forces Corporate Covenant, pledging support for cadets and Armed Forces Day among other military-centric initiatives. Some schools support Camo Day, Uniform to Work Day and Reserves Day.

Why is this a problem?

- Military-led school activities give a one-sided picture of life in the armed forces. They do not foster an awareness of the significant physical and psychological risks, legal obligations and ethical considerations to a military career.
- Who are the main beneficiaries? Many military activities in schools fulfill a defence, rather than an educational, agenda. Are these agendas compatible?
- Are there aspects of 'military ethos' that are not so positive and not compatible with an education environment?
- Education is a space for the development of critical awareness of human rights, military approaches to conflict resolution and long-term sustainable security. How will this be affected by the involvement of the armed forces and arms industry?
- Education for, and about, peace is not being promoted by the government, despite recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Does promoting military activities in schools deter awareness of alternatives to conflict and favour military solutions?
- Military activities in schools are often targeted at young people's whose options are more limited. Research shows that the youngest and most disadvantaged recruits are more vulnerable to risks during and after their service. They are also more vulnerable to the military's marketing messages.
- Although activities such as the cadets provide positive experiences for many, they do so within a narrow, military framework. This expansion is at the expense of more universal provision, accessible to all students regardless of their interest in military activities.
- There is an implication that schools are not already nurturing skills such as self-discipline and teamwork and that the military are better placed than others to provide them.
- Should STEM learning and careers education and advice be heavily influenced by the military and the arms industry? STEM activities should focus more on science and technology that promotes the public good and long term sustainable security, rather than rely on well-resourced military activities.

ForcesWatch scrutinises the recruitment of young people into the armed forces and the wider role of the military in UK society.

For more about our work, and information and resources, see our website or contact our Education Campaign Worker on education@forceswatch.net