

## CONCERNS ABOUT ARMED FORCES VISITS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WALES, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WELSH ASSEMBLY'S CURRENT EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUE

*ForcesWatch*,<sup>1</sup> August 2015

### INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This briefing is a response to the 2012-13 Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee's investigation into UK armed forces 'recruitment' in schools in Wales, following the petition *Stop the Army Recruiting in Schools* (P-04-432) submitted by the Fellowship of Reconciliation Wales. The Petition Committee's final report on their consideration of the petition was published in June 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The Petitions Committee did not encounter sufficient evidence to convince them that the visits comprised 'recruitment' (a disputed term, explored below) as opposed to informing students of armed forces careers, or that visits were deliberately targeted more at schools in poorer areas. The Committee therefore concluded that, 'We do not believe that the case has been made for an outright prohibition of the armed forces from schools in Wales at present... preventing the forces from visiting schools, as the petitioners wish, could disadvantage some young people, including those from less affluent backgrounds, from accessing careers and training of a very high quality.' It should be noted that the petitioners actually requested an end to recruitment in schools by the armed forces, not an end to their visits *per se*.

However, the Committee's report also noted that:

1. 'There does seem to be evidence that the armed forces disproportionately visit schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.'
2. 'Schools have a responsibility to ensure that visits to schools are balanced and conducted in a way that allows pupils to ask and receive honest answers to their questions. Schools should also be concerned to ensure that the often very necessary work of the armed forces is not overly glamorised and that the risks are clearly explained... with the support and guidance of their teachers pupils are more than capable of reaching their own judgement on the morality of the armed forces role. Indeed, they should be encouraged to think about these issues when the forces visit schools... schools would welcome further guidance on inviting the armed forces into schools to ensure that visits are balanced and appropriate.'
3. 'Other employers, particularly in the public sector, may not be as active, or successful, as the armed forces in explaining the career opportunities they provide. Small businesses may also find that the cost of visiting schools is prohibitive.'

The report recommended how the Welsh Government could consider addressing each of these issues:

1. Armed forces visiting schools in areas of relatively high deprivation relatively more: 'further research... into the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.'
2. Ensuring students do not encounter glamorised or sanitised impressions of the armed forces without being encouraged to question them: review 'the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework to ensure that guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role.'
3. Other employers not being as active or successful in presenting their jobs to students: give 'further consideration to how schools, businesses and employers can best be supported to ensure

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that a diverse range of businesses and employers visit schools to provide pupils with information about the career opportunities they offer.’

The Welsh Government responded to the Petition Committee’s report in July 2015, but this response - which states whether or not it accepts the Committee’s recommendations (wholly or in part or in principle) - will only be made publicly available a week before the Welsh Assembly plenary debate on the issue, which is expected to take place on Wednesday 23 September 2015.<sup>3</sup>

As data on armed forces visits to schools in Wales is limited, the Committee’s investigation - and therefore this briefing - mainly focus on visits by the Army to state and private secondary schools, only mentioning the Navy, RAF, and colleges occasionally.

This briefing supports the Petition Committee’s recommendations to the Welsh Government by presenting the key evidence that armed forces visits to secondary schools in Wales:

- are disproportionately high to schools in more disadvantaged areas;
- do not present a balanced view of the armed forces;
- and, are more numerous and more career-focused than visits by most other employers (particularly the emergency services).

This briefing also presents evidence that:

- armed forces visits to schools are motivated by an agenda of engaging students in a long-term recruitment process;
- quality and transparency of armed forces record-keeping makes a full study of the extent of visits to schools problematic.

These issues are of particular concern because of the unique risks and obligations associated with a career in the armed forces. The Petitions Committee saw much of this evidence, but not all of it, as a considerable amount has come to light since their final pre-report meeting in 2013.

The briefing does not cover the following aspects of military engagement with education establishments and students in Wales: armed forces visits to primary schools and universities; school and college visits to armed forces bases and military museums; provision of learning resources by or about the armed forces to schools; armed forces bursaries for sixth formers; cadet units; military-led ‘alternative provision’, such as that carried out by SkillForce and the Army Cadet Force, and, the courses for 15-18 year olds run by the six Military Preparation Colleges based in Wales.<sup>4</sup> However, these should be noted as additional ways in which students may encounter the armed forces during their school careers.

## SCHOOLS IN SOME AREAS OF WALES ARE VISITED MORE THAN OTHERS

**The Petitions Committee has recommended ‘further research... into the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in areas of relatively high deprivation.’**

Plaid Cymru found in 2005-6 that the Army visited schools in the most deprived areas of Wales 50% more than schools in affluent areas.<sup>5</sup> More recent research by ForcesWatch (see the table below), based on the data made publicly available by the Ministry of Defence, shows that between September 2009 and May 2012, 88% of state secondary schools were visited by the Army, as opposed to just 32% of independent schools at secondary level. An average of 82% of secondary schools were visited in total (see table below<sup>6</sup>) On average schools were visited six times during the period but some were visited as many as twenty-two times and others not at all. Data for further education colleges is not included but they were generally visited many times during the period. Schools in local authority areas such as Bridgend, Neath and Port Talbot, Swansea, and Rhondda were visited far more; the latter two received 13% and 12% of the total visits to Welsh schools respectively, though they only contain 8% and 7% of schools in Wales respectively.

It is also worth noting that schools in Wales, along with schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland, appear to be visited disproportionately more compared to schools in England. A Parliamentary Question in 2013 revealed that in 2011-12 the Army visited schools in Wales 476 times, the Navy 146 times, and the RAF 91 times. The UK totals were 5654, 2419, and 2711 respectively, meaning that Wales received 6.6% of the total UK visits, though it only represented 4.8% of the UK population.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Army's 'outreach programme' for 9-12 year-olds in 2006-7 saw 984 activities take place in Wales out of a total of 7000 - slightly more (7.1%) than Wales' proportion of the UK population.<sup>8</sup>

#### Army visits to secondary schools by Welsh local authority, 2009-2012

	number of schools visited (% of all schools in district)			number of visits to all schools (average number of visits)	% of Welsh schools in district	% of all visits to Welsh schools
	state	independent	all			
Blaenau Gwent	4 (80%)	0	4 (80%)	26 (7)	2	2
Bridgend	8 (100%)	0	8 (73%)	67 (8)	5	6
Caerphilly	13 (93%)	0	13 (87%)	83 (6)	6	8
Cardiff	20 (100%)	2	22 (85%)	93 (4)	11	8
Carmarthenshire	14 (100%)	1	15 (94%)	75 (5)	7	7
Ceredigion	7 (100%)	0	7 (100%)	30 (4)	3	3
Conwy County	5 (71%)	0	5 (56%)	22 (4)	4	2
Denbighshire	8 (100%)	1	9 (82%)	46 (4)	5	3
Flintshire	12 (100%)	0	12 (100%)	56 (5)	5	5
Gwynedd	5 (36%)	0	5 (31%)	10 (2)	7	1
Isle of Anglesey	4 (80%)	0	4 (80%)	9 (2)	2	1
Merthyr Tydfil	4 (100%)	0	4 (100%)	22 (6)	2	2
Monmouthshire	4 (100%)	1	5 (83%)	21 (4)	2	2
Neath and Port Talbot	10 (100%)	0	10 (100%)	83 (8)	4	8
Newport	7 (100%)	1	8 (100%)	27 (3)	3	2
Pembrokeshire	5 (63%)	0	5 (63%)	26 (5)	3	2
Powys	10 (77%)	0	10 (71%)	76 (8)	6	7
Rhondda	18 (95%)	0	18 (95%)	139 (8)	8	13
Swansea	15 (100%)	1	16 (100%)	127 (8)	7	12
Torfaen	4 (50%)	0	4 (50%)	10 (3)	3	1
Vale of Glamorgan	8 (100%)	1	9 (100%)	34 (4)	4	3
Wrexham	7 (78%)	0	7 (78%)	28 (4)	4	3
<b>total</b>	<b>192 (88%)</b>	<b>8 (32%)</b>	<b>200 (82%)</b>	<b>1100 (6)</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Notes:

The data is for Army visits to secondary schools (state and independent) only. It was received through a Freedom of information request to the British Army. Special schools, 6<sup>th</sup> form and FE colleges are not included. Activities involving secondary school pupils outside of school premises are not included.

The Petitions Committee state that, 'the reasons for the apparently disproportionate number of visits to schools in these areas is not clear', but there is some evidence pointing to certain factors:

1. A research paper on military recruitment in the south Wales valleys by academics from Cardiff University explores how economic deprivation in the valleys of south Wales drives many students to consider joining the Army as they have few alternatives.<sup>9</sup> The report states, 'As a consequence of their prolonged economic stagnation, the south Wales valleys have long been recognised as being one of the primary recruiting grounds in Britain for the armed forces - and, in particular, the army. Wales, as a whole, consistently has higher than average levels of army recruitment in comparison to its proportion of the British population.' Regarding the unevenness of recruitment-focused school visits and careers fairs, the MoD have suggested that visits largely focused where they are likely to yield results: 'Nationally, [there are] marked differences in the geographical areas and the types of events targeted by each Service in order to optimise return on investment'.<sup>10</sup>
2. Schools' proximity of armed forces recruitment offices and bases, and the relationship that the armed forces build with individual schools and particular geographical areas, will also have a significant impact. Air Vice-Marshal Simon Bryant, Chief of Staff Personnel, said in 2008 that for

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the RAF, 'We are bound by how far we can spread our wings and where we get the best returns...we have done a significant amount of work on this to see where we get the best effect. We have found that by concentrating where there is already a significant footprint and therefore air power is better understood by the people there at least at a subliminal level. Because they see aircraft flying on a daily basis and it is not alien to them that is where we tend to get results.'<sup>11</sup>

The Welsh Government could commission further research. Analysis of the apparent unevenness of the visits would ideally involve mapping a fuller body of data against the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014.<sup>12</sup> A further dataset on armed forces visits to UK schools for 2010-15 was recently obtained through a Parliamentary Question. However, there are major discrepancies in these figures compared to the previous dataset, as well as missing or aggregated data (preventing us from knowing how many RAF visits there were in Wales specifically, for example).<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, not only does this raise concerns about the quality of armed forces and Ministry of Defence record keeping, but it also suggests a lack of transparency on the level and distribution of armed forces visits to schools, both in Wales and elsewhere. The full picture of armed forces visits to schools in Wales can only be attained when the Ministry of Defence/armed forces provide full, up-to-date data for all three armed forces for independent analysis.

## PROMOTING SANITISED, GLAMOURISED VIEWS OF THE ARMED FORCES

The Petitions Committee has recommended a review of, 'the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework to ensure that guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role.'

The risks, legal restrictions, and ethical questions potentially faced by members of the armed forces are unique. The Petitions Committee referred to this in its June 2015 report: 'the armed forces are unique in that they are the only employer where recruits accept, as a normal function of their employment, that they may need to harm or kill other human beings. Relatively high risks of injury or death are not unique to the armed forces but asking recruits to deliberately put themselves in positions where these risks are maximised is also different to most other jobs. From this perspective, inviting the armed forces into schools should perhaps be treated with considerably more care than other potential employers'.

Recent research has shown that the risks of being killed, or physically or mentally injured in the armed forces are felt more by certain groups. Recruits who joined the Army at 16 in recent years were twice as likely to be killed in Afghanistan than those who joined at 18 or over.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the youngest, most disadvantaged recruits are more likely to develop mental health problems. Compared with older personnel, younger recruits are significantly more likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), to drink at levels harmful to health, and to behave violently on their return from war; those with no GCSEs are twice as likely to develop mental health problems than those with A-Levels.<sup>15</sup> The unevenness is partly due to the fact that the youngest, most disadvantaged recruits are over-represented in the most dangerous parts of the armed forces, in particular the Infantry. These recruits are also more vulnerable to stress and more likely to lack strong social support when they leave the forces.

The legal restrictions faced by those in the armed forces are uniquely stringent; there are very limited opportunities to leave once enlisted and a criminal conviction can ensue if the employment contract is broken.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, some of the ethical questions faced by the armed forces are best found in this passage from the Army Policy and Resources Committee from 1996: 'The fundamental and perhaps only difference of significance, between military service and other legitimate professions and occupations is that servicemen and women must be prepared, at any time and in the service of others rather than themselves, to participate in protracted and sometimes wholesale destruction and violence, to kill and be killed for benign and politically justifiable purposes... It is easy in the myopia of a prolonged period of peace and low intensity operations to lose sight of this ultimate reality.'<sup>17</sup>

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An MoD spokesperson claimed in 2008, after the National Union of Teachers voted to oppose armed forces recruitment in schools, that, 'Our recruitment practices avoid "glamorising war" and "propaganda". Anyone considering a career in the Armed Forces is presented with clear information and all aspects of service life are discussed in detail, following a sensitive recruitment process.'<sup>18</sup> However, there is a substantial amount of evidence which indicates that the armed forces are not consistently presenting a sufficiently balanced image of themselves in schools:

- The official Army in Education careers presentation (current 2015) focuses on skills and qualifications need to enlist and the 'rewards and lifestyle' for those that do; it does not routinely mention risks, legal obligations or ethical questions.<sup>19</sup>
- There is evidence that many teachers question the impartiality of the careers advice provided by the armed forces in schools. In his letter to the Petitions Committee, the Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare, and Veterans referred to a 2013 Army survey of school careers services in which 74% of respondents, 'felt that the Army provided impartial careers advice'.<sup>20</sup> However, he did not note the breakdown of this figure: only 18% of respondents felt the army would provide impartial careers advice all of the time; 56% felt they would provide it most of the time, 12% rarely, 4% never, and 10% didn't know. A teacher based in Wales is quoted saying, 'About six or seven years ago, the Royal Navy came in to do a day, it was put on a vehicle, such as numeracy and re-development numeracy skills, but they were [sic] quite specific careers advice coming from that, and not personally, but the other staff complained about that and the Governors as well.'<sup>21</sup>
- Those involved in armed forces recruitment have also expressed unease. An Army recruiter who visited schools in Wales felt uneasy about the way that the Army was being presented to school students: he was aware that the reporting of soldiers' deaths actually increases recruitment interest among young people, 'because they are young and the idea of death and injury is just an abstraction to them, it is not real to them'. He tried to 'emphasise the harsh reality'. But his wife said he was being too negative, reminding him that the Army 'offers opportunities', which he has since taken on board.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, former soldier Martin McGing said in 2007 that in schools, 'recruiters tried to sell the Army basically by using weapons, such as this, the SA80...they'd think it was brilliant. The recruiters... sell the Army by saying "You'd be able to get these" - I don't know - "driving courses, these HGV courses", basically all good stuff that you can get in civilian life, but they say "it's all free, in the Army"... In my view no, it weren't an honest approach. I think it's wrong, the way that it is put over to young children'.<sup>23</sup> Mike Hamilton, ex-Army head of school 'alternative provision with a military ethos' organisation Commando Joe's, stated that, 'Before I left I worked on a team which delivered sessions into schools... however I felt that it was promoting the military too much and didn't give a rounded view on joining the military'.<sup>24</sup>
- A student from Prestatyn High School who gave evidence to the Petitions Committee, said, 'I think that there is an aspect where the army is glorifying it and making it look like it is better than it is. If it brought along people who could explain the risks of entering the army and the things that could happen, that would make it more balanced.'<sup>25</sup> Another student added, 'It should be providing a realistic view of what the army will be like... just doing a day on the field that does not really show you what the army is really about.' The senior associate leader at the school asserted that the Army, 'cannot be glamorised [during visits]. It has to be a kind of open and honest thing.' He was probably right in adding that, 'We all have a tendency to glamorise what we do'.
- Darton High School in Barnsley was the joint-third most visited school in the UK in 2006. In answer to BBC Panorama's question 'What was the Army's presentation like?', one student answered: 'It actually was the thing that made me want to decide to join the Army. I was wavy on what I was going to do but that really decided it for me'. But another said, 'It just shows you all the benefits not the downside of it'.
- Learning resources and curriculum materials produced by or about the armed forces have been criticised for presenting partial, even partisan, representations of the activities of the armed forces and what a career in the forces entails. For example, in 2008 a Ministry of Defence resource for schools on the Iraq War was the cause of complaint by the National Union of Teachers to the



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Secretary of State for Education.<sup>26</sup> In 2014 the Prime Minister's Office and the MoD produced the *British Armed Forces: Learning Resource*, which was promoted by the Department for Education and has been heavily criticised by education professionals and the Welsh Union of Independent Churches.<sup>27</sup>

Children's Commission for Wales, Keith Towler, stated in his submission to the Petitions Committee that, 'In presenting career options, the MoD has a responsibility to present a balanced and accurate picture... I do have some reservations regarding the MoD's ability to offer a balanced picture of military life. This statement is based purely on anecdotal examples of MoD online materials aimed at young people, for instance the Camouflage site'.<sup>28</sup> Kieran Gordon, former President of Institute of Career Guidance, and chief executive of Connexions Greater Merseyside, told the Defence Select Committee in 2008 that, 'when the Armed Forces do their sales drives, so to speak, they are very good at it. Obviously, they tend to feature the benefits, challenges and opportunities that the forces provide and do not focus quite so much on the conflicts and perhaps more controversial issues... A good careers adviser will challenge somebody to think through the consequences of the choices they make, whether or not it is the Armed Forces, and investigate fully what it means. Obviously, in a career such as the Armed Forces the choices you make are not simply where you will be between the hours of nine and five. Therefore, you need to do more to encourage and ensure young people make well informed decisions and understand their importance and what they lead to, not just the trades and skills they can get but the wider life for which they are signing up.'<sup>29</sup>

One Petitions Committee member said during their investigation that, 'I know, from personal experience, that a lot of good comes out of armed forces recruitment, as well as bad. I would like to perhaps see a more honest approach to recruiting. Perhaps we need to show people the consequences of war, as well.'<sup>30</sup> This need for objective advice to allow informed decisions to be made was also stated by Jeff Cuthbert (the Welsh Assembly's Deputy Minister for Skills, who provided the Welsh Government's stance on the issue to the Petitions Committee), the Welsh Local Government Association, and Merthyr Tydfil Council, in their submissions to the Committee.<sup>31</sup> Cuthbert asserted in his letter to the Petitions Committee the need for impartial careers advice, stating that this was Careers Wales' responsibility, and that it was schools' and governors' responsibilities to help pupils to make informed decisions.<sup>32</sup>

Prestatyn High School's senior associate leader observation that 'in an era of such mass media... the pupils are very aware of the non-glamorous side of it... if they have a concern over it, and if they are seriously considering a career in the army and are thinking, "This is a concern", teenagers are savvy enough to ask', is helpful in reminding us that school students can be remarkably critical in their thinking; but this cannot be assumed - it needs to be encouraged, because some students are very impressionable and vulnerable.<sup>33</sup>

**This evidence demonstrates a real need for greater scrutiny of armed forces visits to schools in Wales, to ensure that students do not encounter biased representations of life in the armed forces. Greater balance could be achieved by also using resources or speakers from peace education perspectives (as recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2008<sup>34</sup>) as well as through guidance to schools about how visits from the armed forces should be managed.**

## COMPARISON WITH VISITS BY OTHER SERVICES/EMPLOYERS

The Petitions Committee recommend 'further consideration to how schools, businesses and employers can best be supported to ensure that a diverse range of businesses and employers visit schools to provide pupils with information about the career opportunities they offer.'

In his letter to the Committee, the Defence Minister stated that the armed forces only visit 'at the specific invitation of the schools and colleges'.<sup>35</sup> This statement does not mean much as no external visitor would ever visit a school without an invitation. The key point to consider is: how is an invitation gained? The armed forces will usually initiate an invitation from the school, though they are of course seeking to build up a relationship with staff to establish regular and frequent visits, whereby the school approaches them each time. Examples of this include a 2013 letter from the Navy to schools and an email offering careers presentations to schools in Wales from the Army.<sup>36</sup>

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Another claim by the MoD, quoted in RFCA Wales' submission to the Petitions Committee, is that, 'Similar contributions to schools are made by police, fire, ambulance, emergency and other services and professions. The Armed Forces... get no special treatment or access.'<sup>37</sup> There is contradictory evidence:

- Kieran Gordon, former President of Institute of Career Guidance, and chief executive of Connexions Greater Merseyside, told the Defence Select Committee in 2008 that, 'when the Armed Forces can mobilise quite impressive resources to recruit when other employers and career areas cannot people become suspicious. Maybe the Army is too prevalent, if you like, and we need to raise the bar for all areas of career preparation for young people in schools... Maybe some larger private and public sector employers can... compete on a reasonably level playing field, but the majority of employers cannot deploy the personnel, resource and expertise that very often the Armed Forces provide.'<sup>38</sup>
- In the financial year 2012-13 the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the South Wales Fire Service made a combined 2214 visits to Welsh schools and colleges, and in the academic year 2012-13 the Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Service made 993 visits.<sup>39</sup> However, at least one-third of the Welsh Fire and Rescue Service visits were to primary schools, and at least one-sixth were 'arson vulnerability assessments' of schools (only the South Wales Fire Service break the visits down by year group or activity).
- Moreover, the Fire and Ambulance service don't appear to have the same recruitment emphasis: a study of armed forces visits to schools in Scotland indicates that the majority of Fire and Rescue Service visits relate to fire safety, with only a small proportion promoting jobs (the study also found that, similar to Wales, the Scottish Ambulance Service have very little capacity for school visits, and Police Scotland only made around 60 visits in 2012-13).<sup>40</sup> The differing nature of the visits and the implications of this means that simply comparing the number of visits is not enough: as the Army stated in 1996, 'Other professions, such as the police and fire service, also face death and injury, often more frequently than do members of the Army, but not on the same potential scale, or with the same inherent levels of lethal danger; none face the potentially devastating experience of deliberately taking life as a normal part of their roles.'<sup>41</sup>
- The Welsh Ambulance Service only made 23 visits to Welsh schools and colleges in 2012-13, stating that there were requests 'which we were not able to honour due to operational demands'.<sup>42</sup> No data is available for the police or other employers in Wales.

The senior associate leader at Prestatyn High School, agreed with the Petitions Committee chair that the Army are able to make so many visits because it 'has a budget for this', and they are 'very willing and keen to come in', whereas in the school's experience of 'getting other services in - especially other public services - can be trickier'. The Prestatyn High School students who gave evidence were interested in having visits from other professions.<sup>43</sup>

**This evidence shows that the armed forces make a higher number of visits to schools in Wales than other public sector employers for which data is available except the Welsh Fire Services, and a greater careers emphasis than all other employers.**

## THE RECRUITMENT AGENDA BEHIND ARMED FORCES VISITS TO SCHOOLS

### *Defining recruitment - a process rather than an event*

In his letter to the Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee, then-Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare, and Veterans Mark François, claimed 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.'<sup>44</sup> This standard response has been given by the armed forces and MoD since scrutiny from ForcesWatch and others began. Previously, military bodies had referred very openly to school visits and visitors as 'recruitment' and 'recruiters' respectively.<sup>45</sup>

Following the new MoD line, the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) for Wales, in their submission to the Petitions Committee, stated that, 'it is about providing careers advice and only that.'<sup>46</sup> Similarly, UCAC (the National Union of Teachers in Wales) and Merthyr Tydfil Council distinguish careers

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advice from recruitment, UCAC asserting that they would object to the latter, and therefore object to Combined Cadet Forces (schools' own Cadet units), which they do consider to be armed forces recruitment.<sup>47</sup> Many of these contributors interpreted the petition as calling for an outright banning of armed forces visits to schools in Wales, and thus did not engage with the more subtle debate as to what 'recruitment' means. This in turn contributed to some scepticism among members of the Petitions Committee as to whether the visits represent recruitment; one Committee member stated that, 'we cannot recruit children in schools, it is just wrong', but asserted that the visits represent, 'pre-recruiting... and promotional activities', not recruiting.<sup>48</sup>

However, the MoD's definition of recruitment as pupils signing up then and there on school premises is very narrow; recruitment is usually a process, not a single event. No-one is suggesting that pupils are signed up during the visits - as RFCA Wales noted, this can only be done in a recruitment office.

The evidence listed below strongly indicates that recruitment as a process is in fact a central driver of armed forces visits to secondary schools.

- The MoD state in their 2007 document *Engagement with UK schools* 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.'<sup>49</sup>
- In their 2011 *Youth Engagement Review* the MoD stated their youth engagement activities, of which armed forces visits to schools are a major part, '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.'<sup>50</sup>
- The UK Government's 2008 report to the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, states 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'. The Navy and RAF's school activity is described as advertising and careers advice, rather than recruitment.'<sup>51</sup>
- The MoD's response to the Defence Select Committee's 2008 report *Recruiting and retaining Armed Forces personnel* states, 'Our Recruiting initiatives include... Services Presentation Teams' attendance in schools and at careers fairs... experience indicates that single Service visits produce the best recruiting results.'<sup>52</sup> The MoD also notes - under the heading 'Recruiting and Schools' - that it, 'agrees that recruitment activity in schools can be better co-ordinated.'
- In 2007 the head of the Army's recruitment strategy Colonel David Allfrey stated 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.'<sup>53</sup> By also saying, 'We don't do primary schools... It would be improper to hard-sell a military career at that point. We prefer outreach', he implied that secondary school visits do involve a 'hard sell'.
- The MoD's 2005 *Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives*, calls curricular activities, 'a powerful way to facilitate recruitment'. The document also referred to the MoD's *Short review of engagement with schools, 2006*, stating, 'There appeared to be a need to distance "recruiting" from other "youth and curriculum" activities since the former appeared to be alienating some teachers and preventing Defence messages reaching some students... Thus some recruiters package their work as citizenship programmes rather than pure recruiting.'<sup>54</sup>



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- The Army Recruitment Project's National Recruitment Centre - part of Capita, the private company responsible for Army recruitment - has an 'Outreach' team which, 'promotes Army Careers by going to schools, fairs and events to engage with potential Army recruits'.<sup>55</sup> The Army's contract with Capita states that, 'the Service Provider shall use education as a source of advocacy for an Army career, using existing structures and trusted sources, such as teachers and IAG [Information Advice and Guidance] advisers, to impart information to young people and their parents... the Service Provider shall begin pre-eligible activity from Year 9, when young people are making their first career-orientated choices... [and] aims to attract potential recruits over the long-term'.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of armed forces visits to schools in Wales in particular:

- An bilingual email sent to schools in Wales by the Army requesting that they are invited to give careers presentations is entitled, *The Army can give your students a career, a trade and a future*.<sup>57</sup>
- The breakdown of activities run by the Army in Welsh schools between 2010-12 - the best publicly available data on the issue - shows that many were clearly recruitment oriented: 21% were 'General Presentations' with a section on types of careers available in Army; and 7.5% had 'careers' in their title, including 'early joining' presentations for under-16s.<sup>58</sup>
- Although one member of the Petitions Committee said that none of the nine Prestatyn High School pupils who gave evidence to the Committee, 'felt that they were being recruited', one student told the Committee that, 'The army, as far as careers go, is the only one actually pushing it, actually going for it - the police, the ambulance and fire services do not seem to be pushing it to try to recruit people into their professions.'<sup>59</sup> It should be noted that a focus group of nine students is too small a sample to be representative.

This evidence makes the long-term recruitment agenda behind armed forces visits to schools very clear. This is of significant concern within an education context, particularly given the concerns outlined below. Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales, also expressed concern, noting the contradiction between the UK Government's acknowledgement of recruitment activity in schools to the UN in 2008 and the MoD's claims that it does not, and stated that, 'This contradiction needs to be resolved. I believe clarity is needed so that headteachers, pupils and parents are aware of the nature of MoD activity and can make informed decisions on whether or not they wish to be exposed to any presentations in school.'<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This briefing provides evidence in support of the three recommendations made by the Petitions Committee: to consider research into the unevenness of armed forces visits to schools in Wales; ensure the provision of 'guidance in relation to inviting the armed forces into schools takes account of their unique nature as a career and the need to encourage an open and honest exchange of views with pupils about their role'; and to consider how to increase the range of employers visiting schools.

It has also highlighted two other concerns that merit further research and examination: that the major driver behind the armed forces visits to schools is recruitment into the armed forces (which has been defined as a process, not the single act of signing up), and, that poor record-keeping and transparency of the armed forces regarding the number and geographical distribution of the visits have made it difficult to obtain an up-to-date, full picture of the visits.

## CONTACT

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**ForcesWatch** is a British-based campaigning organisation. We seek to scrutinise 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.

- 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.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10253/cr-ld10253-e.pdf>. For a summary of the Committee's meetings on the issue, and video and audio of the meetings, go to <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryChronology.aspx?lId=4793&Opt=2>. For transcripts of the meetings, click on the relevant dates in this list: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=1310>. You can also watch a short Made in Cardiff TV video piece on an event in Cardiff on 12 February 2015 about armed forces visits to schools in Wales at <http://youtu.be/ooBFd2bT304>
- 3 Email from the Welsh Assembly's Chamber and Committee Service, 1 July 2015
- 4 For an overview of these other military influences in the education system, see <http://www.forceswatch.net>. There are six Combined Cadet Forces - schools' own Cadet units - in Wales, three of which are in state schools (all three have been set up since 2007); there are far more 'community' Cadet units - 629 Army Cadet Forces, 60 Air Cadet squadrons, and 600 Sea cadets [the number of Sea Cadet *units* is unknown]; some of which probably meet and train on school premises - see <http://wales-rfca.org/content/cadets>. For more information on 'alternative provision with a military ethos' in Wales see <http://www.skillforce.org/what-we-do/curriculum-in-your-region/?Wales>, [https://armycadets.com/uploads/brand\\_centre/2014-15\\_Youth\\_Outreach\\_OUTCOMES.pdf](https://armycadets.com/uploads/brand_centre/2014-15_Youth_Outreach_OUTCOMES.pdf), and <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Momentum%20March%202014%20Sports%20Science.pdf>. For more on Military Preparation Colleges, go to <http://www.mpct.co.uk/> and <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/army-training-better-fun-school-2344248>
- 5 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/6199274.stm>
- 6 The data was received from the British Army under the Freedom of Information Act and covers 2009-2012. The data received included visits to FE Colleges, schools for special needs and primary schools, but this table only includes data for state and independent secondary schools. The original data included visits that were not to one specific institution - these visits are not included counted in this table. Finally, when comparing with data from other areas, it is important to note that the data for Wales refers only to the army and not all three forces.
- 7 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm>;  
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/compendiums/compendium-of-uk-statistics/population-and-migration/>
- 8 Government response to House of Commons Defence Committee (2008). *Recruiting and Retaining Armed Forces Personnel* (Fourteenth Report of Session 2007-08) available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/1074/107404.htm>
- 9 Tannock, S., Burgess, S., and Moss, K. (2013), *Military recruitment, Work & culture in the South Wales Valleys: A local geography of contemporary British militarism* (Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods) available at [http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/3613/8019/7095/WISERD\\_WPS\\_009.pdf](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/3613/8019/7095/WISERD_WPS_009.pdf)
- 10 See 8.
- 11 House of Commons Defence Committee (2008). *Recruiting and Retaining Armed Forces Personnel* (Fourteenth Report of Session 2007-08) available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdfence/424/424.pdf>
- 12 <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation>
- 13 <http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2008-2922/DEP2008-2922.doc>
- 14 Gee, D. and Goodman, A. (2013), Young age at Army enlistment is associated with greater war zone risks: An analysis of British Army fatalities in Afghanistan (London: ForcesWatch; Child Soldiers International), available at <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/youngest-soldiers-face-greatest-risks>
- 15 Gee, D. (2013). The Last Ambush? Aspects of mental health in the British armed forces (London: ForcesWatch), available at: <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/last-ambush>
- 16 See <http://www.beforeyou signup.info> for details
- 17 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/163313/response/461823/attach/html/4/Binder1.pdf.html>
- 18 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1582731/Teachers-criticise-armed-forces-propaganda.html>
- 19 MoD (2014), Information Obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, FoI2015/02776 Annex B, Army in Education Main Presentation 1.
- 20 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21391/30.09.2013%20Correspondence%20-%20Ministry%20of%20Defence%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf>

- 21 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/275567/response/682259/attach/2/20130731%20EdComs%20Army%20Careers%20Report.pdf>
- 22 See 9.
- 23 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6479769.stm>
- 24 <http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/primary/2290901-Military-ethos-in-school?pg=2>
- 25 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21880/11%20November%202013.pdf>
- 26 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/iraq-teachers-told-to-rewrite-history-795711.html>; <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-learning-resource>
- 27 ForcesWatch (2015). A critical response to the 'The British Armed Forces: Learning Resource 2014'. (London: ForcesWatch). Available at: <http://www.forceswatch.net/armed-forces-learning-resource>  
For the Welsh Union of Independent Churches' critical response to the *British Armed Forces Learning Resource* go to <http://annibynwyr.org/military-resouce-in-schools/>.
- 28 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16374/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2003%20Childrens%20Commissioner%20for%20Wales.pdf>
- 29 See 11.
- 30 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s19249/02%20July%202013.pdf>
- 31 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s12530/04.12.12%20Correspondence%20-%20Deputy%20Minister%20for%20Skills%20to%20Chair.pdf>; <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?Iid=4793&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI10689>
- 32 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16374/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2003%20Childrens%20Commissioner%20for%20Wales.pdf>;  
<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s12530/04.12.12%20Correspondence%20-%20Deputy%20Minister%20for%20Skills%20to%20Chair.pdf>
- 33 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21880/11%20November%202013.pdf>
- 34 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.OPAC.GBR.CO.1.pdf>
- 35 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21391/30.09.2013%20Correspondence%20-%20Ministry%20of%20Defence%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf>;  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130415/text/130415w0003.htm>;  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-06-30/4788/>
- 36 [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/army\\_visits\\_to\\_scottish\\_schools#incoming-457452](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/army_visits_to_scottish_schools#incoming-457452)
- 37 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16389/Consultation%20Response%20PET4%20SAR%2018%20Reserve%20Forces%20Cadets%20Association%20for%20Wales.pdf>; see also  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-06-30/4788/>
- 38 See 11.
- 39 [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/visits\\_to\\_schools\\_and\\_colleges\\_i#outgoing-318645](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/visits_to_schools_and_colleges_i#outgoing-318645);  
<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/185855/response/459971/attach/3/Request%20ID%20301.pdf>;  
<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/185856/response/464958/attach/html/3/Skonica.cs13122011411.pdf.html>
- 40 Sangster, E. (2014). *Armed forces visits to secondary schools in Scotland*. (London: ForcesWatch). Available at: [www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-visits-schools-scotland](http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-visits-schools-scotland)
- 41 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/163313/response/461823/attach/html/4/Binder1.pdf.html>
- 42 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/185852/response/461811/attach/html/3/Response%20Letter.pdf.html>
- 43 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21880/11%20November%202013.pdf>
- 44 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21391/30.09.2013%20Correspondence%20-%20Ministry%20of%20Defence%20to%20the%20Chair.pdf>
- 45 <http://forceswatch.net/blog/unpacking-recruitment-what-does-mod-mean-when-it-says-armed-forces-do-not-run-recruitment-activ>
- 46 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16389/Consultation%20Response%20PET4%20SAR%2018%20Reserve%20Forces%20Cadets%20Association%20for%20Wales.pdf>

- 47 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16392/Consultation%20Response%20PET4%20SAR%2021%20UCAC.pdf>; <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16396/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2025%20Merthyr%20Tydfil%20County%20Borough%20Council.pdf>
- 48 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s19249/02%20July%202013.pdf>
- 49 <http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2008-2922/DEP2008-2922.doc>
- 50 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-engagement-review>
- 51 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.OPAC.GBR.1.pdf>
- 52 See 8.
- 53 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/02/british-army-recruitment-iraq>
- 54 Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets (2005), *MoD Strategy for Delivery of MOD Youth Initiatives*'
- 55 <http://capitaarmyresourcing.co.uk/Our-Jobs/National-Recruitment-Centre.aspx>
- 56 Provided by the Army in an email response to a Freedom of Information request on 3 July 2015
- 57 <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/178452/response/457452/attach/5/Bilingual%20email%20design%2003.06.13.jpg>
- 58 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16395/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2024%20ForcesWatch.pdf>
- 59 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s21880/11%20November%202013.pdf>. The Welsh Local Government Association's claim in their submission that 'Due to ongoing cuts in funding for the armed forces, recruitment is not currently a priority' (<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16394/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2023%20WLGA.pdf>). However, the armed forces still recruit around 22,000 people each year, of whom around 4700 are children, the vast majority of whom join the Army ([http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/One\\_Step\\_Forward\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/One_Step_Forward_April_2013.pdf)). The current major expansion of the Reserves (especially for the Army) to compensate for the major reduction of the Regulars, is struggling, with recruitment targets proving far too optimistic despite massive expenditure on advertising campaigns (see for example <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/17/uk-reserve-army-reservists-military-recruitment-defence>).
- 60 <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s16374/Consultation%20Response%20-%20PET4%20SAR%2003%20Childrens%20Commissioner%20for%20Wales.pdf>